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**Employer Branding in UK Higher Education Institutions:
Impact on Talent Management Outcomes**

By

Idorenyin Udom Etokakpan

**A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy at the University of Kent**

Kent Business School

University of Kent

December 2021

Declaration of Authorship

The research and all the findings reported in this thesis are my own and all other materials or sources have been properly referenced. This study has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma at any other institution. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Dedication

I Owe All Adoration to God Almighty

This Thesis Is Dedicated To My Parents, Late Mr Peter Udom Etokakpan. & Mrs Elizabeth Udom Etokakpan. Their Vision And Inspiration, Sacrifice And Resilience Inspire Me.

And

To My Dear Wife, Elisa Etokakpan for Supporting Me All the Way On This Journey. To Our Son Aaron and Our Daughter Sharon, You Bring Joy and Delight Every day. It Is for You, I Labour.

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I Acknowledge My PhD Research Colleagues and indeed the PhD Research Team at The Kent Business School for The Support I Received Throughout This Journey.

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Papers Developed from Thesis

- Talent Management in Uncertain Times: Impact of COVID-19 on HEI Talent management Outcomes.
- Comparative analysis of UK Talent Management- the Cases of Public and Private Sectors.
- Talent Management and Artificial Intelligence-Synergy or Antagonism?
- Impact of Brand Equity on Employee Turnover: Empirical Evidence from UK Higher Education Institutions
- Employer Brand Optimizers and Employer Brand Equity: Effects on Talent Management Outcomes

Abstract

In higher education institutions (HEI), surging demand for knowledge-intensive human capital, exacerbated by external environmental factors, presents the opportunity for in-depth study and the empirical review of higher education branding as well as its impact on talent management outcomes. This is the subject of this research. Based on the study of UK HE sectors, through the lenses of resource-based view and brand equity theories, this thesis extends the understanding of the context to which employer branding influences talent management. In doing so, the study focuses on employer branding processes in UK HEI and the employer value propositions that influence talent attraction and retention in UK HEIs. The study explores how these outcomes are shaped by employer branding processes. Employing a qualitative research method, the study interviewed seventy-five highly qualified academic talents, heads of business schools, HR Directors, HR partners, Marketing directors and marketing managers from 17 UK Business schools in South-eastern England and Scotland. The data were thematically analysed to identify patterns across the data set.

Findings provide empirical evidence to a best-fit employer branding model as strategic tool for managing talent outcomes in higher education institutions. This is a significant contribution to knowledge based on this research. Findings also suggest employer branding as strategic talent management intervention in UK higher education institutions and further highlights key attributes (employer brand optimizers) that accentuate influence of employer branding on talent attraction and talent retention. The study also suggests a significant relationship and influence of employer brand stakeholders on talent attraction and talent retention. In doing so, this study provides stakeholders with insight into the effectiveness of employer branding as a strategic tool for talent attraction and retention in a competitive global knowledge-intensive business environment like HEIs. Findings from study further highlights the importance of multi-dimensional approach to the employer brand process underscoring the dynamic nature of talent management delivery. In addressing the study from a HEI context, this study adds to the literature on talent management in HEIs by providing evidence on the conceptualization and management of employer branding and talent management.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Competition and scarce supply of human capital on the back of a global competitive economy especially in knowledge intensive sectors for example finance, business services, education, and health (Beaverstock & Hall, 2012; Faulconbridge, Beaverstock, Hall, & Hewitson, 2009, OECD, 2021), suggest that organizations require nuanced strategies to manage their human capital and skilled labour. Competition and scarce supply of human capital in competitive knowledge intensive sectors for example finance, business services, education, and health suggest that organizations require nuanced strategies to manage human capital and highly qualified talents. Government policies and legislations, global economic volatility, technological advancement as well as changes in workforce demographics have contributed to the shift in talent management narratives and employer branding. Consequently, workplace compliance standards through government legislations and regulations especially in post Brexit and post Covid-19 pandemic environment have influenced strategic talent management decisions, from talent attraction to talent retention. Similarly, while quality of talent pool and the ability to attract and retain high quality talent is affected by the state of the economy through labour demand and supply, advancement in technology has shaped global labour landscape influencing human capital supply through design and delivery of labour. Subsequently, shift in workforce demographics, workforce participation, change in employer-employee relationships from relational to transactional have become notable characteristic of the external environment.

Within higher education (HE), heightened mobility of knowledge workers and the prospect of an uncertain political structure in the UK, makes the already precarious environment even more worrisome and calls for a strategic intervention to labour market challenges. This research responds to this challenge by investigating the relationship between employer branding and talent management within organizations.

Similarly, increasing global competition in higher education offering and surging demand for knowledge intensive human capital exacerbated by shortfall in supply for highly talented academics presents an opportunity for an in-depth study and empirical review of higher education branding and its impact on talent management outcomes.

Applying qualitative research method, this study undertook seventy-five (75) semi-structured interviews across selected business schools in the UK to answer the set of research questions and to investigate how employer branding influences talent management outcomes in the UK higher education institutions (HEIs) The empirical data from 75 semi-structured interviews consisted of

heads of business schools, Academic staff of UK business schools represented across professors, senior lecturers, and PhD students. Respondents also included senior professional staff of universities with key knowledge of the subject of investigation including HR Directors, HR Business partners, Marketing and Communication Directors and marketing managers.

Using a purposive sampling method, the study interviewed heads of business schools (HoS), deputy HoS and senior management. Interviews included academic staff and senior HR practitioners, with in-depth knowledge of university branding, staff recruitment and employee well-being and competences. The study Proposes thirteen employer value propositions observed to be significant to talent attraction and retention in higher education institutions.

Following a thematic analysis of the study, four main themes emerged with corresponding key dimensions: (1) Employer brand antecedents (EBA)- comprising of brand attributes and employer brand concepts; (2) brand process (EBP)- its key dimension include brand building, brand communication, brand alignment, and brand delivery. (3) Employer brand stakeholders (EBS)- comprising of the organization; current employees, potential employees, and former employees. (4) Employer brand relationship (EBR)- Key dimension on talent attraction and talent retention. Findings from the empirical study suggest employer branding as an implicit intervention tool in UK higher education institutions despite clear evidence of its impact on talent management outcomes especially in talent attraction and talent retention. It further highlights key attributes (employer value propositions) that accentuate the influence of employer branding on talent attraction and talent retention. The study suggests a significant relationship between employer brand stakeholders and talent management outcomes.

This study makes significant empirical contribution to talent management literature by proposing a best-fit employer brand model. In doing so, it addresses key outcomes of talent management. Its unique application of cross-disciplinary theoretical approach to research by applying marketing theory to human resource management is a theoretical contribution. Practical contribution of the study will enable heads of business schools, human resource and talent management practitioners address talent attraction and retention issues strategically by focusing on the high influence value propositions emerging from this study.

1.2. Objective of Research

This research sets out to investigate the impact of employer branding processes on employer brand outcomes within organizations. The research has identified higher education institutions as the context for empirical research. Two factors have influenced this decision. First, there is a growing and expanding market for knowledge intensive sectors globally and the UK plays a significant role

in this sector (Beaverstock & Hall, 2018). More specifically, higher education market has witnessed increasing expansion over the last two decades and the UK is a global player within this sector therefore, market change externalities including global labour demand has an impact on the UK higher education market.

Despite the growing interest in employer branding both by practitioners and in academia, the operational mechanism that perpetuates and delivers employer brands have received insignificant attention resulting in the lack of empirical literature to engage in this critical aspect of the subject area. Previous research has focused on the importance of human capital development and human capital management to meet organizational bottom line however, these two important research areas continue to develop in silo, focusing on the antecedents and effects of employer branding on talent management. Employer-branding process however has received very little attention-particularly, the operation of mechanisms at the firm and individual levels that shape and advance the employer brand (Moroko & Uncle, 2009).

As an overarching concept, employer-branding process involves the functioning mechanisms on which the employer brand operates-starting from firm level mechanism that shape and define the brand to factors that underpin its continuous implementation. It further considers the interactions at the individual level that is- between existing and potential employees, taking into consideration, the process of brand association, brand meaning as well as brand loyalty for the employer brand (Moroko & Uncles, 2009). This therefore prompts the need for the following objectives of the study.

1. The need to establish what constitutes the employer branding process through a broader review of the literature and empirical studies. By doing so, it will allow a mix of concepts ranging from corporate branding, human resource, and organizational behaviour literature as well industry journals to deconstruct the relationship between employers, employees, and prospective employees.
2. Even though practitioners and academics agree that employer branding is important to talent attraction and retention (Alshathry & Clarke, 2017; Hadi & Ahmed, 2018; Matongolo et al, 2018; Wallace et al, 2014; Cascio, 2010), there is a growing consensus that employer branding is a desirable component of the talent management strategy of the organization (Collings, 2014; Scullion & Vaiman, 2015; Eghbal et al, 2017; Kravariti et al, 2021). Despite this position, perceptions of successful employer brands have not been empirically examined neither has much attention been given to the employer brand process defined as the distinctive events, sequences and operative mechanism that bring the employer brand to life (Moroko & Uncles 2005).

3. As a result, it is difficult to determine a best-fit model based on an empirically tested brand process. These are the gaps within the employer branding literature.

Even though the literature on employer branding seem to suggest a positive outcome of employer brand effect on the organization, questions exist regarding the functional sequences that produce these outcomes and the extent to which these functional sequences or processes deliver successful brand outcomes. Also, the question of unintended consequences that may have been overlooked during the employer branding process remains unexplored in the literature. This study, therefore, will examine the process in which industry experts apply to develop and deliver their employer brand as a starting point to bridge the gap in knowledge and add to the body of theory in this area by understanding factors that constitute the functional developmental factors of employer brand models.

To proceed with the research therefore and meet the research objectives, the study poses three fundamental research questions to understand the underlying phenomenon of employer branding, based on the theoretical foundations identified from the literature review.

RQ1. How do higher education institutions brand themselves?

RQ2. What are the events, sequences and functional mechanisms that constitute the employer brand process?

RQ3. Considering the varied processes of employer branding, is there a best fit model to impact effective talent management outcomes?

1.3. Aim of Research

The study aims to contribute empirical knowledge by understudying four business schools in the UK. It seeks to propose a best fit model of employer branding for organizations by providing empirical evidence to back up the concept of employer branding as a growing phenomenon within human resource management literature. To achieve this objective, the researcher acknowledges philosophical debates that underpin management and business research and influences the researcher's worldview in terms of the research design for example, the method of data collection and analysis. The study will address the philosophical debates in business and management research as well as the underlying assumptions on which the philosophy builds upon.

1.4. Employer Branding in Context

Research provides evidence of significant return on investment when a brand is clearly articulated (Aaker, 2003; Keller, 1993; Keller, 2012; Kottler & Keller, 2009) such as higher margins and returns, higher perceived quality, consistency and reliability, resilience to competition, stronger customer loyalty and higher recognition and awareness (Kottler & Keller, 2009). Extant literature has focused on the attractiveness of organizations in relation to its human capital (Lievens, 2007; Davies, 2008; Moroko & Uncles, 2009; Wilden et al, 2010). As a result, employer branding and its impact on talent management, especially in talent attraction and retention, has received favourable attention within human resource management (HRM) debates (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004 Biswar & Suar 2016). As a concept, employer branding applies the principles marketing to HRM (Cable & Turban, 2001) by assuming the value of human capital to firms and based also on the assumption that through wilful investment in human capital, firms can gain competitive advantage and subsequently, enhanced performance (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010). Given the demand for highly talented human capital (Beechler & Woodward, 2006), employer branding represents a targeted, long term strategy to manage the awareness of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm (Sullivan, 2004). Ambler & Barrow, (1996, pg.187) defined employer branding as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company”. It is the effort of an organization to distinguish itself among the rest within the labour market by building a certain image based on differentiation as a great place to work (Verma, 2021; Panczuk & Point, 2011, Kima et al, 2011)

Indeed, firms are increasingly recognising the importance of talent as asset for organizational success (Tlaiss et al, 2017) given increased competition, knowledge mobility and current regulatory framework demand, and that attracting and retaining human capital is among the competitive enablers of organizational performance (Minchington, 2010, Prinshoo 2008) and require nuanced ways to attract and retain talented employees (Minchington, 2006). Within higher education institutions, talent retention is considered crucial for reaping full return on investment in human capital (Tlaiss et al, 2010) and employer branding, a critical factor for academic staff retention (Cheese et al, 2007; Crous 2007) consequently, firms and indeed universities have developed employer branding as a strategy to retain talented employees (CIPD, 2018; Martin 2005).

Over the last decade, interest have grown in talent management especially within the key functions of talent attraction and retention among business leaders (Guthridges et al, Beecher & Woodward 2006; Edward 2010) while talent shortage (Beecher & Woodward 2009), intensified competition and global mobility (Delloite, 2021) have been identified as key drivers for the growing interest.

The ability to manage these challenges have also been identified as critical in determining the success of the organization (Schuler et al, 2011; Thunnissen et al, 2013) however, the challenge of talent attraction and retention are not restricted to the corporate world alone. Well-documented research exists on the war for talent (Beecher & Woodward, 2006) and the threat of human capital flight in HEI (Weale, 2017) and continues to grow (Edward & Sulto, 2010; Van den Brick et al, 2013). For example, Van den Brick et al (2013) and Metcaly (2015) acknowledged the challenge of talent attraction and retention as key issue for human resource management in HEIs. Furthermore, the recently introduced funding and regulatory frameworks (Clarke, 2011; Ref2020, 2015) with its emphasis on quality suggests that HEs in the UK face competition not, only in attracting students and large research funding but more significantly, the competition of attracting highly qualified and talented academic staff. This underscores the importance of employer branding as a composite framework for HEI talent management especially in the retention of talents. However, despite the growing importance and the increased need, employer branding in UK HEIs has garnered scanty investigation (Frandsen et al, 2018). This will be the focus of this research. Subsequently, the question of what employer brand strategies and approaches exist and how they influence talent retention within HEI context, and its practice needs urgent attention. This is a gap for further research. Through its empirical project, this study will attempt to answer the call for the study of employer branding process in organizations operating in other contexts such as public and non-profit sectors (Marokko & Uncles, 2005; Thunnissen et al, 2013).

This study therefore extends the body of knowledge by researching the process that gives rise to the effects of employer branding. In doing so, it proposes a best-fit model of employer brand strategy for effective talent management outcomes within higher education institutions and by extension within organizations. The context of research is higher education institutions in the UK. The study will contribute empirical knowledge by understudying a selection of business schools in the UK. It will also provide empirical evidence to the concept of employer branding as a growing phenomenon in human resource management.

1.5. Research Gap

Despite the growing interest in employer branding both by practitioners and in academia, the operational mechanism that perpetuates and delivers the employer brand has received insignificant attention and there is dearth of empirical literature to engage in this critical aspect of the subject area. Employer brand process defined as the operating mechanism at the firm and employee level that shape and perpetuates the employer brand (Moroko & Uncles, 2005 pg. 52). It is an overarching concept which involves the events, sequences and functional mechanisms geared to

delivering the functional package of economic and psychological benefits provided by the organization and identified by the employees (Ambler & Barrow, Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2016). This presents a significant gap in the literature, one that this study intends to fill. Within the UK, despite much research that supports the relationship between employer branding and talent retention especially in corporate organizations (Biswar & Suar, 2016; Thunnissen et al, 2013), there have been little attempts undertaken to identify a clear relationship and study employer branding in other non-profit public sector for example, within the higher education institution. This study therefore seeks to extend knowledge and contribute to theory by investigating how employer brand process affects the employer brand and thus attempt to propose a best-fit employer brand model for higher education institutions.

1.6. Theoretical Contributions

Competition and scarce supply of human capital on the back of a global competitive economy especially in knowledge intensive sectors for example finance, business services, education and health organizations require nuanced strategies to manage their human capital and skilled labour (Beaverstock & Hall, 2012; Faulconbridge, Beaverstock, Hall, & Hewitson, 2009, OECD, 2021). At the same time, the continuous increase in global labour competition, uncertainties, and ease of movement among skilled talents and professionals exacerbate the challenge to attract and retain highly qualified talents (Collings, Scullion, & Caligiuri, 2018). This therefore calls for an emergent strategy to enable organizations gain competitive advantage in a fast-changing global labour market. Labour movements and trends have further necessitated the challenge for strategic intervention for example, the CIPD Labour Market Outlook (2019) report indicates a rising demand for labour across industries. At the same time, buoyant labour demand has resulted in recruitment and retention challenges for employers for example, forty-one percent of employers finding it difficult to fill vacancies and a further thirty-three percent of employers saying it has become harder to retain staff (LMO, 2019). Within higher education (HE), the heightened mobility of knowledge workers and the prospect of an uncertain political structure in the UK, makes the already precarious environment even more worrisome and calls for a strategic intervention to the labour market challenges. It has created the need for strategic talent management however with a focus on the unique qualities of organizations that stands them out among the rest in the competitive labour market through the adoption of employer branding strategies.

Talent management (Collings, Scullion, & Caligiuri, 2018; Collings, Mellahi & Cascio, 2018; Mamman et al, 2021) and employer branding (Theurer, Tumasjan, Welp, & Lievens, 2018; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016, Hoppe 2018) has witnessed growing interest in research over the last

two decades. More importantly, research have focused on the importance of human capital development and human capital management to meet organizational bottom line however, these two important research areas continue to develop in silo, largely focusing on the antecedents and effects of employer branding on talent management. Employer-branding process in this regard, has received very little attention-particularly, the operation of mechanisms at the firm and individual levels that shape and advance the employer brand (Marokko &Uncle, 2005). As an overarching concept, employer-branding process involves the functioning mechanisms on which the employer brand operates-starting from firm level mechanism that shape and define the brand to factors that underpin its continuous implementation. It further considers the interactions at the individual level between existing and potential employees, taking into consideration, the process of brand association, brand meaning as well as brand loyalty for the employer brand (Marokko & Uncles, 2005). There is therefore a need to establish what constitutes the employer branding process through a broader review of the literature and empirical studies. This demands a mixture of concepts ranging from corporate branding, human resource, and organizational behaviour literature as well industry journals to deconstruct the relationship between employers, employees, and prospective employees. Furthermore, the study identifies key brand values that are unique to the context of study in higher education institutions and how they affect talents by observing these values on talent attraction and talent retention.

The inconclusive definitions of talent management as well as the lack of empirical research in employer branding creates a gap for theoretical development within the literature on talent management and human resources. This study will therefore contribute theory to knowledge by advancing the literature on employer branding process. It will do so by building on the research agenda proposed by Moroko & Uncles (2008) to identify key relationships between employer brand process and talent management outcomes. The study aims to generate an employer-brand process theory that connects the outcome of talent management on three different perspectives namely- the employer, the employee, and the prospective employee. It will further extend the literature by applying a multi-disciplinary research approach to anchor the conceptual development of employer branding concept within the HRM literature. By investigating the impact of employer branding on talent outcomes, the study will contribute theory to the fragmented discourse on talent and talent management outcomes (Scullion & Mellahi, 2016).

1.7. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis adopts a unified organizational structure (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015) organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the core problem of the research and outlines key definition,

primary objectives aims and key research questions of the study. In doing so, it sets the scene and clearly outlines pointers towards the conclusion of the thesis. It also introduces the context of the empirical research and justification for the choice of this context

In chapter two, the thesis identifies the body of knowledge relevant to the study as developed during previous research. This was achieved through a systematic literature review. The literature review capture key theories upon which the study builds its theoretical underpinnings. The theories identified for this study include, brand equity theory (Aaker, 1990), psychological contract (Rossenaeu, 2006) and resource-based view (Barney, 1991) as well as human capital theory (Becker, 1964). By exploring these theories, key underlying objectives are drawn and applied in relation to the study. The chapter will introduce the scope of the thesis as an interdisciplinary application of marketing and human resource literature to draw insights into the employer branding process. This study will consider talent management within higher education institutions in the UK. In doing so, it aims to provide empirical and theoretical contribution to the literature on employer branding and talent management.

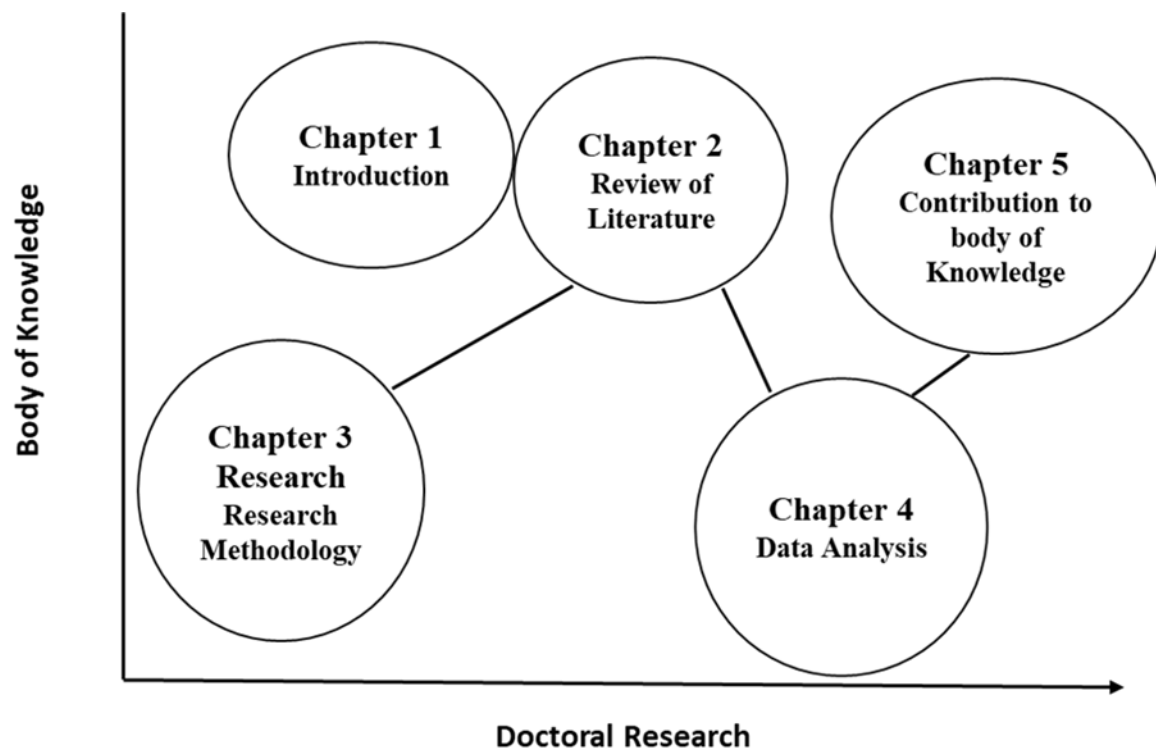
Chapter three will discuss the research methodology- The chapter introduces and identifies the philosophical paradigm of the research as an approach to the subject of enquiry. It will describe the methods used in this research to collect data to address the study research questions. Given the nature of the research question and the study objective; the study will apply primarily an Interpretivist approach to address the questions posed by the research. In doing so, semi-structured interviews will be used to generate primary data for the study. Using this approach, the study will identify respondents from selected UK Business schools. The reason for business schools as the identified empirical context is the researcher's network, the ease of access to primary data as well as its competitive approach to higher education market challenges. Researcher will transcribe interview responses.

Chapter five will report findings from the research's qualitative data collection. Analysis will apply NVIVO software in identifying overarching conceptualizations and themes. It will apply a thematic analytical approach to conceptualize the data from the coding process. (Braun et al. 2016). Findings will contribute to theory generation and empirical relevance. In doing so, it will outline the major themes and concepts derived from the qualitative data.

Finally, chapter six will discuss how findings from the empirical research relate to the broader literature and key research questions. It will also outline the possible outcome of the research and their impact on the research findings. It will present conclusions about the research problem based on the findings from chapter 4. It will also situate them within the body of knowledge as outlined

previously in chapter 2. The chapter will also discuss theoretical implication for research as well as the contributions to policy and practice both for public and private organizations. It will also outline future opportunities for research and proffer further directions to improve and contribute knowledge to human resource management literature.

Figure 1: Thesis Structural Approach



Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this section, the study presents summary of research done within extant literature. This is important in understanding the scope of knowledge and consequently strengthening debates within the literature and by identifying gaps in the literature. The section will proceed to summarise key definitions of employer branding and suggest a working definition of employer branding. It will also provide a summary of debates within extant literature by identifying key theoretical underpinning used in previous studies and finally it will identify the gap in literature and proffer how to fill the gaps.

2.2 Employer Branding

The employer-branding concept originates from the field of marketing and its application to human resources occurred during the last two decades (Ambler & Barrows, 2019). (Backhaus 2016) As a result, to date, a fragmented consensus of the definitions of employer branding reflects the evolutionary process of the concepts (Backhaus 2016) and the notion that it is still finding its feet within mainstream human resource literature.

Extant literature in human resource and organizational studies have focused on the attractiveness of organizations in relation to its human capital (Lievens, 2007; Davies, 2008; Moroko & Uncles, 2009; Wilden et al, 2010). Research over the last two decades similarly provide evidence of significant return on investment when a brand is clearly articulated (Aaker, 2003) such as higher margins and returns (Keller, 1993) higher perceived quality (Keller, 2012), consistency and reliability (Kottler & Keller, 2009), resilience to competition, stronger customer loyalty (Aaker, 2003; Keller, 2012) and higher recognition and awareness (Kottler & Keller, 2009). As a result, employer branding and its impact on talent management, especially in talent attraction and retention, has received favourable attention within human resource management (HRM) debates (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2019; Biswar & Suar 2016).

As a concept, employer branding applies the principal marketing to HRM (Cable & Turban, 2001) by assuming the value of human capital to firms and based also on the assumption that through wilful investment in human capital, firms can gain competitive advantage and subsequently, enhanced performance (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2016; Edwards, 2010). Given the demand for highly talented human capital (Beechler & Woodward, 2006), employer branding positions itself as a targeted, long term strategy to manage the awareness of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm (Sullivan, 2004). Ambler & Barrow, (1996,

pg.187) defined employer branding as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company”. It is the effort of an organization to distinguish itself among the rest within the labour market (Bareket-Bojmel, Shuv-Ami 2019) by building a certain image based on differentiation as a great place to work (Jenner & Taylor, 2009; Ewing et al, 2002)

In a wider context, global competition, and the scarce supply of human capital especially in knowledge intensive sectors for example finance, business services, education, and health (Beaverstock & Hall, 2012; Faulconbridge, Beaverstock, Hall, & Hewitson, 2009, OECD, 2006), require nuanced strategies to manage organizations’ human capital and skilled labour. At the same time, the continuous increase in global labour competition, uncertainties, and ease of movement amongst skilled talent and professionals exacerbate the challenge to attract and retain highly qualified talents (Collings, Scullion, & Caligiuri, 2018). While firms increasingly recognise the importance of talent as asset for organizational success (Tliss et al, 2017), the increased competition, knowledge mobility and current regulatory framework demand serves as a reminder that attracting and retaining human capital is among the competitive enablers of organizational performance (Minchington, 2010, Prinshoo 2008) and a necessity for organizational competitive advantage.

Labour movements and talent management trends have further strengthened the challenge for a strategic intervention into organizational reputation and image management for example, the CIPD Labour Market Outlook (2019) report indicates a rising demand for labour across industries. At the same time, buoyant labour demand has resulted in recruitment and retention challenges for employers- forty-one percent of employers finding it difficult to fill vacancies and a further thirty-three percent of employers saying it has become harder to retain staff (LMO, 2019).

Talent management (Collings, Scullion, & Caligiuri, 2018; Collings, Mellahi & Cascio, 2018; Lewis, & Heckman, 2006) and employer branding (Theurer, Tumasjan, Welp, & Lievens, 2018; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016) have gained strategic importance in addressing human capital challenges and for their ability to provide organisational leverage through approaches on cost, attrition, and brand loyalty. Research over the last two decades have focused on the importance of human capital development and human capital management to meet organizational bottom line however, these two important research areas continue to develop in silo, largely focusing on the antecedents and effects of employer branding on talent management. Employer-branding process in this regard, has received very little attention-particularly, the operation of mechanisms at the firm and individual levels that shape and advance the employer brand (Marokko & Uncle, 2005). As an overarching concept, employer-branding process involves the functioning mechanisms on which

the employer brand operates-starting from firm level mechanism that shape and define the brand to factors that underpin its continuous implementation. It further considers the interactions at the individual level that is- between existing and potential employees, taking into consideration, the process of brand association, brand meaning as well as brand loyalty for the employer brand (Marokko & Uncles, 2005). Consequently, the need to establish what constitutes the employer branding process through a broader review of the literature and empirical studies is imperative. It requires a mix of concepts ranging from corporate branding, human resource, and organizational behaviour literature as well industry journals to deconstruct the relationship between employers, employees, and prospective employees.

The intersection between employer branding and talent management is based on two assumptions: firstly, the role of employer branding in promoting organisational attractiveness and loyalty (Backhaus, 2004; Bonaiuto, 2013). Secondly, the management of employee talents to increase retention (Martin et al, 2011; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Bode, Singh & Ahmed, 2018). To address these issues within the literature, require a systematic review of employer brand and talent management literatures.

A systematic review literature synthesizes large amount of information and identifies key elements and main characteristics of the given topic. In this type of review, there is a consistent and logical investigation comprising a detailed research of potentially relevant articles as well as the adoption of reproducible selection criteria (Transfield et al, 2003, Adams et al, 2017). Subsequently, a systematic review facilitates the collection, evaluation, and synthesis of literature from multiple search results (Cooke et al, 1997) to identify research gaps (Kitchenham, 2004).

The structure of the study is as follows. Section 2 describes the review methodology and the database used for the literature search. It also describes the process of analysis. Section 3 analysis the result and offers a conceptual framework based on the literature review on employer branding. Section 4 presents an overview and synthesis of employer branding and talent management research. The section concludes by proffering further studies and theoretical insights.

2.3 Literature Review Methodology

This section explains the methods used in selecting and reviewing the papers examined in this study. The methodology is like other recent reviews in talent management and employer branding literature and follows Theurer et al, (2018) methodology. It builds on a data set used in prior reviews beginning with Backhaus and Tikoo, (2004) and further on Theurer et al, (2018). This also includes articles discovered in this review, the data set now includes employer branding studies from the relevant literature for the 22-year period from 1996 to the present review.

This also includes articles discovered in this review; the data set now includes employer-branding studies from the relevant literature from 1996 to the present review. Literature started by conducting a google scholar scan regarding research subject environment. The intention was to capture key words used for previous research within employer brand. The result of the scan yielded key words: *employer branding, employer attraction; employee reputation, talent retention, employee retention organizational reputation etc.* With the outcome of this search, the identified key words used Scopus and Business Source Ultimate databases to find relevant articles for the literature analysis.

Classification of all new articles were according to Theurer et al's (2018) original framework. This was to ensure consistency in the review as well as comparability of the results. Articles were first identified using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, followed by an in-depth structural and content-based analysis of the literature and it was then integrated and clustered into categories to synthesize the research (Armstrong et al, Turner et al, 2013 in Theurer et al, 2018) They were first coded then checked for consistency before a final classification. Academic impact of the articles from Google Scholar citations will be included to measure the impact of the articles and provide insight into the development of the literature. To address the thematic of the review, the conceptualizations rooted in Theurer et al's (2018), Keller (1993) and Gardner et al, (2011) conceptualization was compared to Backhaus and Tikoo's (2016) employer brand conceptualization. The intention of this comparison was to provide in-depth insight into the thematic and to identify key issues missed but would be important in the literature review. The result of the comparative process showed similar results with a slight difference in Backhaus and Tikoo (2016) emphasis on theories of employer branding as opposed to Gardner et al (2011), and Keller (1993) emphasis on models and concepts. To the research, it was necessary to include this as a separate category.

The steps taken to assemble the data set before presenting the results and discussions are outlined in the following. In identifying the journals for this review, the study built on the journals examined in Theurer et al, (2018). This was to ensure comparability of results and more so because, these journals publish interdisciplinary research including employer branding and are also generally available through research databases. As at the time of review, this was the latest research database. To meet the purpose of the study, additional journals were identified to cater for HEI literature. Thus, this review incorporates two areas of-Journal of brand management and journals of human resource management. Theurer et al, conducted an exhaustive employer brand literature review by identifying relevant literature using an inclusion and exclusion criteria followed by a structural and content-based analysis of the literature and then integrating the articles and clustering then into categories for in-depth research synthesis (Theurer et al, 2018).

In selecting the articles for review, this study builds on the data set developed by Theurer et al, (2018) by subsequently improving and expanding upon it to include employer branding in higher education institutions (HEI). In doing so, the data set has been updated to include articles published from 2015 to present and articles published to include HEI employer branding. In keeping to the employer branding theme, articles with an employer branding or brand equity research focus were included. The final tally includes 253 articles for analysis and therefore represent an up-to-date review on employer branding research. All new articles added to data set were classified according to predetermined search strategy. This was to ensure consistency in the review as well as comparability of the results. Articles were first identified using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, followed by an in-depth structural and content-based analysis of the literature and it was then integrated and clustered into categories to synthesize the research (Armstrong et al, Turner et al, 2013 in Theurer et al, 2018) They were first coded then checked for consistency before a final classification. Academic impact of the articles from Google Scholar citations will be included to measure the impact of the articles and provide insight into the development of the literature. To address the thematic of the review, the conceptualizations rooted in Theurer et al's Keller (1993) and Gardner et al, (2011) conceptualization was compared to Backhaus and Tikoo's (2016) employer brand conceptualization. The intention of this comparison was to provide in-depth insight into the thematic and to identify key issues that may have been missed but would be important in the literature review. The result of the comparative process showed similar results with a slight difference in Backhaus and Tikoo (2016) emphasis on theories of employer branding as opposed to Gardner et al (2011), and Keller (1993) emphasis on models and concepts. To the research, it was deemed necessary to include this as a separate category.

Table 1: Table of Literature Search Result

Search No	Search Words	Google Scholar	Scopus
s1	Employer brand*	250	285
s2	Employer image	150	175
s3	Talent management	180	215
s5	s1 OR s2 OR s3	120	150
s6	Employer branding and higher education	76	89
s7	Brand architecture	100	120
s8	S6 OR s7	75	88
s9	s5 AND s8	60	73
Database search limits			
By date>20 years		84	100
By peer-reviewed/ academic journal type		75	89
By Language		74	80

Table 2 is a sample of literature review journals by ABS ranking. It also a potential target for the study research publication and communication.

Table 2: Journals by ABS Ranking

Category	Representative Journal Samples	ABS Rankings
Human Resources	International Journal of Human Resources; Journal of Industrial Relations; Industrial and Commercial Training; Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources; Journal of Strategic HR; HR Management Journal; Human Resource Management;	(**)(***)(****)
Marketing	Journal of Brand Management; Journal of Marketing Management;	(***)(****)
Business Management/Strategy	European Management Journal; Journal of Management Communication; European Journal of Management; Global Business and Management Review; Journal of Business Management; Thunderbird International Business Review	(**)(***)(****)

After the search was completed using exclusion criteria as detailed in Table 1, selected literature abstracts were read to ascertain applicability to the research. Appropriate literature was systematically selected and reviewed through a defined process. The process used for the literature review process included dividing work into authors, theoretical lens, data sources and key findings. Table 3 below provides excerpts from wider systematic literature for this study.

2.4 Conceptualizing Employer Branding

Global changes within labour markets as well as growing shortage of talents have increased organizations need for strategies of talent attraction and retention is becoming even more on demand (Martindale, 2010). A systematic literature review may reveal the impact of employer branding on organizations as well as its place within HR literature as a strategic tool and a theoretical formulation (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Theurer et al, 2018). Arguably, the shortage of talents and the competitive nature of the employment landscape demands a paradigm shift in strategy to address talent management. More so, the growing mobility in labour and the increasing transactional nature of psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989) confirms that a relational psychological contract has outlived itself as the natural explanation of employer/employee relationship. Similarly, the alternative options that are available for employees within an increasing competitive labour market cannot be easily ignored (Lievens & Lighthouse, 2003). Thus, there is a need to explore factors that can influence employees to stay in organization and to understand the trajectory of development within the construct of employer branding (Edwards, 2010).

Several literatures have discussed employer branding from a multidisciplinary perspective (For e.g., Miles & Mangold, 2004; Moroko & Uncles, 2005; Edwards, 2010). Noticeably, HRM academics have been reluctant in leading the discussion however, there is a consensus that much progress is being made in drawing from diverse literature including marketing, organisational psychology and HRM academics, to engage views on the subject area. Accordingly, Backhaus and Tikoo, (2004) amongst other leading authors (Miles and Mangold, 2004) have applied this multidisciplinary approach in discussing the concept of employer branding.

Findings from a succinct review of the employer branding literature reveals the heterogeneous theoretical approach to employer branding leading to a dispersed understanding of conceptual interpretation for example the subordinate theories linked to the concept limits its ability to provide a coherent explanation of the construct. (Edwards, 2010; Berthon et al, 2005; Davies, 2008; Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

Brand equity emerged as the dominant theory within employer branding discourse while attributive subordinate theories are linked either directly to brand equity or indirectly linked as complementary theories (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al, 2018). The literature further categorizes employer branding concepts and models by highlighting application areas and target groups including a highly competitive job market (Collins & Stevens, 2002); high value-added knowledge intensive business (Ewing, 2002); functionality framework for career management programmes (Avery & McKay, 2006; Martin & Groen-In't-Would, 2011) and prime approach for potential employees (Recruitment) and current employees (Retention) (Martindale, 2010). Table 3 presents a summary

of the study thematic as well their corresponding literature. Employer brand antecedents relates to multi-stakeholders of the brand including current and potential talents (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016; Veloutsom & Guzman, 2017; Hoppe, 2018) Research in employer branding indicates that consistency in the fulfilment of the employer brand attributes improves the psychological contract of current employees and consequently reciprocates employee engagement by contributing to the organization. The positive engagement of the employee leads to talent retention expressed by the talent/s willingness to the commit to the organization (Kiazad et al, 2019; Hoppe, 2018) See also (Zhang, Stewart 2017, Suseno, Pinnington 2017, Tanwar, Prasad 2016)

Employer value proposition refer to the value and principles that make up the image and identity of the organization (CIPD, 2020). They represent the unique value-added variable on which organizations, competitive advantages are maximised. (Dabirian, ete al, 2019). According to Ambler and Barrow, (1996), employer brand equity refers to the tangible and intangible assets that are identified by the employer and are derived through aa combination of good human resources and effective marketing of the inherent assets of the employer brand. These attributes are reflected in the attitudes and behaviours of the employees as fundamental bran values (Tavassoli et al, 2014) The strategic alignment of these values through a positive behaviour of the employee is said to have a positive effect on the organization in the form of employee engagement and talent retention (Hoppe, 2018). A strong employer brand articulation is able to provide employee brand champions 9Hoppe, 2018; King & Grace, 2010; Loehndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014) According to the literature, the interactive and committed behaviour of the employee response to the consistency of the employer through their employer value proposition ensures loyalty and commitment to the organization as the well as induced intention to stay (Theurer et al,, 2018; Kiazad et al, 2019; Atrizja et al, 2020; Mensah, 2019. The level of organization commitment and loyalty allows such talents become brand champions (King et al, 2011). The literature addresses key elements that are needed to deliver effective employer rand equity. First, the argue that the expectation of the potential employee and current employee should be consistent with the perceived expectation of the current employee which will affect the overall psychological contract (Dinen et al, 2019; Rosseau, 2019). This will result in the intentional building of the employer brand to equity to attract high value potential talents (Barros-Arrieta 7 Garcia-Cali, 2020). More recently, Iglesias & Ind, 2020 suggest that it is the ability to fulfil brand promise which will aid in the attraction and retention of high value talents. Research further suggests that high value talents who have positive perception of the brand promise can influence the interaction of the brand-on-brand stakeholders. They are referred to as brand influencers (Jan and Yi, 2020).

Deepa & Baral, (2020) explored the mediating role of psychological contract impact on the commitment of current employees. The study suggested that the fulfilment of a brand promise reflects the kind of employer value proposition of the organization and can drive a consistent employer brand equity. The study further suggest that the benefit of a positive psychological contract will result in deeper commitment to the organization by current employees and a projection of attraction to potential employees (Jan & Yi, 2020) Brand experience viewed also as the process of brand interaction where the element of the brand affects potential brand stakeholders is well researched (Chen & Lin, 2018, Moreira et al, 2017) They provide the platform on which brand equity is built. Brand equity refers to consumers perceived worth of the brand based on the valuation of the product or service (Yaw. et al, 2000)

It is the utility value that a customer bestows on the brand compared to competing brands. Jeon & Yoo, (2021) identify the influence brand experience on perceived value of brand and propose that brand awareness increases brand loyalty. It is also understood that positive attraction to the brand increases customer engagement with the brand. Verma (2021) suggests that a brand engagement is enhanced where there is a positive attraction to brand. The study proposes a model integrating the element of brand attraction to influence brand equity and attraction to the brand.

2.5 Employer Branding

Several literatures (Rampl, Opitz, Welpé & Kenny, 2016; Gupta & Mohan, 2019; Moroko & Uncles, 2005) have discussed employer branding from a multidisciplinary perspective. Although HR academics have been reluctant in leading the discussion; however, there have been significant progress in attempting to draw the understanding of the concept from diverse literature including organisational psychology and HR academics to provide engaging and multi-disciplinary views on the subject area (Edwards, 2009, Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Accordingly, Backhaus and Tikoo, (2004) amongst other leading authors (Miles and Mangold, 2004; Biswar 2016) have applied this multidisciplinary approach in discussing the concept of employer branding. This has informed the variant definitions of employer branding. Broadly, Kotler, (2001) defines brand as “ a seller’s promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits and services consistent to the buyer. Employer brand therefore is a term that suggests the distinctive qualities of the employer and what differentiates it from its competitors. According to Conference Board (2001), the employer’s branding “establishes the identity of the firm as an employer. It also encompasses the firm’s value system, policies and behaviour toward the objective of attracting, motivating and retaining the firm’s current and potential employees”. Their definition suggests a poignant strategy aimed at explicitly promoting the distinctive qualities that differentiates a firm from other competitors and

makes it more desirable for employment. Drawing from that context, Ambler and Barrow, (1996) summarises employer branding as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company” and Ruch, (2002) opine it is the “company’s image as seen through the eyes of its associates and potential hires. Accordingly, employer branding has an intimate link to the employment experience of what it is like to work at a company and involves tangibles such as rewards and compensation and intangibles such as company culture and values.

More recently, the CIPD, (2016) define employer branding as “a set of attributes and qualities, often intangible that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture”. It suggests a relationship between an organisation’s value, the people strategy of the organisation and the human resource (HR) policies that are in place to deliver the brand. Consequently, the combination of the organisation’s value, people strategy and HR policies can determine a strong employer brand, reinforced by the company brand (CIPD, 2010). The inference from these definitions suggests that either explicitly or implicitly, all organizations have an employer brand. Essentially, when organizations distinguish themselves from their competitors in the labour market, in how they retain attract and retain potential employees, that process is termed employer branding. In doing so, employers are poised to compete within the labour market for best talents and improve their credibility to be employers of choice. Literature suggests that a strong employer brand is a value to the employer by helping it connect to sets of values espoused by the organization executed through a strategic talent management approach (CIPD, 2021).

However, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) earlier argued that employer branding is the “process in which an identifiable and unique identity as an employer is built. Van Dam (2006) further explored this observation, positing that employer branding is “a logical process through which companies reach one main goal; to have a strong appeal on their current and future ideal employees”. Similarly, Martin, Golan, and Griggs, (2011) view this concept as a process by which branding concepts, marketing communications and HR techniques are applied to create an employer brand. According to Martin, Golan, and Griggs (2011) view, employer branding has a generalized recognition for being known among key stakeholders to provide a high-quality employment experience and distinctive organisational identity which employees value, engage with and feel confident and happy to promote to others”. In doing so, the attempt to view employer branding as a process therefore is critical to this study and will receive detailed attention in the research.

In a further opinion, Lloyd, 2002 agreed that employer branding is the sum of a company's effort to communicate to existing to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work". According to Sullivan, (2004), employer branding is "a targeted long-term strategy to manage awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a firm". It is the package of psychological, economic and functional benefits provided by employment and identified with an employer (Thorne, 2004). Extending the study, Silvertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen (2013) argue that employer branding entails the development of an organization's image and reputation as a prospective employer, which affect its ability to retain employees. Accordingly, HR professionals are increasingly embracing the language and techniques of branding in positioning a strategic influence and credibility throughout the employee life cycle. Organizations are also recognising the value of a branding approach to human resource practice (CIPD 2016). Below is a table summarizing key variant definitions of employer branding.

Table 3: Summary-Employer Branding

Authors	Definitions
Ambler& Barrow, 1996	Employer brand consists of the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company
Lloyds, (2002)	Employer branding is the sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work
Conference board, (2001)	It establishes the identity of the firm as an employer. It also encompasses the firm's value system, policies, and behaviour toward the objective of attracting, motivating, and retaining the firm's current and potential employees".
Beaumont & Branding, (2003)	Employer branding involves managing a company's image as seen through the eyes of its associates and potential hires
Sullivan, 2004	Employer branding is a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm
Mangold & Miles, 2004	Employer branding is the process by which employees internalize the desired brand image and are motivated to project the image to customers and other organizational constituents
Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004	Employer branding is the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity
Edwards, 2009	Employer branding refers to activities where principles from marketing, especially within branding, are used for HR initiatives regarding both existing and potential employees
Minchington, 2010	An employer brand is the image of the organization as a 'great place to work'
CIPD, 2017	A set of attributes and qualities, often intangible that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture.

From the table above, three key observations inform discussions in both the conceptual design and contextual framework of the study. First, many of the definitions on employer branding are

seen as strategic and fall short in identifying how the strategy works including the components of the vehicle to deliver the strategy for example Amber & Barrow, (1996), Lloyds, (2002), Corporate Board, (2001), Sullivan (2004). Secondly, the definitions identify key functional agents in employer branding namely- the organization, the employee, and prospective employees (Beaumont & Branding, 2003; Sullivan, 2004; Mangold & Miles, 2004). Thirdly, only a few definitions recognise employer branding as a process or a string of activities that lead to the delivery of the employer brand (Edwards, 2009, Mangold & Miles, 2004; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2006). As a result, the majority of employer branding literature seem to focus on the antecedents and consequences of the concept while ignoring the operational mechanism that delivers the process. How this process interacts with the different stakeholders and the influence it has on the employer brand outcome is under-researched and calls for an empirical investigation. This informs the objective of this study.

2.6 Working Definition

To meet the objective of the research, this study proposes a working definition of employer branding as a guide to the foundational objective of the study and a principal point of reference for the research. In this context therefore, employer branding is *the process by which an organization employs both internal and external resources to create a unique and identifiable employer identity based on its organizational culture to attract potential employees and retain existing ones*. In defining employer branding as a process, the study takes into consideration the changing nature of the subject but also, it suggests a functional structure, which can produce a best-fit model. The research design will consider this definition to achieve the purpose of the study.

2.7 The Tripartite Components of Employer Branding

Employer branding functions within a tripartite focal point (Biswar & Suar, 2014; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010). Main branding literature identifies the focal point of a brand message to be either the customer or other stakeholders; however, there is a remarkable shift within employer branding literature where the brand message primarily targets three focal stakeholders. The organization (Pandita & Ray, 2018; Budhwar et al, 2018; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017), the current employer (Mishra & Kumar, 2019; Ruchika, Prasad & Dabirian et al, 2019; Arasanmi et al, 2019; Lee et al, 2018; Babu et al, 2018;) and equally important- the potential employer (McFarland, Heilmann, Saarenketo & Likkanen, 2013; Gardner, Erhardt & Martin-Rios, 2011; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Love & Singh, 2011; Moroko & Uncles, 2009).

Extant literature on employer branding identifies organizations as a key focus of the employer branding process (Lloyds, Conference Board 2001; Lloyds, 2002; Beaumont & Branding, 2003).

Although, they adopt variance of phrases to refer to the same organization for example while Lloyds, (2002) refer to the employer as company, Beaumont & Branding, (2003) convey the same message however by referring to the employer as a firm (also Conference Board, 2001) however, Minchington 2014 as well as CIPD, 2017 refer to the employer as an organization. These references underpin a major component of the employer branding which this study identifies as part of the tripartite component of employer branding. For this research, the first component of the employer branding process will refer to the organization. In their definitions, Lloyds, (2002), Beaumont & Branding (2003) recognise the organization as an important component of the employer-branding concept. They postulate that employer branding particularly incorporates the organization and its ambition to communicate the unique value propositions that distinguishes it from the rest. Therefore, the organization becomes the focus of the employer branding strategy through the designing of the processes targeted as delivery vehicles for the employer brand.

A growing number of literatures recognise the importance of talent attraction and retention within a complex labour market (Collins 2001; Wallace et al, 2014; Gilani & Cunningham, 2017; Biswas et al, 2017; Rampl & Kennig 2014). In doing so they have addressed some of the underlying reasons for growing interest in talent attraction and retention. For example, Wallace et al, (2014) noted that staff attraction and retention is a prime concern for organizations. Following on, they identified factors that attracts talents to the organization and industries but more importantly, their discourse focuses on the need for organizations to align their brand message with these factors to create a suitable employer brand. Similarly, Gilani, (2017) explored the influence of employer brand on retention. His work focused primarily on the integrational role of employer branding on organizational culture and the interplay of their values on the employee by helping to consolidate the choice to stay or leave an organisation. Conversely, Biswal et al, (2017) explored the concept of employer branding from an attraction perspective to the organization. Accordingly, they postulate that organizations seek to attract potential talents through attractive job offers and by developing, motivating, and satisfying wants and needs (pg. 14) and by doing so, organizations create unique identities that employees can relate to (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, pg. 502). Biswal et al's (2017) explanation opens the essential areas of focus for employer branding namely, the organization, the employee and the future employee or potential employees. Several literatures recognise them as the focal points constituting the essential component of the employer brand strategy (Xie, Richard, Bagozzi, Kjersti & Meland, 2015; Micik & Micudova, 2018). The study will seek to understand the extent to which these elements collaborate with each in the development and implementation of the employer brand strategy. In doing so it will aim at contributing theory

to the employer branding debate by providing empirical support to the argument on the elements that drive employer branding.

2.8 Employer Brand Antecedents

Extant employer branding research have focused on the factors that trigger the employer brand strategy (Edwards, 2010; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2016). Several studies investigate employee attraction as the antecedent of employer branding (Berthon, Ewing & Li Hah, 2005 (Baumstate, 2018; Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019) and show that organizations are interested in talents that fit their organization and therefore, position themselves as preferred choice for work (Berthon, Ewing & Li Hah, 2005). Similarly, talent retention plays a significant role in triggering the employer brand strategy due to the attendant effect and the cost implication of talent acquisition (CIPD,2017). Organizations work hard to develop a culture value and are eager to pass them on to the employees to produce specific performance outcomes. It is therefore important that organizations retain these talents to get return on investment through performance. Employer branding becomes an important strategy for talent retention through the identification of the unique value proposition of the employee and aligning the values to the organizational culture through specific processes for employees to identify with (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Organization also expresses great concern for their reputation as employers. Existing literature suggest varying reasons and outcomes for organizational reputation (Baumstate, 2018). In some instances, good organizational reputation can lead to employees taking lower pay to be associated with an organization (Campos-Garcia & Zuniga Vicente, 2018). Organizational reputation is therefore an important factor for organizations to embark on an employer brand strategy. The diagram below represents the conceptual framework described above.

2.9 Employer Brand Architecture

Brand architecture is defined broadly from a marketing perspective as the strategy that determines the elements of a brand for example brand names, logos, symbols, etc. a firm needs to apply across their existing products and services (Keller, 2014). A brand architecture strategy therefore attempts to define the entire complexity of a brand in its depth and breadth by clarifying the brand and motivating the brand. In doing so, it aims to present a clear picture to the consumer by communicating similarities and differences between individual products or services. It also maximizes the brand image by aiming to transfer brand equity across individual products or services and to enhance loyalty to the brand (Junior, 2018). In the case of human resource management, brand architecture triggers employer brand loyalty by creating the impression to stay

longer with an organization. Perhaps more pertinent to this study, Brexendorf and Keller (2017) define brand architecture as the hierarchical structure that determines a firm's product and service brand. This avenue provides a platform for reciprocal feedback between corporate and image associations and the effect it has on the brand portfolio. It further defines the distinctive characteristics of the brand element and the clear nature of their ordering relative to the corporate brand. Research has shown that organizations can leverage brand effects depending on the brand architecture strategy that it employs, to deliver maximum outcomes (Devlin and McKechnie, 2008). The main brand architecture portfolio adopted by firms to maximize brand equity are the following:

- A. Branded House- This strategy is used by organizations with many products and offerings under one master brand. It is also called a mono-brand portfolio (Junior, 2018). A branded house consists of one single master brand. It also has one name and one visual system. Within the context of higher education, an example of branded house includes- University of Greenwich. Where the university superimposes its brand on the business school. The business school therefore carries the corporate identity of the university, and any brand equity is reciprocal forward and backward feedback from the brand logo, brand name and symbols of the university.
- B. Sub-Brands- Like a master brand, with a parent and the sub-brands are subordinates to their parent brands. Example is the University of Reading- Henley Business School, University of Kent-Kent Business School.
- C. House of Brands- This approach allows organizations to have varied products and offerings but market them with their own identity. A house of brand strategy is focused on the sub-sets of the brand and primary brands get little or no attention. Each sub-set operates as its own company in terms of brand element and messaging. For example, the University of London as a parent brand with sub-brand like The London Business School; Birkbeck, SOAS.
- D. Endorsed Brands- are made up of individual and distinct product brands linked together by an endorsing parent brand. The endorsed brand therefore rides on the wings of the parent brand. The advantage of an endorsed brand is that it does not expose organizations to reputation risk, but it provides positioning alternatives that if the organization's corporate branding were the only considered option.
- E. Hybrid brand strategy- This represents a mixture of the above. It is most common in mergers and acquisitions. It usually represents an ad-hoc rather than a pro-active strategy of brand architecture.

2.10 Employer Brand Process

Depending on the focus and reason for embarking on an employer brand strategy, a key question then becomes- how do organizations go about developing, building, and delivering the employer brand strategy? More importantly, who are the stakeholders involved in the brand process and how do they contribute to the design and delivery of the employer brand. Significantly, what are the events; sequences as well as the operative mechanisms that organizations engage with to bring the employer brand to life?

Over the last 20 years since the introduction of the employer brand concept, employer brand literature has directed little attention to the operative mechanism of employer branding. As a borrowed concept from marketing, the focus of debate has largely centred upon who constitutes the driving force for the employer brand strategy within the organization (Erlenkaemper, et al, 2008). While some literature suggest that the employer brand strategic delivery lies within the purview of the organization's HR department (Silva & Calisto, 2017, Auer, Edlinger & Moelk, 2014; Aggerholm, Andersen & Thomsen, 2011), others however suggest that it should be a combination of both the marketing and the HR departments (Erlenkaemper et al, 2008; Casio & Graham, 2016; Rampl, Opitz, Welpé & Kenning, 2016). There are views also that external consultancies as appropriate to build and deliver the employer brand strategy (Erlenlaemper et al, 2008; Bodderas et al, 2011).

Extant literature recognises employers as key determinants of organizational success (Edwards, 2010; Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013) and the considerable interest in employer branding concept both from academic and practitioner levels, however, there seems to be a disparity in knowledge of the employer brand process. As noted by Marokko & Uncles, (2005), the functional activities, series of actions and the changes that bring about employer branding overtime has received less attention. A wide margin of literature within employer branding focuses on the antecedents of employer brand (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Biswar & Prasad, 2016; Karla, Parson & Prisla, 2012) and the consequences and outcomes of the employer brand strategy (Aggerholm, Andersen & Thomsen, 2011; Huang & Liu, 2010). The employer brand process includes the events, sequences and the generative mechanisms that create the employer brand (Van de Venn & Poole, 1995 cited in Marokko & Uncles, 2005 pg. 1). The employer brand process identifies with Ambler & Barrow's definition of the employer brand as well as the mechanism that allows the target audience-current and potential employees to identify with the employer brand. Accordingly, Marokko & Uncles (2005) define employer brand process as "events, sequences, and generative mechanisms by which the distinct package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits

provided by employment and identified with the employing company, is conveyed to, accessed and interpreted by prospective and current employee overtime.

Existing body of literature on the employer branding process have focused attention on defining the conceptual phenomenon (Amber & Barrow, 1996; Ewing et al, 2002; Edwards, 2010 and Biswar, 2016; Rampl, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013; Gupta & Mohan, 2019). The literature also addresses the conceptual framework, antecedents, and consequences of the employer brand process (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010; Cable & Turner 2016; Hoppe, 2018). To establish the events and sequences as well as the generative mechanism of employer branding, there is a need for a broader review of the employer brand literature, focusing on the process that “births” the outcome of the strategy. This should include literature on the corporate brand as well as from human resource and organizational behaviour literature as suggested by Marokko and Uncle (2005). The multiplicity approach (Marokko & Uncle 2005) is useful to highlight the relationship between the organization employers as well as potential employees.

2.11 Impact of Employer Branding

Academia and practitioners of employer branding generally agree to the effects of employer branding (Wallace et al, 2017; Biswas et al, 2017). Existing research supports the recognition of the importance of being an attractive employer brand when it comes to choosing a future employer (e.g., Edwards, 2010; Fulmer, Gerhart, & Scott, 2003; Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010; Subramanian & Jaiswal, 2016).

Previous studies have investigated the effects of attractive employer brands (e.g., Knox & Freeman, 2006; Maxwell & Knox, 2009; Moroko & Uncles, 2008), and show, for instance, that preferred employer brands are associated with lower salary requests by potential employees (Cable & Turban, 2003) but also it impacts the turnover intention of employees (Ahmaud & Daud, 2016). As a result, employer branding seeks to position organizations as employer of choice (Berthon, Ewing & Li Hah, 2005; Tanwar & Kumar, 2019) and further improve the recruitment of best-fit talents. It has been observed to attract generation Y candidates (Xie et al, 2015) even extending its impact on age and gender employer brand attraction and retention (Kashive & Khanna, 2018). As posited by Tanwar & Kumar, (2019), the impact of employer branding produces positive value congruence by differentiating the organization among competitors in the form of positive identification. This helps to build a brand equity for the organization. On the other hand, intentional reduction in workforce can influence employer branding and can serve as an effective tool to mitigate the negative effect of post-down-sizing and subsequently, improve the quality of future recruitment (Campos-Garcia & Vicente, 2018). A summary table below outlines the finding

of the literature. Existing research supports the recognition of the importance of being an attractive employer brand when it comes to choosing a future employer (e.g., Edwards, 2010; Fulmer, Gerhart, & Scott, 2003; Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010). Several studies investigate the effects of attractive employer brands (e.g. Knox & Freeman, 2006; Maxwell & Knox, 2009; Moroko & Uncles, 2008), and show, for instance, that preferred employer brands are associated with lower salary requests by potential employees (Cable & Turban, 2003). The growing interest in employer branding by practitioners as well as academics provide conceptual evidence of its acceptance and the attendant effects for the organization for example, organizational focus on employer branding- Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2003; Thomson, de Chernatony, Arganbright, & Khan, 1999).

Summarily, a systematic literature review is important for research because it sets the scene from the perspective of past research, it also attempts to map the development of key research themes and consequently, support the identification of gaps available for future research. The literature for this study will be analysed in three strands and then amalgamated to form a contextual review for this study. The strand includes the employer branding literature, higher education branding and talent retention literature. This approach provides a comprehensive scan to capture areas of study that may be relevant to the study given the multi-disciplinary component of the concept. This will also allow a clearer identification of the research gap for which this study intends to fill.

2.12 Talent Attraction

Talent attraction refers to one step in talent management strategy aimed at acquiring best qualified and high performing talents to an organization at the right time. It involves attracting talents with high competencies that will accentuate the competitive advantage of the organization and increase overall competency of the organization (Carusi & Cipollone, 2016). A broad range of methods can be used in the attraction of high performing talents to an organization and thus is incorporated into the talent attraction strategy both internally and externally (Dessler, 2015). Some of the approaches for talent attraction include external talent recruitment, referral programmes by employees as well as advertisements through portals, however, the effectiveness of any talent management strategy is dependent on the constituent of employer value proposition of the organization and the image the organization presents both to potential and existing employees (Taylor, 2014). A study by Conley et al, (2004) identified five reasons that motivate or compels potential to be attracted to an organization. Accordingly, the include competitive pay,

opportunities for advancement, work-life balance, recognition for performance and competitive retirement package.

On the other hand, talent retention is the ability of the organization to maximise the outcome of talent attraction by convincingly maximising the durability and sustaining the interest of the potential employee to remain in the organization based on the set of value propositions that attracted the employee. It is comparative that once talents are attracted, necessary steps are taken to retain them in the organization due to their critical role in the long-term health and success of the organization (Al-Quran, 2021). Talent retention therefore is the ability of the organization to maintain a stable workforce (Rothwell, 2016). It is the activities and processes that allows for employees to consciously choose to remain in the organization and be actively involved in the growth and development of the organization (Garavan, 2012). Studies on talent retention have identified five top employee value propositions considered as enablers of talent retention. They include, career development, training, competitive base pay, clear job description and career progression. Similar studies identified work relationship and communication with leadership as factors enabling retention.

2.13 Talent Retention

A key challenge in organizational development which is linked to organizational performance is the decision to source talents internally or acquire talents externally. (Kontoghiorghes 2016, Hadi, Ahmed 2018, Pandita, Ray 2018, Cascio 2014, Narayanan 2016) also, Ahmed & Haid, (2018). Organizations understand the importance of talents in driving organizational performance (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016; Mehta et al, 2014) and remains an ongoing debate (Edwards, 2018). The pertinent question remains whether it is advisable or economically viable to retain existing talents or devise a means to attract new ones from the outside the organization. This is a key challenge for talent management. There are several theoretical and management debates that argue on each side of the aisle (Kravariti, Oruh et al. 2021, Hagel 2012, Johnnesse, Te-Kuang Chou 2017, DETUNCQ, SCHMIDT 2013, Deery, Jago 2015) Some of these studies maintain the economic importance of maintaining existing employees rather than acquiring new ones and the impact of employee retention as opposed to external talent acquisition, in relation the organizational workforce systems. Arguments include the high cost of external recruitment through job description reviews, high recruitment costs, job advertisements and training of new talents. Furthermore, the competitive nature of the business environment and the scarcity of highly skilled and knowledge-based talents have necessitated and expanded the “war for talents” (Beecher & Woodward, 2009). Talent retention therefore is gaining essential grounds as a preferred outcome of talent

management. Talent retention is defined as the strategic technique employed by an organization to maintain and sustain effective and highly productive employees who contribute to organizational performance (Mehta et al, 2014). According to Das & Baruah (2013), talent retention is the process where employees are encouraged to remain with the organization for a longer period. Their definition suggests a strategic policy decision by the organization to create a system that encourages an environment which allows employees to feel engaged with the organization and in return show loyalty to the organizational values. This becomes even more important as one witnesses the change in employer employee relationship that is based on transactional rather than a relational psychological contract (Alniacik, 2014; Singh & Rokadu, 2014; Lodberg, 2011; CIPD, 2019). Accordingly, there is need to address talent retention from a strategic spectrum as organizations focus on keeping employees who contribute to organizational development. In doing so, research suggests that certain variables act as antecedent for talent retention for example, job satisfaction, work environment, positive psychological contract, and management support (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016; Sokro, 2012). This study aims to investigate the role of employer brand attributes in defining a best fit model for employer branding on which talent management can expect a better outcome on talent retention.

2.14 Employer Brand Conceptual Framework

During the last two decades, phenomenal changes have occurred in the literature on employer branding. Competitive nature of global business environment as well as the shortfall in the supply of highly qualified talents to meet the demands of a growing and highly competitive business landscape are among the factors that have driven these changes, (Beechler & Woods, 2012; Edwards, 2010; Cascio, 2012; Berthon, Ewing & Lian Hah, 2005; Tanwar & Kumar, 2019;). Increasingly, these phenomenal changes have resulted in a surge in the literature. Their focus on employer attractiveness (Tanwar & Kumar, 2019; Xie, Bagozzi & Meland, 2015; Kashive & Khanna, 2018), employer positioning as best choice (Micik & Micudova, 2018; Kashive, & Khanna, 2018; Subramanian & Jaiswal, 2016) employee fitness to organization (Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019) and the impact of organizational value proposition on the potential employee's choice of where to work. Global labour mobility impact on employee turnover within organizations and academia further highlights the antecedents and consequences of employee turnover (Ahmad & Daud, 2016) and the need for a strategic approach to manage employee retention. Along the same line, talent management (define) has received notable attention within strategic HRM literature (ref), thereby positioning itself as a tool to deliver a holistic approach to the management of employee turnover, motivation, and organizational competitiveness. This review therefore addresses the development

of employer branding over the last two decades by synthesizing the antecedents and consequences of the subject. In doing so, it provides the framework to carry out a review of the literature on employer branding. Attraction and retention of employees as a scarce talent is a product of global market liberalisation response by organizations (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2011) Market liberalization has affected human capital mobility and the changing realities of global economy have exacerbated the war for talent (Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2011). At the same time, institutional environments have influenced firms' behaviour and strategic choice Amankwah-Amoah & Debrah, 2021). The study conceptualizes employer branding from the perspective of three key actors namely- Organization, also referred to as employer, employee and future or prospective employees. The study investigates the antecedents of employer branding in relation to the identified key actors. Furthermore, it investigates the process of employer branding. In doing so, it seeks to understand the relation between the antecedents and the outcomes based on the employer branding process by exploring the effects of employer branding based on the process adopted by the identified stakeholders or key focus of the employer branding process. In taking the research further, it looks at the effects/consequences of employer branding based on the process adopted to deliver employer branding outcome. Table (4) represents the employer branding literature review.

Table 4:Table of Literature Review

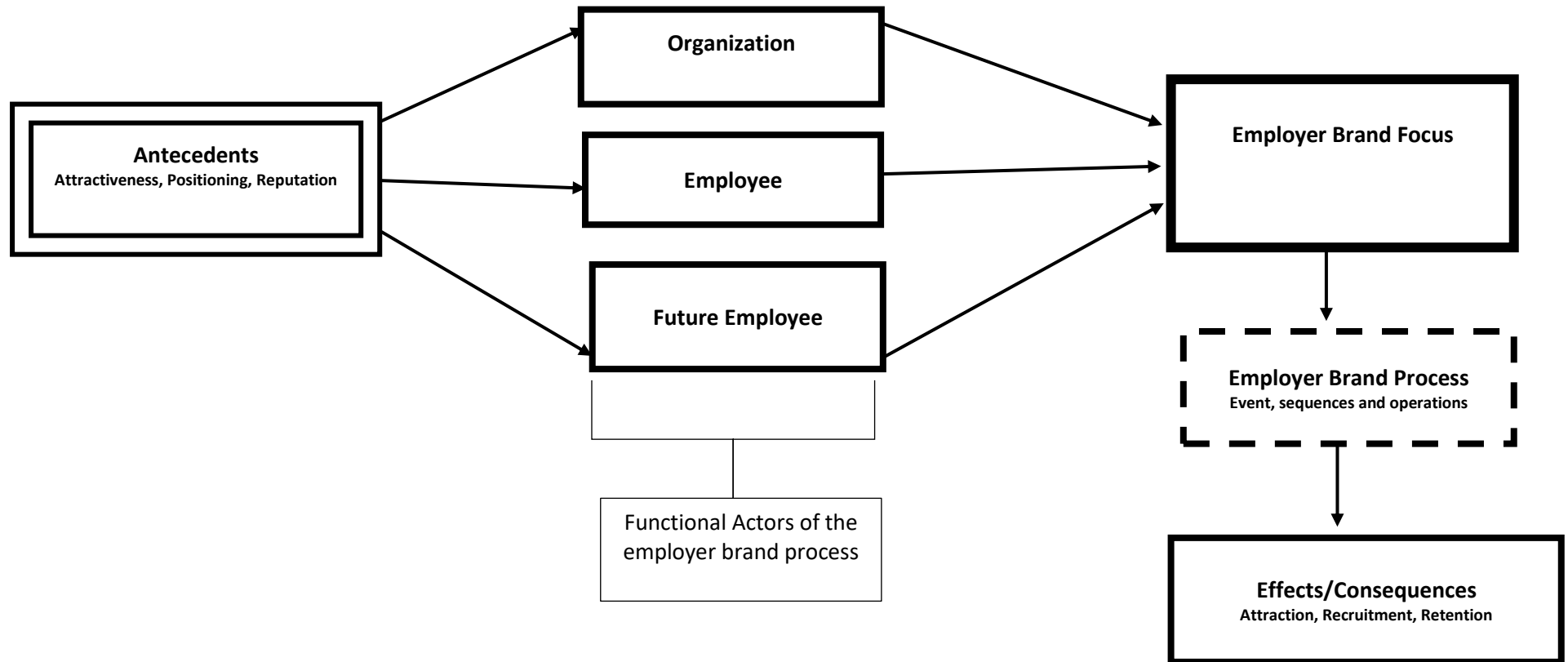
Authors	Theoretical lens	Data sources/context	Key Findings
Berry & Martins 2019	Qualitative	Exploratory Analysis	The analysis revealed the following ten major themes of content: Worldview, Stakeholders, Environment, Excellence, Dedication, Aid, Unity, Advancement, Distinctiveness, and Industry/Organization. Additionally, the results revealed that health-care employer branding often communicated about Stakeholders, Industry/Organization and Advancement.
Tanwar & Kumar 2019	Quantitative	Factor Analysis/Structural Equation Modelling	The paper provides empirical insights on how the person-organisation fit helps in transferring employer brand dimensions to EOC status. The results indicate that the person-organisation fit acts as a full mediator, indicating that for becoming a EOC, the dimensions of employer brand must be linked to the person-organisation fit
Deepa, 2019	Questionnaire Survey	Questionnaire Survey	The results indicate that several EVP attributes fall within the “Concentrate Here” quadrant that requires more focus. With respect to EVP dimensions, social value needs focus; economic value received “Low Priority”; and work value and employer reputation are identified as “Potential Overkill.”

Gunesh Maheshwari 2019	Qualitative Approach	Purposive Sampling	The findings reveal the presence of recruitment orientation career websites across the banking sector. It also conveys HR practitioners' suggestions for revamping the banks' career websites to a more screening orientation approach for greater interactivity by both the internal and external talent pools.
Patra et al, 2019	Quantitative	Random Sample Survey	Brand image as underlying team for talent mobility
Mishra & Kumar 2019	Qualitative	Exploratory Conceptual Modelling	This paper suggests that e-recruitment and training comprehensiveness might be the untapped antecedents of EB as compared to traditional recruitment and training process explored in earlier studies. The result reflects the direct relationship between employer branding and a candidate's intent to join an organization and indirect relationship with anticipatory psychological contract (APC) as a mediator between the two. It also demonstrates the direct relationship between employer branding and APC.
Rachika & Prasad	Qualitative	Semi-Structured Interviews	
Saini & Jawahar (2019)	Quantitative	Multi-Level Logistic regression	Employment experience influences employee's recommendation as an employer of choice
Gupta & Mohan (2019)	Qualitative	Case Study	Candidate experience important in brand image reinforcement and transformation as best place to work

Ngo et al, (2019)	Qualitative	Empirical Tested Sampling	Finding indicate a sequential mediation model in that employee brand knowledge affects employee performance
Molyneux, Holton & Lewis (2018)	Qualitative- Content Analysis	Semi-Structured Interviews	Results suggest that employment branding occurs in individual, organizational and institutional levels, however, organizational branding takes priority
Natarajan & Babu (2018)	Descriptive Study- Questionnaires	Questionnaires	Demonstrated strong correlation between talent management practices and talent retention and Succession planning
Schnapp & Janneck (2018)	Quantitative- Online Survey	Online Survey	Results provided insights into successful media use and corporate presentations of employers but also illustrate low attractiveness of the financial service industry and commission remuneration models. It emphasizes the importance of successful brand strategy.
Biswas & Suar (2018)	Qualitative- Exploratory	Exploratory	Four key categories relevant to employer branding: a) essence of a successful EB, (b) precursors of EB, (c) visibility of the employer and (d) outcomes of EB. Attributes of these categories were explored along the sub-themes, which reveal the respondents' perceptions regarding their implementation of EB strategy
Maurya & Agarwal (2018)	Quantitative design	Questionnaire Survey Method	Organizational talent management is strongly and positive with perceived employer branding; Reward, work-life balance are effective predictors of talent attraction and retention

Kashyap & Verma (2018)	Quantitative	Structured Questionnaire	Employer branding dimensions are negatively correlated with employees' TIs, and two dimensions (social value and development value) are significant predictors of TIs.
Davies, Mete & Whelan (2018)	Quantitative	Survey	The base model proved valid; satisfaction partially mediates the influence of employer brand image on engagement. Age, experience gender, and whether the role involved customer contact moderate both the influence of the employer brand image and of satisfaction on engagement
Sahu, Pathardikar & Kumar, (2018)	Quantitative	Questionnaire/Structured & Measured Modelling	The results reveal that transformational leadership style directly influences employee intention to leave. Transformational leadership and employer branding is mediated by employee engagement. The leadership relation with psychological attachment is mediated by employer branding.
Maheshwari et al, (2017)	Qualitative	Semi-Structured Interviews	Analysis of the findings showed that organisations, and banks in this case, are increasingly competing to attract highly skilled personnel in various professional areas; therefore, those organisations that attract the best talent will have a distinct edge in the marketplace.

Figure 2: Employer Brand Conceptual Framework based on Literature Review



2.15 Employer Branding in Context

The use of branding as a vehicle to communicate organizational message and objectives is a strong strategy by corporate organizations. A brand is defined as a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (American Marketing Association) while branding is endowing products and services with the power of a brand (Kotler & Keller, 2015). It is the ability of a brand to attract and retain a level of commitment by the consumer through a return sell. In human resource management, employer branding represents those functional attributes, financial, economic, or non-financial that are attributed to the employer and recognized by the employee (Ref). They have the power of attracting the employee and sets the employer apart from the rest in the labour market as an attractive employer of choice.

Regardless of the popularity and attention branding has enjoyed within literature, less attention has been given to branding within higher education. It is argued that branding in higher education differs from corporate organizational branding (Ref). Primarily because of the very nature of higher education's position as a non-for-profit organization, a quasi-business enterprise. Therefore, literature suggest certain limitations in the application of branding and by extension, the derivatives of branding in higher education. However, the growing global competition in higher education offering, the surging demand for knowledge intensive human capital exacerbated by shortfall in supply for highly talented academics present an opportunity for an in-depth study and empirical review of higher education branding and its impact on talent management outcomes.

It is this growing interest that captures Melewar & Nguyen (2015) article by presenting an overview of areas that advance branding theory and practice. Amongst the area of focus they include, brand activity, brand innovation in social media. They also review specific brand inclusion in higher education. They surmise that higher education branding is important beyond the adaptation of branding from industry to higher education but also from higher education to industry and this lacks robust empirical study.

Lesenyaho, Barkhujen & Schulte, (2018) focused on factors that determine the attraction of early career academics to South African higher education. The study summarizes and identify themes that are related to talent attraction including career development and advancement, opportunity to make contribution to the reputation of the university and prestige and work-life balance. It challenges universities to develop superior employer value propositions that will attract, develop, and reward early career academics.

Matongolo, Kasekenda & Majabi, (2018) address the challenge of talent retention within higher education. Their study investigates the empirical relationship between employer branding attribute of reward strategy to people orientedness and the development of talent retention in HE specific to Uganda. Findings from the study suggest reward strategy and people orientedness as significant

predictor of talent retention and that a successful retention strategy will require reward as a significant factor. This study, however, presents a finding that is contextualised and location specific. It contrasts with other studies where research and career progression are a more significant factor for academic careers (Lesenyaho, Barkhujen & Schulte, 2018). The study however opens avenue for further study especially in ascertaining the assertion of this findings in other contexts as a means for generalization. Kassawar & Golga (2016) discuss the factors that induce levels of commitment among academic staff in HE. Using quantitative study method, they opine that the level of commitment is directly relational to the performance of the organization. Their study further stresses the effect of organizational image and identity and how academics perceive them depending on their gender, age and educational qualification. They suggest it strongly promotes the effect of employer brand equity and argue the extent to which the employer brand affects or induce brand equity and subsequently, organizational commitment or brand loyalty. Furthermore, it suggests that different value propositions appeal to different categories as identified by the study and challenges the employer brand process and questions how brand managers can factor these elements into the employer brand process to achieve talent management outcomes such as retention. Increasingly, higher education is taking up branding themselves to develop sustainable strategies due to complex and highly competitive market. It is understudied through the lens of brand equity (Pinar et al., 2014)

In recent times, Business schools have been understudied however, focusing on student experience vis-à-vis university offerings. Consideration of cognitive and affective brand attributes. Do these affect academic talents in the same way? (Gyed Alwi, 2014). Chapleo, 2011 asserts that in higher education brand communication for example websites, traditional values and emotional values like corporate social responsibility and environment were less communicated. Are these typical and do academics respond to them? (Chapleo, 2011). Unlike the corporate environment, it is yet to be ascertained to what extent this appeals to academics and the extent to which it can form a value proposition for employer branding purposes.

2.16 Branding in Higher Education

Branding in higher education is still an under-researched area requiring more empirical, conceptual, and theoretical work. The impact of brand strategy and brand portfolio, although a common feature in corporate business is yet to be fully grasped as well, its consequences are yet to be fully explored in the higher education literature. Some of the areas still unknown include how university manage multiple identity of brands and the inter-relationship that exist between brand interest groups (Chapeo, 2015). It is also unclear how universities build strong brand identities (Hemesley-Brown, 2016). Indeed, the

need for higher education to develop their brand and create viable brand awareness for talent attraction in a highly developed economy is very significant (Chapleo, 2015) especially as a strategic tool for talent attraction and human capital retention. This increasing interest can cause inter-dependence and collaborations between university organizations and promote research influence to produce new theories and framework in the areas of employer branding, especially in the higher education (Melewar & Nguyen, 2015). Higher education stands to benefit from branding especially in the context of an increasing competition, global student and knowledge capital mobility and diminishing university funding. This creates more opportunity for research in higher education branding. (Nguyen, Henly-Brown, 2016). In the UK, assessing the quality of research is important in maintaining the integrity and excellence of higher education as a global commodity. This has mainly driven the quality assurance process that provides a shared policy aimed at UK research institutions to provide and guarantee a sustainable world class academic spectrum in the UK (REF, 2021). The Research Excellence Framework (REF) was set up to achieve in this regard, to achieve three mandates. First, it was aimed at achieving accountability for public servants in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment. Secondly, the REF was set up to provide a bench marking information and establish reputable yardsticks for use within the higher education sector and for public information. Thirdly, the REF was set up to inform the selective allocation funding for resources (REF, 2021). However, over the last decade, higher education quality assurance has gone through series of organizational metamorphosis. Starting as Research Assessment Exercise until 2014, when it was changed to Research Excellence Framework. Essentially the REF is described as a process of expert review panels for designated subject-based units of assessment (REF, 2021). The REF essentially acts as a image validation to universities brand image and is aimed to attract employee attraction view point. Universities are primarily keen on the external validation of their brand image from the student point of view. Subsequently, Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes as the name implies is a quality assurance exercise introduced by the English Government as a means to assess the excellence of teaching in the higher education, and that is expressed in the context of graduate level employment or further study (TEF, 2021). According to the description, the TEF is designed to be student focused , especially in the quality of teaching and scholarship among, Universities or college higher education providers. Other forms of reputation management incentives include the UK University League table (Complete University, 2021)

Branding in the private sector is already a highly established compared to the public sector and has been very successful. It therefore obvious that higher education including public and private universities are notably taking on traditional branding concepts e.g brand identity, image, and reputation, especially as

they foray into a highly competitive global environment for student recruitment and highly talented staff.

This study connects three strands of literature into the brand literature namely, higher education and human resource/talent management. It answers the call for a brand strategic management link however, with particular interest in supporting human resource management theory outcomes.

2.17 Discussion and Implications

From a general context, employer branding literature is divided into four distinctive areas namely: the focus of the brand strategy; antecedents of employer branding, the brand process and finally, the impact of the brand. Assessing different literature reviews within the brand concept, four key categories are expressed within key literature in this field. See Table 3.

1. The focus of employer brand – This consist of the organization as the focus of employer brand strategy
2. Focus on the employee- on this perspective, the employer brand strategy is mainly focused on the retention of existing and current employees
3. Focus on future employees- the brand strategy focuses primarily on the attraction of future and potential employees

2.18 Antecedents

Extant employer branding research also focuses on the factors that trigger the employer brand strategy (Edwards, 2010). Several studies investigate employee attraction as the antecedent of employer branding (ref) and show that organizations are interested in talents that fit their organization and therefore, position themselves as preferred choice for work (ref).

Similarly, talent retention plays a significant role in triggering the employer brand strategy due to the attendant effect and the cost implication of talent acquisition (CIPD; REF). Organizations work hard to develop a culture value and are eager to pass them on to the employees to produce specific performance outcomes. It is therefore important that organizations retain these talents to get return on investment through performance. Employer branding becomes an important strategy for talent retention through the identification of the unique value proposition of the employee and aligning the values to the organizational culture through specific processes for employees to identify with (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010; CIPD, 2017).

Organization also shows great concern for their reputation as employers. Existing literature suggest varying reasons and outcomes for organizational reputation (ref). In some instances, good organizational reputation can lead to employees taking lower pay to be associated with an organization

(ref). Organizational reputation is therefore an important factor for organizations to embark on an employer brand strategy.

2.19 Employer Brand Process

During the last two decades, considerable interest in employer branding concept both from academic and practitioner levels have risen as well as prevalent disparities in knowledge of the employer brand process however, extant literature recognise employers as key determinants of organizational success (Edwards, 2010). Specifically, Marokko & Uncles, (2005) have argued that the functional activities as well as series of actionable changes that bring about employer branding overtime has received less attention. The employer brand process includes the events, sequences and the generative mechanisms that create the employer brand (Van de Venn & Poole, 1995 cited in Marokko & Uncles, 2005 pg. 1). The employer brand process identifies with Ambler & Barrow's definition of the employer brand as well as the mechanism that allows the target audience-current and potential employees to identify with the employer brand. Accordingly, Marokko & Uncles (2005) define employer brand process as "events, sequences, and generative mechanisms by which the distinct package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company, is conveyed to, accessed and interpreted by prospective and current employee overtime.

Existing body of literature on the employer branding process have focused attention on defining the conceptual phenomenon (Amber & Barrow, 1996; Ewing et al, 2002; Edwards, 2010 and Biswar, 2016). The literature also addresses the conceptual framework, antecedents, and consequences of the employer brand process (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010; Cable & Turner 2016). To establish the events and sequences as well as the generative mechanism of employer branding, there is a need for a broader review of the employer brand literature, focusing on the process that brings to bear, the outcome of the strategy. This should include literature on the corporate brand as well as from human resource and organizational behaviour literature as suggested by Marokko and Uncle (2005). The multiplicity approach (Marokko & Uncle 2005) is useful to highlight the relationship between the organization employers as well as potential employees.

Depending on the focus and reason for embarking on an employer brand strategy, a key question then becomes- how do organizations go about developing, building, and delivering the employer brand strategy? More importantly, who are the stakeholders involved in the brand process? Significantly, what are the events, sequences as well as the operative mechanisms that organizations engage with to bring the employer brand to life?

2.20 Theoretical Implications and Directions for Future Research

Despite the growing application of employer branding in talent management, there have been a few studies on the application of employer branding to organizational performance and competitive advantage i.e., what organizations get in applying it as an explicit strategy. Even more scanty contribution in theory and empirical studies, the relationship, and outcomes in higher education. This study will therefore attempt to contribute to the conceptual framework for employer branding and talent retention. By doing so it will also be providing empirical data to consolidate employer branding as a construct in HRM literature.

Within the field of practice, it will consolidate employer branding as a strategic tool for HRM practitioners, talent managers and heads of business schools thus extending the boundaries of knowledge in HE talent management.

It will argue that the seeming satisfactory retention rate in HE cannot be ignored and require strategic approach within a competitive and uncertain market.

This research will provide evidence-based strategies to heads of business schools to improve upon their strategies for the attraction and retention of highly qualified and talented academic staff. The empirical evidence will provide a tool for HEI talent managers to focus on needs for talent engagement and thus, increase intention to remain. Through the models observed from research, it will help uncover critical areas in the employer branding process and talent management that have attracted less attention.

2.21 Summary of Literature Review

The literature on employer branding is categorized under 4 main headings namely, attraction, retention, process, and outcomes.

The main purpose of any brand initiative is to send out a specific message and to increase awareness of customers to the brand. It is the composite objective of any brand initiative. Extant literature identifies talent attraction as a composite objective of many employers' brand initiative. On the background of global competition for knowledge intensive talent (Guerrero & Challiol-Jeanblanc, 2017; Backhaus, Ameila & Nasution, 2016; Biswas & Suar, 2016; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016; Russell & Brannan, 2016; Kavitha & Jubilee, 2016) universities are driven to position itself first to target student recruitment but increasingly so, to attract and retain best academic talents.

Table 4 and figure 2 provides the conceptual framework. It reports the summary of literature review on employer branding in organizations and the effects on talent management outcomes. More importantly, it states the composite elements of the organization and the resulting impacts on talent

attraction and talent retention. These elements are summarized under three categories- antecedents of employer branding, employer brand process and employer brand outcomes.

The employer brand antecedent factors are identifiable triggers for organizations to embark on the process of employer branding. Organizations pursue an employer brand strategy for different reasons that may include, improving overall organizational reputation (Edwards, 2010), attracting of best talent (Tlaiss & Hofaidhllaoui, 2017) positioning of organization as an employer of choice (Biswas & Suar, 2016). The literature also captures the processes by which employer brands are delivered. This is the functional operational mechanism that gives rise to the employer brand.

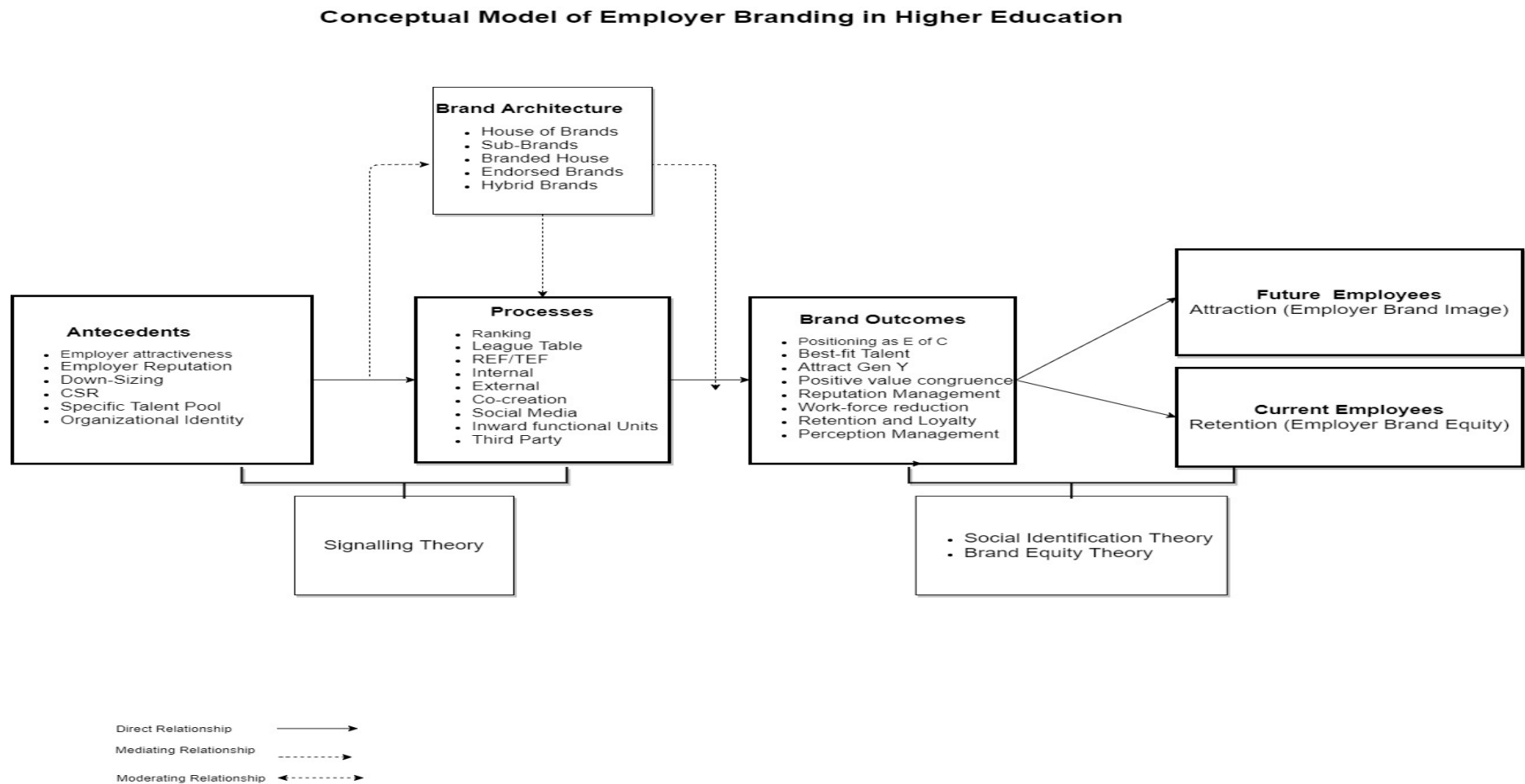
Employer brand outcomes is seen through the prism of talent management by assessing its impact on talent retention. It also assesses how the employer value proposition interacts with the employee and how it influences the choice of the employee to work for the organization and be loyal to the organization. The literature also captures the mediating factors that influence the directional relationship of employer branding. The review identifies, brand architecture as a mediating factor in the directional relationship of employer branding.

Brand architecture is defined broadly from a marketing perspective as the strategy that determines the elements of a brand for example brand names, logos, symbols, etc. a firm needs to apply across their existing products and services (Keller, 2014). A brand architecture strategy attempts to define the entire complexity of a brand in its depth and breadth by clarifying the brand and motivating the brand. In doing so, it aims to present a clear picture to the consumer by communicating similarities and differences between individual products or services. It also maximizes the brand image by aiming to transfer brand equity across individual products or services and to enhance loyalty to the brand (Junior, 2018).

In the case of human resource management, brand architecture aims to trigger employer brand loyalty by creating the impression to stay longer with an organization. Perhaps more pertinent to this study, Brexendorf and Keller (2017) define brand architecture as the hierarchical structure that determines a firm's product and service brand. This avenue provides a platform for reciprocal feedback between corporate and image associations and the effect it has on the brand portfolio. It further defines the distinctive characteristics of the brand element and the clear nature of their ordering relative to the corporate brand. Research has shown that organizations can leverage brand effects depending on the brand architecture strategy that it employs, to deliver maximum outcomes (Devlin and McKechnie, 2008). The main brand architecture portfolio adopted by firms to maximize brand equity are the following: 1) Branded House- This strategy is used by organizations with many products and offerings under one master brand. It is also called a mono-brand portfolio (Junior, 2018). A branded house

consists of one single master brand. It also has one name and one visual system. Within the context of higher education, an example of branded house includes- University of Greenwich. Where the university superimposes its brand on the business school. The business school therefore carries the corporate identity of the university, and any brand equity is reciprocal forward and backward feedback from the brand logo, brand name and symbols of the university.²). Sub-Brands- Like a master brand, with a parent and the sub-brands are subordinates to their parent brands. Example is the University of Reading- Henley Business School, University of Kent-Kent Business School. (3) House of Brands- This approach allows organizations to have varied products and offerings but market them with their own identity. A house of brand strategy is focused on the sub-sets of the brand and primary brands get little or no attention. Each sub-set operates as its own company in terms of brand element and messaging. For example, the University of London as a parent brand with sub-brand like The London Business School; Birbeck, SOAS. (4) Endorsed Brands- are made up of individual and distinct product brands linked together by an endorsing parent brand. The endorsed brand therefore rides on the wings of the parent brand. The advantage of an endorsed brand is that it does not expose organizations to reputation risk, but it provides positioning alternatives that if the organization's corporate branding were the only considered option. Example Hybrid brand strategy.

Figure 3: Conceptual Model of Employer Branding in Higher Education



2.22 Conclusion

In this section, I provided a summary of research done within the literature. This was important in understanding the scope of the literature and strengthen the debates within the literature, by identifying gaps in the literature. The section proceeded by summarising key definition of employer branding to form a working a definition of employer branding and providing a summary of debates within the literature. It identified key theoretical underpinning used in previous studies and finally it identified the gaps in literature and proffer how to fill the gaps. It argued that the employer-branding concept originated from the field of marketing and its application to human resources occurred during the last two decades (Ambler & Barrows, 1996). The section as well, presented the systematic literature review process. As a result, it argued that to date, a fragmented consensus of the definitions of employer branding reflects the evolutionary process of the concepts (Edwards, 2012) and the notion that it is still finding its feet within mainstream human resource literature.

As a concept, employer branding as a growing topic in HRM literature still lacks grounded theoretical and empirical framework within scholarly debates. Given the heterogeneous underpinning of the theoretical foundation there is a need for more empirical work to firmly position it within academic literature. In terms of application, its position as a factor for organizational competitive advantage still lacks currency. More specifically within higher education, a few studies have attempted to address this gap in research. This study therefore aims to fill this gap in the literature.

2.23 Limitations of Review

This review had its limitations and will be discussed in this section.

- Data set based on Theurer et al, (2018) which may not include other articles that investigate employer branding.
- Likely articles that may investigate employer branding concept, however they may have used different terminologies.
- Articles in many other countries may be published in different times and places that can contribute to the review however too narrow and may need revamping.
- Researchers are always limited by the boundaries they put on their own research, nit by unforeseen boundaries of knowledge that already exist. This too is a limitation.

Despite the growing application of employer branding in talent management, only a few studies apply employer branding to organizational performance and competitive advantage i.e., what organizations get in applying it as an explicit strategy. Even more, there are scanty contribution in theory and empirical

studies, the relationship, and outcomes in higher education. This study will therefore contribute to the conceptual framework for employer branding and talent retention. By doing so it will provide empirical data to consolidate employer branding as a construct in HRM literature.

Within the field of practice, it will consolidate employer branding as a strategic tool for HRM practitioners, talent managers extending the boundaries of knowledge in talent management. It will argue that the seeming satisfactory retention rate in cannot be ignored and require strategic approach within a competitive and uncertain market. Therefore, contributing to empirical data to policy practice. This research will provide evidence-based strategies to heads of business schools to improve upon their strategies for the attraction and retention of highly qualified and talented academic staff. The empirical evidence will provide a tool for talent managers to focus on needs for talent engagement and thus, increase intention to remain. Through the models observed from research, it will help uncover critical areas in the employer branding process and talent management that have attracted less attention. Further research should focus on three key areas namely: conceptualization of employer branding; employer branding targets and further development of the employer branding process. Within the context of conceptualization, it will be beneficial for researchers to establish the constituent needs in employer branding to show how human resources contributes to the employer branding process. Particularly, the study will benefit from studies establishing the use of indicators that best describe employer branding functions and operations. Studies should therefore focus on employer attraction, engagement, stakeholder practice and process as well as retention of talents but also financial performance.

Further studies should also explore employer branding targets by focusing on stakeholder conceptualization. Current employees as well as future employees experience and job experience levels have been found to impact the perception of organizations and the relationship between employers and potential employees, yet it lacks empirical data to substantiate these relationships. Finally, the employer branding process require in-depth research especially in understanding the impact of explicit and implicit strategy on employer branding results and outcomes.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Review

3.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, the study provided a broad overview of the wider literature on employer branding and talent management. It also identified the contextual framework for the study by highlighting key components and trend based on the literature. The following chapter will provide a review of employer branding in the context of higher education and discuss their outcomes with the objective to build a theoretical base for which the study can further expand. To achieve this aim, the chapter shall proceed to identify the key elements of employer branding based on the literature review. It will describe the process by which the literature review was carried out and further expand on the contextual framework of the research

3.2 Methodology

This section explains the methods used in selecting and reviewing the papers examined in this study. The methodology is like other recent reviews in talent management and employer branding literature and follows Theurer et al, (2018) methodology. It builds on a data set used in prior reviews beginning with Backhaus and Tikoo, (2004) and further on Theurer et al, (2018). This also includes articles discovered in this review, the data set now includes employer branding studies from the relevant literature for the 22-year period from 1996 to the present review.

The steps taken to assemble the data set before presenting the results and discussions are outlined in the following. In identifying the journals for this review, the study built on the journals examined in Theurer et al, (2018). This was to ensure comparability of results and more so because, these journals publish interdisciplinary research including employer branding and are also generally available through research databases. As at the time of review, this was the latest research database. To meet the purpose of the study, additional journals were identified to cater for HEI literature. Thus, this review incorporates two areas of-Journal of brand management and journals of human resource management. Theurer et al, conducted an exhaustive employer brand literature review by identifying relevant literature using an inclusion and exclusion criteria followed by a structural and content-based analysis of the literature and then integrating the articles and clustering then into categories for in-depth research synthesis (Theurer et al, 2018).

In selecting the articles for review, this study builds on the data set developed by Theurer et al, (2018) by subsequently improving and expanded upon it to include employer branding in higher education institutions (HEI). In doing so, the data set has been updated to include articles published from 2015 to present and articles published to include HEI employer branding. In

keeping to the employer branding theme, articles with an employer branding or brand equity research focus were included. The final tally includes 253 articles for analysis and therefore represent an up-to-date review on employer branding research. All new articles added to data set were classified according to predetermined search strategy. This was to ensure consistency in the review as well as comparability of the results. Articles were first identified using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, followed by an in-depth structural ad content-based analysis of the literature and it was then integrated and clustered into categories to synthesize the research (Armstrong et al, Turner et al, 2013 in Theurer et al, 2018) They were first coded then checked for consistency before a final classification. Academic impact of the articles from Google Scholar citations will be included to measure the impact of the articles and provide insight into the development of the literature. To address the thematic of the review, the conceptualizations rooted in Theurer et al's Keller (1993) and Gardner et al, (2011) conceptualization was compared to Backhaus and Tikoo's (2016) employer brand conceptualization. The intention of this comparison was to provide in-depth insight into the thematic and to identify key issues that may have been missed but would be important in the literature review. The result of the comparative process showed similar results with a slight difference in Backhaus and Tikoo (2016) emphasis on theories of employer branding as opposed to Gardner et al (2011), and Keller (1993) emphasis on models and concepts. For the research, it was deemed necessary to include this as a separate category.

Several literatures (Rampl, Opitz, Welpé & Kenny, 2016; Gupta & Mohan, 2019; Moroko & Uncles, 2005) have discussed employer branding from a multidisciplinary perspective. However, research suggests a reluctance within HR academics in leading the discussion. Regardless, significant progress within the literature is shaping the understanding of the concept from diverse literature including organisational psychology and HR academics prompting the engaging views on the subject area (Edwards, 2009, Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Arguably, Backhaus and Tikoo, (2004) amongst other leading authors (Miles and Mangold, 2004; Biswar 2016) have applied this multidisciplinary approach in discussing the concept of employer branding.

This justifies the clarification a broad understanding of employer branding and the elements that constitutes its conceptual framework. It further allows academics to seek an explanation to adapt the key elements of the concept to the challenges of human capital development. In doing so, it positions employer branding within the epicentre of management practice and argues its place within strategic management and organisational decision-making paradigm.

Kotler, (2001) defines brand as “a seller's promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits and services consistent to the buyer. Employer brand therefore is a term that suggests the distinctive qualities of the employer and what differentiates it from its competitors. According to

Conference Board (2001), the employer's branding "establishes the identity of the firm as an employer. It also encompasses the firm's value system, policies and behaviour toward the objective of attracting, motivating and retaining the firm's current and potential employees". This therefore suggests a poignant strategy to aimed at promoting in clear terms, the distinctive qualities that differentiates firm from other competitors and makes it more desirable for employment.

Ambler and Barrow, (1996) summarises employer branding as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company" and Ruch, (2002) opine it is the "company's image as seen through the eyes of its associates and potential hires. Accordingly, employer branding has an intimate link to the employment experience of what it is like to work at a company and involves tangibles such as rewards and compensation and intangibles such as company culture and values.

More recently, the CIPD, (2016) define employer branding as "a set of attributes and qualities, often intangible that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture". It suggests a relationship between an organisation's value, the people strategy of the organisation and the human resource (HR) policies that are in place to deliver the brand. Consequently, the combination of the organisation's value, people strategy and HR policies can determine a strong employer brand, reinforced by the company brand (CIPD, 2010).

However, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) argue that employer branding is the "process in which an identifiable and unique identity as an employer is built. Van Dam (2006) further pursues this observation positing that employer branding is "a logical process through which companies reach one main goal; to have a strong appeal on their current and future ideal employees". Similarly, Martin, Golan and Griggs, (2011) view this concept as a process by which branding concepts, marketing communications and HR techniques are applied to create an employer brand. According to Martin, Golan and Griggs (2011) view, employer branding has a generalized recognition for being known among key stakeholders to provide a high-quality employment experience and distinctive organisational identity which employees value, engage with and feel confident and happy to promote to others". In doing so, the attempt to view employer branding as a process is critical to this study.

In a further opinion, Lloyd, 2002 agreed that employer branding is the sum o f a company's effort to communicate to existing to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work". According to Sullivan, (2004), employer branding is "a targeted long-term strategy to manage awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a firm". It is the package of psychological, economic, and functional benefits provided

by employment and identified with an employer (Thorne, 2004). Extending the study, Silvertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen (2013) argue that employer branding entails the development of an organization's image and reputation as a prospective employer, which affect its ability to retain employees. Accordingly, HR professionals are increasingly embracing the language and techniques of branding in positioning a strategic influence and credibility throughout the employee life cycle. Organizations are also recognising the value of a branding approach to human resource practice (CIPD 2016). Below is a table summarizing key variant definitions of employer branding.

3.3 Reviewing Employer Branding in Higher Education: Antecedents, Processes and Outcomes

The recruitment process in the higher education environment has been concentrated for a long time in the attraction of students and focusing on key drivers of growth among the student population and seemingly ignoring broader and long-term objectives linked to talent management issues that are equally important as a key driver of growth and sustainability within the higher education sector. On one hand, global competition, and the scarce supply of human capital especially in knowledge intensive sectors for example finance, business services, education, and health (Beaverstock & Hall, 2012; Faulconbridge, Beaverstock, Hall, & Hewitson, 2009, OECD, 2006), suggests that organizations require nuanced strategies to manage their human capital and skilled labour. At the same time, the continuous increase in global labour competition, uncertainties, and ease of movement amongst skilled talent and professionals exacerbate the challenge to attract and retain highly qualified talents (Collings, Scullion, & Caligiuri, 2018). This therefore calls for an emergent strategy to enable organizations gain competitive advantage. Labour movements and trends have further necessitated the challenge for strategic intervention for example, the CIPD Labour Market Outlook 2019 report indicates a rising demand for labour across industries. At the same time, buoyant labour demand has resulted in recruitment and retention challenges for employers- forty-one percent of employers finding it difficult to fill vacancies and a further thirty-three percent of employers saying it has become harder to retain staff (LMO, 2019). Within higher education (HE), the heightened mobility of knowledge workers and the prospect of an uncertain political structure in the UK, makes the already precarious environment even more worrisome and calls for a strategic intervention to the labour market challenges.

Talent management (Collings, Scullion, & Caligiuri, 2018; Collings, Mellahi & Cascio, 2018; Lewis, & Heckman, 2006) and employer branding (Theurer, Tumasjan, Welp, & Lievens, 2018; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016) have gained strategic importance in addressing human capital challenges within

HEI and for their ability to provide organisational leverage through approaches on cost and attrition as brand loyalty resulting in employee retention. Growing interest in research over the last two decades have focused on the importance of human capital development and human capital management to meet organizational bottom line however, these two important research areas continue to develop in silo, largely focusing on the antecedents and effects of employer branding on talent management. Employer-branding process in this regard, has received very little attention-particularly, the operation of mechanisms at the firm and individual levels that shape and advance the employer brand (Marokko & Uncle, 2005). As an overarching concept, employer-branding process involves the functioning mechanisms on which the employer brand operates-starting from firm level mechanism that shape and define the brand to factors that underpin its continuous implementation. It further considers the interactions at the individual level that is- between existing and potential employees, taking into consideration, the process of brand association, brand meaning as well as brand loyalty for the employer brand (Marokko & Uncles, 2005). Consequently, the need to establish what constitutes the employer branding process through a broader review of the literature and empirical studies becomes imperative. It requires a mix of concepts ranging from corporate branding, human resource, and organizational behaviour literature as well industry journals to deconstruct the relationship between employers, employees, and prospective employees.

The relationship between employer branding and talent management in higher education is an innovative and emerging strategic approach to human resource management and a relevant gap yet to be fully explored. The intersection between employer branding and talent management is based on two assumptions: the role of employer branding in promoting organisational attractiveness and loyalty (Ref) and the management of employee talents to increase retention (Ref). Existing research differ in their opinion and are based on different assumptions about employee talent management. This paper explores how employer branding has been conceptualised in talent management studies. Through a systematic literature review it assesses the state of the art of employer branding and outlines key elements and trends of extant literature and the research gaps.

A systematic review literature aims to synthesize large amount of information by identifying key elements in a subject area and clearly identifying the main characteristics of the given topic. In this type of review, there is a consistent and logical investigation comprising a detailed research of potentially relevant articles as well as the adoption of reproducible selection criteria (Transfield et al, 2003, Adams et al, 2017). Subsequently, a systematic review facilitates the collection, evaluation, and synthesis of literature from multiple search results (Cooke et al, 1997) to identify research gaps

(Kitchenham, 2004). The structure of the study is as follows. Section 2 describes the review methodology and the database for used for the literature search. It also describes how process of analysis. Section 3 analysis the result and offers a conceptual framework based on the literature review on employer branding. Section 4 presents an overview and synthesis of employer branding and talent management research. The study concludes by proffering further studies and theoretical insights.

3.4 Branding in Higher Education Institutions (HEI)

The use of branding as a vehicle to communicate organizational message and objectives is a strong strategy by corporate organizations. A brand is defined as a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (American Marketing Association) while branding is endowing products and services with the power of a brand (Kotler & Keller, 2015). It is the ability of a brand to attract and retain a level of commitment by the consumer through a return sell. In human resource management, employer branding represents those functional attributes, financial, economic, or non-financial that are attributed to the employer and recognized by the employee (Ref). They have the power of attracting the employee and sets the employer apart from the rest in the labour market as an attractive employer of choice.

Regardless of the popularity and attention branding has enjoyed within literature, less attention has been given to branding within higher education. It is argued that branding in higher education differs from corporate organizational branding (Ref). Primarily because of the very nature of higher education's position as a non-for-profit organization, a quasi-business enterprise. Therefore, literature suggest certain limitations in the application of branding and by extension, the derivatives of branding in higher education. However, the growing global competition in higher education offering, the surging demand for knowledge intensive human capital exacerbated by shortfall in supply for highly talented academics present an opportunity for an in-depth study and empirical review of higher education branding and its impact on talent management outcomes.

It is this growing interest that captures Melewar & Nguyen (2015) article by presenting an overview of areas that advance branding theory and practice. Amongst the area of focus include, brand activity, brand innovation in social media, they review specific brand inclusion in higher education. They surmise that higher education branding is important beyond the adaptation of branding from industry to HE but also from higher education to industry and this lacks robust empirical study. Lesenyaho, Barkhujen & Schulte, 2018 focus on factors that determine the attraction of early career academics to South African higher education. The study summarizes and identify themes

that are related to talent attraction including career development and advancement, opportunity to make contribution to the reputation of the university and prestige and work-life balance. It challenges universities to develop superior employer value propositions that will attract, develop, and reward early career academics.

Matongolo, Kasekenda & Majabi, 2018 address the challenge of talent retention within higher education. Their study investigates the empirical relationship between employer branding attribute of reward strategy to people orientedness and the development of talent retention in HE specific to Uganda. Findings from the study suggest reward strategy and people orientedness as significant predictor of talent retention and that a successful retention strategy will require reward as a significant factor. This study, however, presents a finding that is contextualised and location specific. It contrasts with other studies where research and career progression are a more significant factor for academic careers (Lesenyaho, Barkhujen & Schulte, 2018). The study however opens avenue for further study especially in ascertaining the assertion of this findings in other contexts as a means for generalization.

Kassawar & Golga (2019) discussed the factors that induce levels of commitment among academic staff in HE. Using quantitative study method, they opine that the level of commitment is directly relational to the performance of the organization. Their study further stresses the effect of organizational image and identity and how academics perceive them depending on their gender, age, and educational qualification. They suggest it strongly promotes the effect of employer brand equity and argue the extent to which the employer brand affects or induce brand equity and subsequently, organizational commitment or brand loyalty. Study suggests that different value propositions appeal to different categories as identified by the study and challenges the employer brand process and questions how brand managers can factor these elements into the employer brand process to achieve talent management outcomes such as retention.

Increasingly, given the competitive nature of the global higher education landscape, and to develop sustainable strategies due to complex and highly competitive market, universities have taken on the branding concepts to promote student recruitment. It is understudied through the lens of brand equity (Pinar et al, 2014). Business schools have been understudied however, focusing on student experience vis-à-vis university offerings. However, consideration of cognitive and affective brand attributes is not explicit in understanding how branding affect academic talents (Gyed Alwi, 2014). Brand communication, websites (Chaleo 2015) and traditional values communicated and emotional values like corporate social responsibility and environment were less communicated.

3.5 Resource Based View (RBV)

Resource based view is a management theory which explains the resources of a firm's competitive advantage. The theory proposes that for a firm to be competitive among similar or contemporary firms, they need to have access to control and apply viable resources of the organization characterized as valuable, rare imitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 2002). Resource based view position is shared by other related components like core competences and dynamic capabilities (See Helfart & Peterof, 2003, Pisaw and Shien, 1997 and Grant 1996). It is also described as knowledge-based view (Ref). Resource based view has an enormous strategic influence on organizational management from theoretical perspective. It has a distinct trajectory in accommodating conversation within other theoretical development trajectories for example, stakeholder and human capital theories. In applying a stakeholder -oriented perspective, organizations tend to identify the benefits of stakeholders to include employees-current and potential as well as organizations. (Harrison, Phillips & Freeman, 2020) Stakeholder theory in resource-based view provides a model for which organizations utilize the functional element of identified strategic resources of the organization (Barney, 2018). The synthesis of stakeholder perspective in RBV, allows the study to create a theoretical expansion of RBV and lends insight into the intellectual narratives of RBV and stakeholder theory (Eslerod, 2020; Freeman, & Harrison, Phillips, 2019).

Primarily, RBV examines the firm's competitive advantage and argues that the unique endowments and strategic resources puts a firm above its contemporaries. This simple and uncomplicated discourse of the RBV theory made the theory a dominant theory in strategic management and provided the platform to address talent management. Based on this, RBV, view people as a composite element to organizational competitive advantage and placed at the same level with other factors of production. It borrows from the Ricardian narrative to posit those human resources is an essential part of the broader firm's resource profile where they provide labour and are classified as human resources or human capital (Foss, 2011 Coff & Kryscnski, 2011). In applying the concept, human capital act as managers by orchestrating resources ad leveraging other resources of the firm. Simon, Hilt Breland & Gilbirt, 2011). For organizations, top talents are crucial to the firm's organizational performance and therefore qualify as rare and valuable assets to achieve organizational competitive advantage.

As a fundamental theory in management, RBV studies however argue that RBV is incomplete (Dmytriyeu, 2021 argue the need to provide a more comprehensive theory by other elements to address the theoretical deficit of the resource-based view. For example, viewing people beyond

resources (Dmytriiev, 2020). They suggest that a unified approach to theorizing will help RBV deliver on this promise. This study will address the deficit by providing the empirical evidence to human capital definition and approach to resource-based view.

Within the framework of talent management, Sun & Mamman (2021) investigate the factors that influence the adoption of high performing work systems. The study suggest that high performing work systems have strong influence o organizations performance. They further suggest that top management support is one of the key predictors of organizational efficiency. The study aligns with resource-based view where essential resources for example human capital is seen to leverage organizational performance

From a general context, employer-branding literature has four distinctive areas namely: the focus of the brand strategy; antecedents of employer branding, the brand process and finally, the impact of the brand.

A broad conceptualization of employer branding involves the identification of the employer branding target groups. These could be an employer or organization (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Biswas & Suar, 2016), current/existing employees (Prasad, Dabirian & Paschen, 2019) as well as future/potential employees (Martin-Rios, 2011, Moroko & Uncles, 2009; Love & Singh, 2011). The interaction within and among these target groups differentiated by their antecedents are unique but equally related to some of the target groups. At the same time, the process of managing and implementing the employer brand based on the purpose of the employer brand can also influence the effect and outcome of the employer brand.

The review considers four important components of employer branding within an integrative framework as presented in figure 1. The first focus of the literature is to understand who the key target groups of employer branding are. From the broader branding literature, the communication of the brand message relates to stakeholders within the business (Biswas & Suar, 2014) however, extant literature identifies three target groups for the communication of the employer-branding message namely- the employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2016); existing (Biswas & Suar, 2018) and potential employees (Hsiao et al, 2014; Heilmann, Saarenko, Liikkanen & Gardner, 2013). The review suggests that based on extant research, the antecedents of employer branding influence these target groups differentially but sometimes interchangeably and that the relationship between them is significant in understanding the conceptual framework of employer branding. The review also considers the operative mechanism of employer branding with the view to understand the extent to which it can produce a best-fit model of employer branding. It also allows for the proposition of factors that may influence the theoretical underpinning of such a model on the organization.

Studies seem to suggest that the outcome of employer branding will depend on the combination of the operational process and the identification of the target group that play a significant role when viewed from either the organizational level or the existing employee level or future employee perspective. It can also be a combination of both. The review presents a summary of findings to highlight the different perspectives. In doing so, it distinguishes between the operational processes both at the individual and firm level and provide insight into the factors that trigger employer branding as well as the effects of the process in achieving the consequences of employer branding within the identified target groups.

3.6 Employer Brand Theory

Kotler, (2001) defines brand as “a seller’s promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits and services consistent to the buyer. Subsequently, branding is typically associated with taglines, single sentences or ebullient quotes aimed at delivering a punch line and palliating the sentiment of consumers to a product. Consumer branding is commonly associated with image or a combination of colour and palette. It elucidates sentimental perceptions and carry a certain message about the product on the consumer, employer branding delivers much more than taglines and address different stakeholders beyond taglines and worded statements.

The earliest definition of the concept by Ambler and Barrow, (1996) summarised employer branding as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company”. As a concept, employer branding suggest the distinctive qualities of the employer and what differentiates it from its competitors. It essentially espouses tenable employer value propositions aimed at employees either potential or existing within an organization. According to Conference Board (2001), the employer’s branding “establishes the identity of the firm as an employer. It also encompasses the firm’s value system, policies and behaviour toward the objective of attracting, motivating and retaining the firm’s current and potential employees”. It is a poignant strategy aimed at promoting the distinctive qualities that differentiates firm from other competitors and makes it more desirable for employment. It can be argued that employer branding is an explicit strategy.

In a further opinion, Lloyd, 2002 agreed that employer branding is the sum of a company’s effort to communicate to existing to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work” while Ruch, (2002) argued employer branding to be the “company’s image as seen through the eyes of its associates and potential hires and strongly suggest an intimate link to the employment experience of what it is like to work at a company and involves tangibles such as rewards and compensation and intangibles such as company culture and values. According to Sullivan, (2004), employer branding is “a targeted long-term strategy to manage awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a firm”. It is the package of psychological, economic, and functional benefits provided by employment and identified with an employer (Thorne, 2004). Extending the study, Silvertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen (2013) argue that employer branding entails the development of an organization’s image and reputation as a prospective employer, which affect its ability to retain employees.

To further strengthen the view, CIPD (2016) define employer branding as “a set of attributes and qualities, often intangible that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture”. It suggests a relationship between an organisation’s value, the people strategy of the organisation and the human resource (HR) policies that are in place to deliver the brand. Consequently, the combination of the organisation’s value, people strategy and HR policies can determine a strong employer brand, reinforced by the company brand.

3.7 Human Capital Theory and Talent Management

Since the development of human capital concept by Schultz (1964) and further elaborated by Becker (1981), human capital theory has gathered significant importance as a theoretical construct in a diversity of academic and research fields. It has assumed significance primarily in unit-level scholarship with its primary understanding directed to the variety of knowledge, skills, and abilities of individual talents. Research in the field human capital has focused on individual impact of HC and the corresponding impact that resonates with individual capabilities and outcomes debate (Wright and McMahan 2011, Nyberg et al 2014, Ployhart et al, 2014). Recent studies show that human capital is taking a centre stage and has become a major source of competitive advantage (Senno and Pinngton, 2017). Further studies in the field (for example, Ployhart and Moliterno 2011; Coff and Kryscynski 2011; Crocker and Edkardt 2014; Nyberg et al 2014; Ployhart et al, 2014) have attempted to bring together individual and organization level perspectives to investigate HC contribution to competitive outcomes. Mamman et al, (2021) addresses talent management and explores the practice of talent attraction and retention in SMEs from an institutional context. They draw distinction between talent management practices in multi-national corporations and SMEs. Findings from the study suggest SMEs have a more inclusive approach to talent management practice based on country’s institutional context. Their findings further suggest a hybrid approach to talent development to address talent scarcity. In doing so, they conclude that a targeted value driven approach to talent management process provides an insight to stakeholder interest to talent management practice and provides the platform for employer branding as a strategic tool for talent management.

3.7.1 What is Human Capital?

Shultz (1961) suggested human capital combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities of the people in an organization and coined the term human capital. Schultz’s attempt to capture the value and investment in human capital subsequently defined human capital as “all human abilities to be either

innate or acquired”. Becker, (1993, p3) added a dimension to this definition by addressing contemporary contextual development of human capital within organizations. Thus, defining human capital as the knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and health of individuals.

More recent definitions highlight individual components of human capital contribution to organizational outcomes and the way they are employed to leverage organisational objectives and outcomes, for example, (Bontis et al 1993, p391) for example who define human capital as “the human factor in the organisation; the combined intelligence, skills and expertise that gives the organisation its distinctive character. In the same vein, Burt (1997) saw human capital as quality within an individual, (Burt, 1997).

More recently, focus on human capital emphasized the ability and capacity to bring value to the organization for example, Ployhart et al, (2014) define human capital as an individual and/or unit-level resource that relates to the ability of the firm to generate economic value. This is supported Collings (2014) who define human capital as the value-generating potential of employee knowledge, skills, and abilities (Collings, 2014). By including the “potential” of an employee, Collings seem to suggest the multi-dimensional and hidden value of the individual. Their definition therefore highlights those human elements of the organisation are those that are capable of learning, changing, innovating and providing the creative thrust which if properly motivated can ensure the long-term survival of the organisation’(Collings, 2014)

Subsequently human capital can be argued as the underlying individual knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics such as personality traits and interests (KSAOs) that underpin the human capital resources of a firm (Boon et al, 2018). By recognizing other characteristics such personality traits and interests, literature suggest the management of personalities to induce maximum impact for the organization. Accordingly, HC is the combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, and personality characteristics (Tarique and Schuler, 2016). According to Crane and Hartwell (2019) the accumulation of an individual’s information, knowledge, and experience. Therefore, when well-managed, human capital enhancement will increase an individual’s personal performance as well as increase their contribution to the firm (Crane & Hartwell, 2019)

3.7.2 Human Capital and Talent Management.

Human capital theory emerged as a challenge to the assumption that economic success was solely driven by physical growth (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961 and Mincer, 1974). They primarily summarized that “peoples learning capacities are of comparable value with other resources involved in the production of goods and services (Lucas, 1990). Investment in human capital yields high level skills and higher productivity and subsequently higher earning as return on investment.

The increasingly importance of the knowledge economy in the 21st century has necessitated the transformation of intangible skills and resources inherent in an organization to be directed at increasing the knowledge base of the organization and providing a platform for value creation within the organization known as intellectual capital. Focus on individual ability to generate economic value (Ploy et al, 2014). This intellectual capital is consisting of human and social capital and are keenly efficient organizational tools for performance. Monitoring the effect of human capital across organizational spectrum, requires careful coordination and a clear understanding of the inherent characteristics that can aid the maximization of its value. Human capital is argued as pivotal in value creation, through innovative ideas, facilitating the integration of social capital for effective value creation and building a consensus relationship. (Han et al, 2014).

The basis for HC is that people's learning capacities are directly relational to production of goods and services. Human capital theory therefore underscores the importance of talent management practice. (CIPD, Becker 1996)

Extant literature suggests that human capital could be understood as synonymous with talent management (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Sels, 2014; Sonnenberg, van Zijderveld, & Brinks, 2014). Studies in HRM often substitute human capital for talents by emphasising human capital aspects of talents (for example, Byham, 2001; Peters, 2006; Ready et al., 2008) while also viewing talent management as the "process through which employers anticipate and meet their needs for human capital" (Cappelli, 2008, p.1). From this standpoint, talent management has the tendency to be human capital centric and focus on the target, or whom should be considered as having talent (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Sels, 2014; Sonnenberg, van Zijderveld, & Brinks, 2014). Since human capital focuses on the individual unit level and largely involves the attribute of individual level contribution to organizational performance, we consider it useful in understanding the evolution of talent and an important lens through which to view talent management. This argument allows us to review human capital within human relations literature. By doing so, we provide a theorization of human capital as a framework for the empirical study.

A study by Wright and McMahan (2011) addressed the impact on human capital rather than human capital itself. Their study "largely focuses on the practices that impact human capital" (pg. 4). This seems to strengthen an earlier argument by (Becker and Huselid, 2006) that human capital only strategically important if it contributes to firm's objectives. According to Becker and Huselid, the value of an employee is measured largely by their significant contribution to the organization. Their study emphasises the human value contribution to firm strategy which Schultz terms as human

capital. It further suggests that for the value of the employee to be enhanced, there are processes that need to be triggered through a structure and delegated by an agency to allow the maximization of the potential or innate value of the employee. The direct management of the employee to allow the full release of that person's talent is a concern for talent management practitioners and scholars. Human capital therefore becomes a major source of competitive advantage for the organization (Senno and Pinggton) because of the inherent value of the employee on which the talent is endowed, as a point of advantage for the organization.

Earlier studies for example, Empson, (2007) and Von Nordenflycht, (2007) asserted human capital as the most valuable resource in private service firms. Recent streams of literature seek to unify the diverging perspective of human capital impact measured from the individual level (See Wright and McMahan 2011, Nyberg et al 2014, Ployhart et al 2014). and the organization level perspective (Ployhart and Moliterno 2011, 7 Coff and Kryscynski 2011, Crocker and Edkardt 2014, Nyberg et al 2014, Ployhart et al 2014). In doing so, they contribute scholarship to the wholistic theorization of human capital by considering all aspects of the human capital debate rather than focusing primarily on the impact of human capital (Wright and McMahan, 2011). Accordingly, human resource management recognizes the importance of human capital for enhancing firm performance (Barney, 1991; Becker & Huselid, 2006; Crook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, & Ketchen, 2011). The primary focus of human capital in HRM literature is expressed within organizations and largely boards on the impact it has on organizations. Accordingly, HRM views human capital as a valuable resource and therefore preserves the interest of value capture and knowledge mobility and skills in pursuit of organizational goals. It is also a useful tool to measure how management the management of people within organizations may relate to key organizational outcomes for example operational bottom-line and target organizational delivery. However, there is limited knowledge in the understanding of human capital contribution during projected periods of uncertainties. Much of the literature specifically among strategic HRM researchers, have understudied the relationship between human capital investment and firm performance. They argue that by investing in a firm's human capital, there is a marginal increase in the performance level of the organization. This they argue is possible through systems and practice that are aimed at developing and managing organization's human capital (Becker and Huselid, 2006).

Research therefore points to a need for a more holistic perspective in understanding and capitalizing on the advantages of human capital. We suggest a convergent perspective to the study of human capital. This does not only address the skewed understanding of the construct, it also merges two strands of research enquiry to consolidate the theory on human capital. We illustrate this in Table 9.

Table 5: Human Capital Definitions

HC Definitions	
Unit-Level	Firm Level
‘Knowledge, skills and abilities of the people employed in man organisation’.	The human factor in the organisation; the combined intelligence, skills and expertise that gives the organisation its distinctive character.
all human abilities... which are valuable and can be augmented by appropriate investment will be human capital’	As they are relevant to the task at hand, as well as the capacity to add to this reservoir of knowledge, skills, and experience through individual learning’.
‘Knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and health of individuals.	HC in the context of organisational/unit-level outcomes
Focus on individual ability to generate economic value (Ploy et at. 2014)	‘People, their performance and their potential in the organisation’
the individual’s capabilities, knowledge, skills and experience of the company’s employees and managers,	
a useful way to explain how employees might enhance their value in organizations	

3.8 Branding in Higher Education

Over the last 20 years, business schools have been understudied however, focusing on student experience vis-à-vis university offerings. Consideration of cognitive and affective brand attributes. However, it is not known to what extent cognitive and affective brand attributes affect academic talents (Gyed Alwi, 2014). Similarly, it is not clear how brand communication, websites (Chapleo, 2015) and traditional values, emotional values like corporate social responsibility and environment were communicated. As typical brand attributes, are they related to academic talents and do academics respond to them? (Chapleo, 2011). It is the intention of this study to address these factors.

Branding in higher education is still an under-researched area that requires more empirical, conceptual, and theoretical work. The impact of brand strategy and brand portfolio, although a common feature in corporate business is yet to be fully grasped and the consequences fully explored in the higher education literature. Some of the areas still unknown include how university manage multiple identity of brands as this tends to differ among interest groups within the business and the inter-relationship that exist between the groups. It is also unclear how universities build strong brand identities (Hemesley-Brown, 2016). Indeed, the need for higher education to develop their brand and create viable brand awareness for talent attraction in a highly developed economy is very significant, more for student recruitment but increasingly also is the importance for talent attraction and human capital. This increasing interest can cause interdependence and collaborations between university organizations and promote research influence to produce new theories and framework in the areas of employer branding, especially in the higher education (Melewar & Nguyen, 2015). Higher education stands to benefit from branding especially in the context of an increasing competition, global student and knowledge capital mobility and diminishing university funding. This creates more opportunity for research in higher education branding. (Nguyen, Henly-Brown, 2016). Branding in the private sector is already a highly established compared to the public sector and has been very successful. As a result, higher education including public and private universities are notably taking on traditional branding concepts e.g., brand identity, image, and reputation (Hoppe, 2018) especially as they foray into a highly competitive global environment for student recruitment and highly talented staff.

This study connects three strands of literature into the brand literature namely, higher education and human resource/talent management. It answers the call for an in-depth study and empirical review of higher education branding and its impact on talent management outcomes. By strategic

management link however, with interest in supporting human resource management theory outcomes.

Higher education is increasingly acknowledging the importance and significance of talent attraction as a major outcome of talent management in higher education literature. However, extant literature mostly focuses on student attraction and recruitment and comparatively, there are fewer research and empirical studies on academic staff recruitment referred to in this study as talent attraction. Over the last two decades, there have been growing interest in the literature focusing on talent attraction in universities fuelled by the impact of global labour mobility and competition in the higher education sector (Matongolo, Kasekenda & Majabi, 2018; Lesenyaho, Barkhujen & Schulte, 2018; Kassawar & Golga, 2019). The use of branding as a vehicle to communicate organizational message and objectives is a strong strategy by corporate organizations. A brand is defined as a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (American Marketing Association) while branding is endowing products and services with the power of a brand (Kotler & Keller, 2015). It is the ability of a brand to attract and retain a level of commitment by the consumer through a return sell. In human resource management, employer branding represents those functional attributes, financial, economic, or non-financial that are attributed to the employer and recognized by the employee (Ambler & Barrow 1996). They have the power of attracting the employee and sets the employer apart from the rest in the labour market as an attractive employer of choice (Edwards, 2010; Hoppe, 2018)

Regardless of the popularity and attention branding has enjoyed within literature, less attention has been given to branding within higher education. It is argued that branding in higher education differs from corporate organizational branding (Ref). Primarily because of the very nature of higher education's position as a non-for-profit organization, a quasi-business enterprise. Therefore, literature suggest certain limitations in the application of branding and extension, this study seeks to explore the derivatives of branding in higher education. However, the growing global competition in higher education offering, the surging demand for knowledge intensive human capital exacerbated by shortfall in supply for highly talented academics present an opportunity for research in higher education talent management and employer branding.

It is this growing interest that captures Melewar & Nguyen (2015) article by presenting an overview of areas that advance branding theory and practice. Amongst the area of focus include, brand activity, brand innovation in social media, they review specific brand inclusion in higher education.

They surmise that higher education branding is important beyond the adaptation of branding from industry to HE but also from higher education to industry and this lacks robust empirical study.

Lesenyaho, Barkhujen & Schulte, (2018) focus on factors that determine the attraction of early career academics to South African higher education. The study summarizes and identify themes that are related to talent attraction including career development and advancement, opportunity to make contribution to the reputation of the university and prestige and work-life balance. It challenges universities to develop superior employer value propositions that will attract, develop and reward early career academics.

Matongolo, Kasekenda & Majabi, (2018) address the challenge of talent retention within higher education. Their study investigates the empirical relationship between employer branding attribute of reward strategy to people orientedness and the development of talent retention in HE specific to Uganda. Findings from the study suggest reward strategy and people orientedness as significant predictor of talent retention and that a successful retention strategy will require reward as a significant factor. This study, however, presents a finding that is contextualised and location specific. It contrasts with other studies where research and career progression are more significant factors for academic careers (Lesenyaho, Barkhujen & Schulte, 2018). The study however opens avenue for further study especially in ascertaining the assertion of this findings in other contexts as a means for generalization.

Kassawar & Golga(2019) discusses the factors that induce levels of commitment among academic staff in HE. Using quantitative study method, they opine that the level of commitment is directly relational to the performance of the organization. Their study further stresses the effect of organizational image and identity and how academics perceive them depending on their gender, age and educational qualification. They suggest it strongly promotes the effect of employer brand equity and argue the extent to which the employer brand affects or induce brand equity and subsequently, organizational commitment or brand loyalty. Their study further suggests that different value propositions appeal to different categories as identified by the study and challenges the employer brand process and questions how brand managers can factor these elements into the employer brand process to achieve talent management outcomes such as retention. To develop sustainable strategies due to complex and highly competitive market it is important for employer branding to be understudied through the lens of brand equity (Pinar et al, 2014)

3.9 Employer Brand as a Process

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) had earlier introduced a caveat to the employer branding debate by arguing that employer branding is the “process in which an identifiable and unique identity as an employer is built. Van Dam (2006) further pursued this observation positing employer branding as “a logical process through which companies reach one main goal; to have a strong appeal on their current and future ideal employees”. Similarly, Martin, Golan and Griggs, (2011) view this concept as a process by which branding concepts, marketing communications and HR techniques are applied to create an employer brand. According to Martin, Golan and Griggs (2011) view, employer branding is known among key stakeholders to provide a high-quality employment experience and distinctive organisational identity which employees value, engage with and feel confident and happy to promote to others”. In doing so, the attempt to view employer branding as a process therefore is critical to this study and will receive detailed attention in the research. Accordingly, HR professionals are increasingly embracing the language and techniques of branding in positioning a strategic influence and credibility throughout the employee life cycle. Organizations are also recognising the value of a branding approach to human resource practice (CIPD 2016). This presents both structural and organizational debate on how the functional and operational framework looks like especially when applying employer branding as a strategic intervention for talent management outcomes e.g., talent retention. In terms of talent management, current pressure emanating from high talent mobility, increase competition and shortage of highly qualified talent within knowledge sectors presents a case for human resource practice in knowing how best to deliver employer branding and how what indicators can be applied to measure the efficiency on talent management outcomes. Furthermore, it broadens the scope on who the key stakeholders are in the creation, organization, and implementation of an employer brand strategy. In essence there is a lack of empirical literature to answer the questions posed by the employer branding process in organizations. Table 10 summarizes variant definitions of employer branding from the literature. Three key observations inform discussions in both the conceptual design and contextual framework of the study. Firstly, most definitions on employer branding are seen as strategic and falls short of identifying how the strategy works including the components of the vehicle to deliver the strategy for example Amber & Barrow, (1996), Lloyds, (2002), Corporate Board, (2001), Sullivan (2004). Secondly, the definitions identify key functional agents in employer branding namely- the organization, the employee, and prospective employees (Beaumont & Branding, 2003; Sullivan, 2004; Mangold & Miles, 2004).

Table 6: Table of Summary-Employer Branding

Authors	Definitions
Ambler& Barrow, 1996	Employer brand consists of the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company
Lloyds, (2002)	Employer branding is the sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work
Conference board, (2001)	It establishes the identity of the firm as an employer. It also encompasses the firm's value system, policies and behaviour toward the objective of attracting, motivating and retaining the firm's current and potential employees".
Beaumont & Branding, (2003)	Employer branding involves managing a company's image as seen through the eyes of its associates and potential hires
Sullivan, 2004	Employer branding is a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm
Mangold & Miles, 2004	Employer branding is the process by which employees internalize the desired brand image and are motivated to project the image to customers and other organizational constituents
Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004	Employer branding is the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity
Edwards, 2009	Employer branding refers to activities where principles from marketing, especially within branding, are used for HR initiatives regarding both existing and potential employees
Minchington, 2010	An employer brand is the image of the organization as a 'great place to work'
CIPD, 2017	A set of attributes and qualities, often intangible that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture.

Thirdly, only a few definitions recognise employer branding as a process or a string of activities that lead to the delivery of the employer brand (Edwards, 2009, Mangold & Miles, 2004; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2006). Subsequently, the majority of employer branding literature focus on the

antecedents and consequences of the concept while ignoring the operational mechanism that delivers the process. How this process interacts with the different stakeholders and the influence it has on the employer brand outcome is under-researched and calls for extensive investigation.

3.10 Conclusion

In chapter 3, the study provided a review of employer branding in the context of higher education and discussed their outcomes with the objective to build a theoretical base for which the study can further expand. To achieve this aim, the chapter proceeded to identify the key elements of employer branding based on the literature review. It described the process by which the literature review was carried out and further expanded on the contextual framework of the research. The next chapter will introduce the research methodology based on the established theoretical and literature review framework. It will discuss the as a foundational framework, the philosophical underpinnings from which the research situates itself and will justify the methodological tools employed by the research based on the chosen research paradigm.

Chapter Four. Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the philosophical framework that underpins my research. This is important due to the fragmented nature of management research philosophy. By doing so, this study recognises that philosophical assumptions underpin every research whether explicit or implicit and that they embody key elements that inform the design and evaluation of the research project as well as contribute to achieving the objective of a research. These elements are central to research and invariably affects the quality and components of management research (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015). On one hand of management research, the unification paradigm proposes a strong research philosophy, paradigm, and methodology whereas, to understand the diversity of research and the strength it brings to research, pluralistic approach argues that it enriches business and management research (Saunders et al, 2015). My research however argues that business and management are not mutually exclusive and that the diversity and multiplicity of paradigms is a strength to the course.

In business and management science, philosophical positions underpinning research include ontology, epistemology, and axiology as well as research method. An understanding of a research philosophy fulfils some vital contributions to the research work. It provides clarity to the issues regarding theory of knowledge as researchers will be able to state in clear terms issues surrounding their epistemology and the research methods applied and in doing so, make creative contribution to the field of study. It also helps in defining and clarifying the research design and understanding the kind of evidence the researcher will gather but also how the researcher interprets data to provide answers to the research investigation. It further helps researchers understand what works best for the research project based on the objectives of the research. Understanding the philosophical issues can allow researchers to go beyond conventional norms by creating and identifying research designs that may differ from their prior knowledge and in doing so, adapt research designs to accommodate limitations and adopting new structures to address constraints. This study highlights the philosophical debates in management and business relative to my research project. It also addresses the philosophical issues underpinning my research and in doing so, it will briefly state my research project with the aim of contextualizing the issues under discussion.

The objective is to address the philosophical issues underpinning my research project. In doing so, it considers, the research thesis as a means of contextualising the philosophical issues under discussion. It also recognises the debates surrounding management research philosophy and

identified my position within the debate. Moreover, it addresses the underlying assumptions that make up the components of a research philosophy, which include the identification of the research paradigm and aligning it to the key assumptions that make up the research paradigm namely: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and the research method. Furthermore, it identifies and show clarity in the direction of the research both in the design and in structure of the research project. It also clarifies the anticipated contribution to the field based on the philosophical underpinning of the research. By addressing the research philosophy, this section provides justification to the type of data the research has gathered and the approach to data analysis.

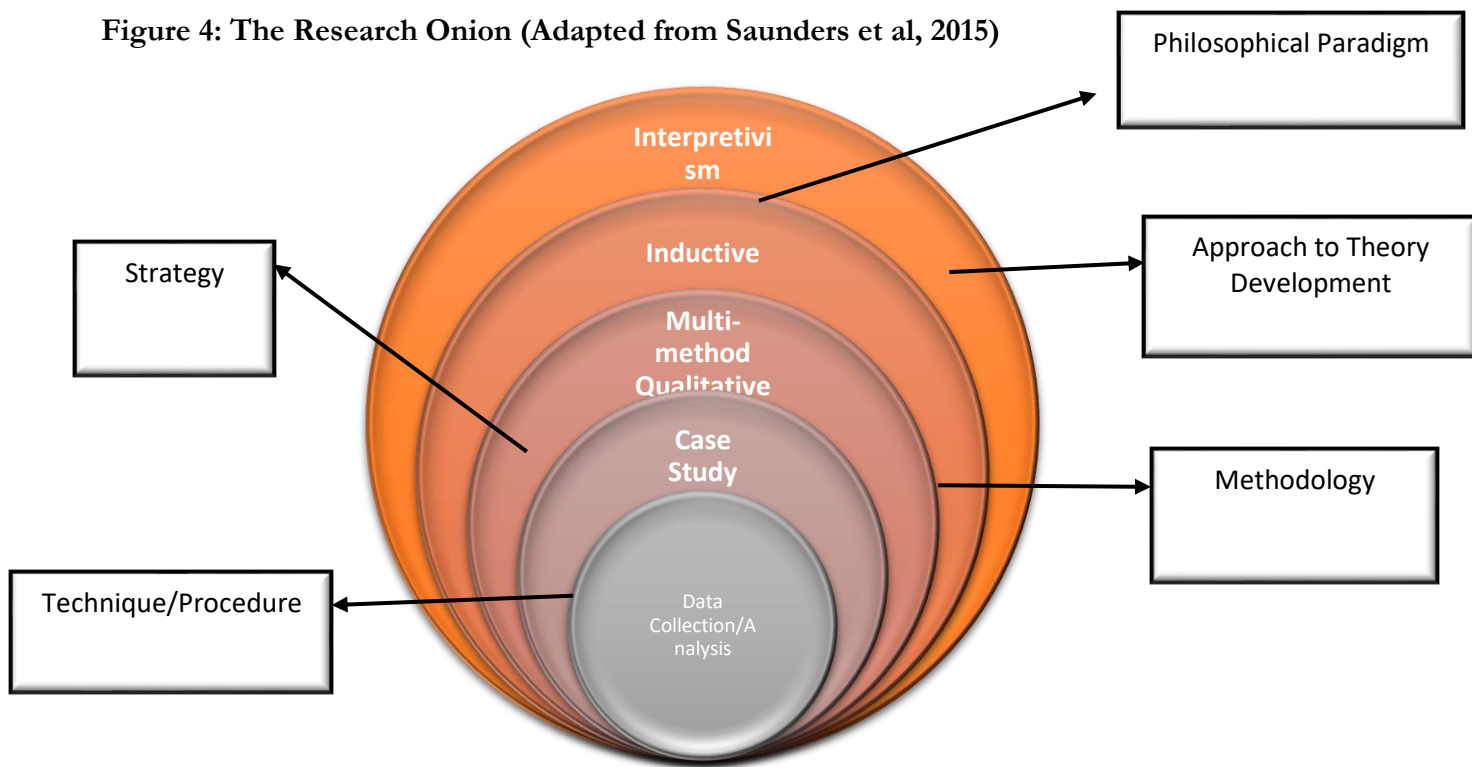
4.2 Philosophical Debates

The nature of reasoning in the social science has brought about a general disagreement in management research philosophy (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015). While some argue the pluralistic approach to research, others seem to debate the unification paradigm to social science research (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015). A pluralistic approach argues that business and management are fragmented discipline and can invariably impede on the attempt to make research scientific (Saunders et al, 2015). Further argument has viewed management research from the lens of unification. As a result, unification perspective therefore proposes the unification of management research under a strong research philosophy, paradigm, and methodology (Saunders et al, 2015 pg. 126). However, pluralists recognise the diversity of the research field and the strength that it brings into the research work. They also argue that this approach tends to enrich business and management (Saunders et al, 2015 pg.126; Knudsen, 2003).

My research is under-pinned by the philosophy that business, management are not mutually exclusive, and that the multiplicity of paradigms and the diversity that have shaped the development of business and management is a strength to the course. It also assumes the position that each research philosophy and paradigm have a unique role to play and contributes an asset to business and management research in the way that each see things from unique and distinctive perspectives, given the realities of social science. At the same time, my research is fully aware of the debates regarding the varied opinions and perspectives surrounding the research philosophy. To situate my work and be able to discuss the philosophical paradigms underpinning my research, it is important to note that the diversity of research paradigms builds on these core assumptions of ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Easterby-smith et al, 2015). The research onion diagram in **figure 4** is an attempt to situate my research within the context of the philosophical debate that is under consideration. It seeks to give a clear overview of my research philosophy as well as clarify

where it stands in terms of the research paradigm, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. I will discuss these assumptions and their relevance to the research.

Figure 4: The Research Onion (Adapted from Saunders et al, 2015)



4.3 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is mainly concerned with the political or ideological orientation of the researcher towards the social world for which the researcher is about to investigate. It generally describes the thinking pattern of the research. In doing so, it highlights the worldview adopted by a researcher to portray the message of the research. Specifically, it is a shared belief that influences the interpretation of a research data (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) and a conscious adoption of a worldview for which a researcher wants the research to be viewed (Lather, 1986). These sets of beliefs and values shape the researcher's perspective and interpretations of details emanating from the research. The research paradigm therefore determines the research method and the means of data analysis. It plays a significant role in the design and process of the research by presenting the means for the construction of data, defining what constitutes data; how it will gather data, and interpret it. A research paradigm comprises of four key elements, which include epistemology, Ontology, axiology, and methodology. These elements inform the basic assumptions, beliefs, norms, and values that the paradigm situates itself. In doing so, it aims to present the difference between research philosophies and recognises the polarised dimensions regarding research

philosophies, and their views of the social world of research (Burnell & Morgan, 1979). Examples of research paradigms include positivism, critical realism, Interpretivism as well as post-modernism; however, my research adopts an Interpretivist paradigm.

The core objective of an Interpretivist paradigm is the understanding of subjective human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) in so doing, it places emphasis on understanding the context of the research by interpreting the subject of research based on what they think or mean.

An Interpretivist research takes the viewpoint of the observed subject rather than the observer to understand the individual as well as the interpretation of the world in which they exist therefore, reality is socially constructed (Bogdan & Bijklen, 1998). It is primarily a subjective epistemology suggesting that meaning derived from a study within this paradigm depends on the thinking and cognitive process of data analysis as a product of the interactions between the researcher and the participant. Therefore, the research is dependent on its social environment (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Similarly, the personal experiences and the natural interaction, dialogue, question, listening and recording of data form part of the sense-making process of Interpretivist research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It also believes in the multiplicity of realities explored through interactions between researcher and research subjects (Chalmers, Manley & Wasserman, 2005). An Interpretivist paradigm subsequently assumes a naturalist methodology by making use of data gathered through interviews, discourses, texts messages as well as reflective sessions (Kivunja & Kiyuni, 2017) with the researcher acts as a participant observer (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Morgan (2007), several characteristics make an Interpretivist research identifiable. Firstly, an Interpretivist research admits the multiplicity of the social world and shares the view an individual standpoint does not suffice in the explanation of the social world. Accordingly, Interpretivist argue the social construction of realities and the influence of natural settings in which the realities occur. This they argue results in the notion that research within this paradigm allows the interaction between the researcher and the participants as the only way in which researchers can reach constructive outcomes. This is the notion of subjectivity (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Secondly, the Interpretivist paradigm firmly supports the notion that context is vital for knowledge and the belief that the findings within a context creates knowledge. This argument emphasises the importance of value arguing that value must be explicit since it is what defines the findings (Silverman, 2000). Thirdly, for the Interpretivist, universal law is irrelevant rather; the understanding of the individual is paramount. Therefore, a mutual interdependence between causes, effects, and holistic understanding of knowledge, is important for contextual determinants of knowledge (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). To express these characteristics in context, my research will explore employer-branding process

by seeking to understand its overarching concept especially, the functioning mechanisms at the firm level that influence the employer brand. It will also attempt to understand and explore factors that underpin the continuous implementation of employer branding considering the interactions that exists between existing and potential employees. These interactions between the identified respondents and the interpretation of their responses within the context of their experiences and interpretation of relevant arguments in relation to my research topic, justifies my research paradigm as Interpretivist.

4.4 Ontology

According to Saunders et al (2015 pg. 127), ontology refers to the nature of reality and the nature of existence. Ontological assumptions therefore shape the way researchers see their study as well as the research object. For example, from an ontological position, a research objective could be organizational, management, individuals, events or even artefacts. Consequently, a researcher's ontology determines how it perceives the world of business and the chain of the research objective, given the researcher's understanding of reality. In my research, I undertake a relativist ontology. This view accepts the fact that there are multiple perceptions to realities depending on the experiences of the people involved and the context in which they operate. Consequentially, it asserts there is no single reality but multiple perspectives and that different observers will have different viewpoints because "what counts as truth can vary from place to place and from time to time" (Collins, 1983, pg.88). From this standpoint, my research ontology takes an inductive approach. In this regard, theory is not static, but a product of multiple realities determined by the findings from interview responses. In seeking to research the different processes adopted by organizations to deliver employer branding, the research claims that each process is different and that the context for which the organization functions play an integral role in determining the reality that shapes the employer brand process for that organization. Therefore, any best-fit model developed, will be within the context of the organization as derived from the perceptions of the participating organizations.

4.5 Epistemology

Epistemology is the assumption regarding knowledge and what contributes knowledge and follow the assertion regarding what is acceptable, valid, and legitimate knowledge. It is also how it communicates knowledge to others (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Within this context, various accounts of knowledge exist that are legitimate, for example, numerical data, text data, visual data, facts and interpretation, narratives, stories, and fictional accounts. This allows therefore for

different research projects to adopt different epistemological assumptions relative to the choice of methods but also considering the limitations and the strengths that the approach may offer. In general, this gives rise to either positivist or Interpretivist assumptions, which consequently informs the choice of methods- either the qualitative or quantitative or a mixture of both, including others. My study therefore in assuming an Interpretivist/constructivist epistemology, believes that reality is a function of multiple realities, through the gathering of data from multiple contexts and perspectives to construct an understanding of the nature of knowledge. In doing so, it will ask research questions and use cases to construct the reality of the knowledge that it seeks to explain. It will draw findings from the interviews and case studies of the research. By using the interviews and case studies, it will seek to provide triangulation in the analysis and interpretation of research with the objective of affirming knowledge and generating theory with verified evidence.

4.6 Axiology

Axiology simply refers to the role that value and ethics play within a research context. Questions that arise within this realm of assumption presupposes how researcher deal with their own values as well as the values of the participant in the research. It states the guiding principle of human action anchored on the values of the human and subsequently, informs the process, the how and why of the research process (Heron, 1996). Furthermore, it gives credibility to the research process once the results are out. In other terms, axiological paradigms present itself in the choice of the study topic and even the decision regarding the research design, following one pathway and not the other. It informs the personal values that the researcher attaches to the research or that influences the work from the researcher's perspective. A decision to do a research where it collects data through interviews may reveal the axiological orientation of the researcher in which it places emphasis on the personal interaction with the respondent rather than an anonymous questionnaire for which respondents may only express their views. The axiological assumption of my research is value laden as it seeks to interact with participants through interviews. In doing so, my research will recognise the impact of respondents' participation in the research as well as the researcher's influence and participation in the design and interpretation of data to address the component objectives of the research work.

4.7 Methodology

Given the underlying philosophical position of the research as discussed in previous section of this paper, the study will take a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, using an expert industry panel (Moroko & Uncles, 2009). A key benefit of this approach is to gain practitioner

perspective and perception for the advancement of theory and to provide substantial empirical evidence for the research question. The study will identify four business schools in the UK and will carry out in-depth interviews among ca. 50 industry participants. It will also apply a case study review of documents to support the evidence for key research question. The research will apply a theoretical purposive sampling to establish the sampling framework. Based on the review of the existing employer branding literature, the study will identify relevant areas of theory and specialist practice. The sampling frame will be constructed to reflect the spectrum of social exchange theory, brand equity theory, resource-based view, employee attraction and employee retention. It will select Individual participants based on their standing in the industry as well as relevant experience within the subject area. It will consider as appropriate expert informants as participants for the study, as they will offer efficient ways to provide informed perceptions on employer branding process across higher education institutions, business schools specifically within the UK.

The study will undertake semi-structured interviews across selected business schools in the UK will form the primary empirical material to answer the research questions (Lee, 1999). To understand the employer brand process within each business school, the study will interview heads of business schools (HoS), deputy (HoS) and senior management. Interviews will also include Academic staff including HR, with in-depth knowledge of university branding, staff recruitment and employee well-being and competences.

It will utilize where possible, secondary data in the form of strategy papers, internal reports, marketing resources and channels, employed by the business schools, to establish linkages between the first research question and the overarching subject of this study. Similarly, to achieve a cross-sectional understanding of the impact of employer branding on employees' intention to stay, the study will also interview through random selection, academic staff, including junior and senior academic staff, relatively new and longer serving academics.

4.8 Research Design

To achieve the objective of the research, the study will take a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, using an expert industry panel (Marokko & Uncles, 2008). A key benefit of this approach is to gain practitioner perspective and perception for the advancement of theory and to provide substantial empirical evidence for the research question. The study will identify business schools in the UK and will carry out in-depth interviews among ca. 75 industry participants as described in table below. The study will also apply a case study review of documents to support the evidence for key research question. The research will apply a theoretical purposive sampling to establish the sampling framework. Based on the review of the existing employer branding

literature, the study will identify relevant areas of theory and specialist practice. The sampling frame will be constructed to reflect the spectrum of social exchange theory, brand equity theory, resource-based view, employee attraction and employee retention. It will select Individual participants based on their standing in the industry as well as relevant experience within the subject area. It will consider as appropriate expert informants as participants for the study, as they will offer efficient ways to provide informed perceptions on employer branding process across higher education institutions, business schools specifically within the UK.

The qualitative study will draw on data to be collected at selected business schools in the UK to address the overarching research question:

RQ. How does HEI employer branding processes influence employer brand outcome?

To achieve this aim, **semi-structured interviews** across selected business schools in the UK will form the primary empirical material to answer the research questions (Myers, 2010; Lee, 1999). To understand the employer brand process within each business school, the study will interview heads of business schools (HoS), deputy (HoS) and senior management. Interviews will also include Academic staff including HR, with in-depth knowledge of university branding, staff recruitment and employee well-being and competences.

The study will utilize where possible, secondary data in the form of strategy papers, internal reports, marketing resources and channels, employed by the business schools, to establish linkages between the first research question and the overarching subject of this study. Similarly, to achieve a cross-sectional understanding of the impact of employer branding on employees' intention to stay, the study will also interview through random selection, academic staff, including junior and senior academic staff, relatively new and longer serving academics.

HoS will respond to **RQ1**, in the attempt to understand approaches of employer branding and what drives the approach thereby HEI branding models. Academic staff will respond to **RQ2**. This is to understand the value proposition of academic staff and their perception of branding message relative to intention to remain or leave. HR managers, HoS and academic staff will respond to **RQ3**. This will allow for triangulation of research (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012)

4.8.1 EBP Research Design

The purpose of this research is to understand the mechanisms that explain employer branding and its impacts and to what degree the mechanisms implied by employer branding theories-social exchange theory, resource-based views, brand equity) responsible for the relations among employer brand antecedents and outcomes. More specifically, the research will explain the

employer branding development and its application to key HR functions. It will further assess employer branding process impact on key HR outcomes.

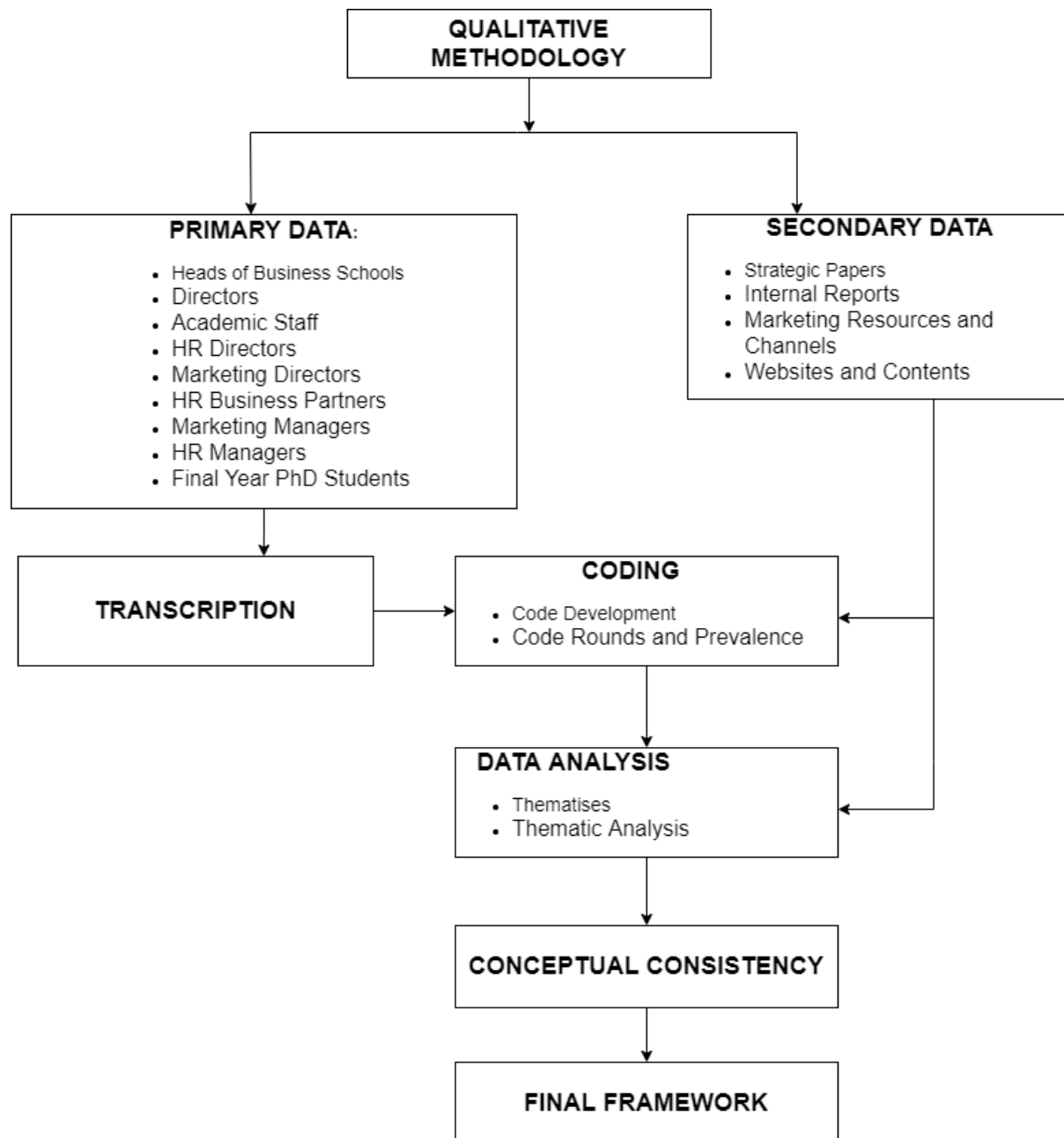
To achieve the objective of the research, the study will take a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, using an expert industry panel (Moroko & Uncles, 2009). A key benefit of this approach is to gain practitioner perspective and perception for the advancement of theory and to provide substantial empirical evidence for the research question. The study will identify four business schools in the UK and will carry out in-depth interviews among ca. 75 industry participants as described in **table 10**. The study will also apply a case study review of documents to support the evidence for key research question. The research will apply a theoretical purposive sampling to establish the sampling framework. Based on the review of the existing employer branding literature, the study will identify relevant areas of theory and specialist practice. The sampling frame will be constructed to reflect the spectrum of social exchange theory, brand equity theory, resource-based view, employee attraction and employee retention. It will select Individual participants based on their standing in the industry as well as relevant experience within the subject area. It will consider as appropriate expert informants as participants for the study, as they will offer efficient ways to provide informed perceptions on employer branding process across higher education institutions, business schools specifically within the UK. The qualitative study will draw on data to be collected at selected business schools in the UK to address the overarching research question:

RQ. 3. How does HEI employer branding processes influence employer brand outcome?

To achieve this aim, **semi-structured interviews** across selected business schools in the UK will form the primary empirical material to answer the research questions (Myers, 2010; Lee, 1999). In order to understand the employer brand process within each business school, the study will interview heads of business schools (HoS), deputy (HoS) and senior management. Interviews will also include Academic staff including HR, with in-depth knowledge of university branding, staff recruitment and employee well-being and competences. The study will utilize where possible, secondary data in the form of strategy papers, internal reports, marketing resources and channels, employed by the business schools, to establish linkages between the first research question and the overarching subject of this study. Similarly, to achieve a cross-sectional understanding of the impact of employer branding on employees' intention to stay, the study will also interview through random selection, academic staff, including junior and senior academic staff, relatively new and longer serving academics. Key areas of expertise where the researcher will focus the interview

include employer brand strategy, internal and external communication, and employee attraction and employee retention.

Figure 5: Research Design Flowchart



1. *Employer brand strategy*

Heads of Business Schools, deans of colleges and head of departments will respond to **RQ1**, with a view to understand approaches of employer branding and the factors that drive the approach thereby HEI branding models. Furthermore, questions will aim at understanding how employer branding and the process involved in developing the strategy as well as the extent to which it

embeds it within the organisation's strategy. It also aims to understand how intentional the process is either as an explicit or implicit action.

2. Internal/External Communication

Heads of marketing, marketing managers, HR business-partners as well as HR Managers will respond to questions with the purpose of understanding how they operationalise the strategic mechanism employed to deliver the employer brand within the organization. In doing so, these set of questions will investigate the composition of team involved in the employer branding process. It will also investigate the rationale of the target audience as well as key agencies used to build and deliver employer branding in the organization.

3. Employee Attraction/ Retention

Academic staff will respond to **RQ2**. This is to understand the value proposition of academic staff and their perception of branding message relative to intention to remain or leave. HR managers, HoS and academic staff will respond to **RQ3**. This will allow for triangulation of research (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012)

4. Research Procedure

To achieve an empirically based understanding of the employer branding process in HEP's. The research will gather data from business schools in the South-eastern region of UK regarding their employer branding process. The universities will represent a broad range of HEs within the southeast England. The primary source of data will be semi-structured in-depth interviews, carried out on-site at each university. All interviews will follow an interview guide that will consist of open-ended questions specifically designed to investigate the identified aspects of the process (for example, internal marketing, the role of leadership, support of line management, the alignment of internal and external values of communication etc.). The aim of this approach is to ensure consistent interview data that will facilitate easy interpretation and provision of opportunistic exploration of themes with respondents where it necessary and appropriate. Research will gather Interview data from staff identified as being involved in the day-to-day management of the employer brand process. These include- recruitment, on boarding, training and development, performance management and rewards.

Following on these therefore, prospective respondents on the interview will include HR, marketing, brand managers, internal communication, external communication, employee relation

staff and suppliers involved in the employer brand delivery for example, external, advertising, design, HR, and recruitment agency staff.

The research will also include employees not involved in the employer-brand management process but have the following characteristics: functional positions, level of seniority and length of tenure. To assess the impact of employer branding process, research will further assess its impact on target audience. In doing so, it will carry out impact assessment on the following employer branding outcomes: attraction, employee engagement and retention.

To provide a deeper exploration, the research will supplement interview data with additional sources. They will include sources such as documents, (internal and external brand guidelines; employee handbook, recruitment advertising, employee/recruitment brochures, employer branding strategy and planning documents etc.). Multimedia data (intra-and-extranet pages, induction videos as well as staff directed video presentations) including other materials (promotional materials relating to university values such as posters, T-shirts, screensavers, audio messages to staff and so on)

The research proposes to carry out a pilot study first to test the idea before attempting a full-scale field project. The selected pilot study area is Kent Business School as well as Christ Church Canterbury University respectively. The rationale behind the choice of the two universities is clearly, the proximity to the researcher and the criteria that both universities are within the same location. Even though they appear in different categories on the universities league table and seem not to be in competition with each other, it will be interesting to under-study the processes adopted by each university and the impact of the employer brand process on the key HR outcomes. I have included the proposed interview guide summary table below.

There are 31 interview question guides divided into 2 Sections. The first section consists of four general questions. The purpose of these questions is to help open conversation with the respondent and promote comfortable environment for the interview. The second section consist of 27 core interview questions focusing on the key areas of interest for the research work. (See table 11).

Some questions occur in all the segments however, questions vary depending on the segment and the emphasis of each segment relative to the research objective. The questions are only suggestive and function as guides to the researcher in steering the interviews. However, depending on the nature of response from the participants, researcher may review questions to seek further clarification or widen the scope of knowledge for the purpose of research. There are four areas of expertise, which includes employer-branding strategy-here, the researcher seeks to understand the objectives of an organization's employer brand strategy. In doing so, the research seeks to know

if the employer brand strategy is explicit or implicit and the extent to which the organizational management engage with and manage the employer brand. Key respondents in the area will include-heads of business schools, deans of schools and Human resource directors in the organization. The researcher has designated five interview questions to cover this area of research.

Table 7: Table of Interview Questions

Areas of Expertise	Number of Interview Questions
General Questions	4
Employer Branding Strategy	6
Employer Brand Process	6
Communication	5
Talent Attraction/ Retention	7
Total	31

4.8.2 General Interview Questions

The purpose of this section is to provide a background information about the respondent and create a familiar atmosphere in which the researcher and the respondent can talk freely. The questions serve as icebreakers aimed at assisting the researcher to transition into the core interview questions.

- Tell me about your current role. How long have you been in the role?
- What do you do in your current position?
- Tell me about your experience prior to your current role.
- How did you get into this role?

4.8.3 Core Interview Questions

These questions aim to understand the key areas of interest for the researcher. There are 27 questions in this section, see table (). These questions cover the fundamental process of employer branding by investigating respondent's opinion and insight to employer branding processes and mechanisms. They also address the impact of employer branding on talent management outcomes. To achieve the purpose, a pilot interview was conducted using the set of questions. This was to understand the impact of the questions in addressing the defined objective of the research and to identify ambiguity. Feedback from the pilot study were reflected in the adjusting the question as well as the wordings of the questions.

The questions were designed to be face to face semi-structured interviews. This was achieved in the first 15 percent of the data collection process. However, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became necessary to transition all data collection process online. In consultation with my research team, it was advised to change the mode of data collection. For this reason, further interviews were conducted via virtual platforms. Below is a table of interview channels and platforms

Table 8: Table of Interview Channels

Mode of data Collection	Interviews	Percentage
Face-to face	11	15
Zoom	45	60
Skype	7	10
Team	11	15
Total	75	100

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed afterwards, with all identifying information removed. Transcripts (typed copies of interviews) are kept electronically on a password protected and encrypted computer. All interviews are anonymised, and transcripts will be seen by members of the research team employed by The Kent Business School. This was mentioned in the participant information sheet issued to every interview participant.

Table 9: Respondent Categories

Areas of Expertise	Position	Institution
Employer Branding Strategy	Heads of Business Schools Deans of Colleges Heads of Department	Business Schools
Internal/External Communication	Head of Marketing Marketing Managers Director of HR HR Business Partners HR Managers	Business Schools Marketing Department Consultancies
Employee Attraction	Professors Senior Lecturers Lecturers	Business Schools
Employee Retention	Professors Senior Lecturers Lecturers	Business Schools
Employer-Brand Process	Director of HR HR Business Partners HR Managers Head of Marketing Marketing Managers	Business Schools Marketing Department Human Resource Department

5. Respondent Recruitment

Interview respondents comprised of academic talents at various academic cadres in universities around the southeast of England. They were categorised into academic lecturers, comprising of senior lecturers, professors, and chairs of research institutes. A second category of interview respondents were human resource practitioners, marketing consultants and marketing communication directors of universities. A further category was heads of business schools and Directors of Human resource management in higher education institutions. Access to participants was gained by following the criteria for research participant as mentioned in the previous section. Firstly, an internet search was carried out on university websites in the southeast England region for academic lecturers and heads of schools. Particular interest was for academic staff and heads of business schools. Based on the result of the internet search, 15 universities were located who had outstanding business schools and, in some cases, they were called management schools. In this case, they were not substantive business school and did not share the level of autonomy that business schools share within the university organizational structure. Nevertheless, this schools shared the characteristics of business schools and were in some cases positioned to become business schools in the future. After identifying the business schools, we proceeded to check the university staff profile for contact of potential participants for interviews. In doing so, we followed the already drawn participant respondent criteria. Contacts for potential participants were collected via the university staff profile page and a list of potential participants was drawn. A special email invitation was designed for the purpose and using MS Word device, bulk emails were sent to potential participants. (See Appendix for email sample). A total of 255 emails were sent to participants comprising of the various categories needed for the empirical work. From the number of invitations sent out, 120 people responded to the initial email. 80 emails were not responded to and 55 emails were returned as error messages. These were due to incorrect email addresses. We therefore focused attention on potential participants who had responded to our initial contact. 80 contacts gave direct positive response and willingness to participate in the interview. These group of participants were then followed up with further emails to establish contact and discussion on the study and more interview details for example, appointment dates, were scheduled. These set of contacts also received interview guides as well as consent forms. (See appendix). 40 participants responded with a negative.

Table 10: Sources of Data

Description of Sample	Data Source	Interview Type	
		Face-Face	Virtual
Employer brand strategy	Heads of Business Schools, Deans of Colleges, Heads of Departments	4	7
Internal/external Communication	HR Directors, HR Business Partners, Marketing Directors, HR Managers		12
Employer Brand Process	HR Directors, HR Business Partners, HR Managers, Marketing /Communication Directors, Marketing Managers		
Employee Attraction	Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers, PhD Researchers	15	48
Employee Attraction	Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers, PhD Researchers		
Total		19	56
		75	

In doing so, the study adopted a random sampling strategy to choose a sample from a population (Saunders et al, 2012) According to Gravetter and Forzano, (2011) the method allows for less bias from the selection procedure and should result in representative samples. It is also suggested that findings from random sampling strategy allows for generalization due to the representativeness of the sampling technique (Saunders et al, 2012). A disadvantage of the method is that it may be costly for a face-to face interview due to geographical location and time consideration.

4.8.4 Approach to Research Data

The major focus of the qualitative research was to understand the process and delivery of employer branding and the corresponding impact on the identified stakeholders of the employer brand. To achieve this purpose, the study adopted a thematic analysis to the interview transcripts (Grbich, 1999; Braun & Clarke, 2006) and was informed by applying constructivist grounded theory

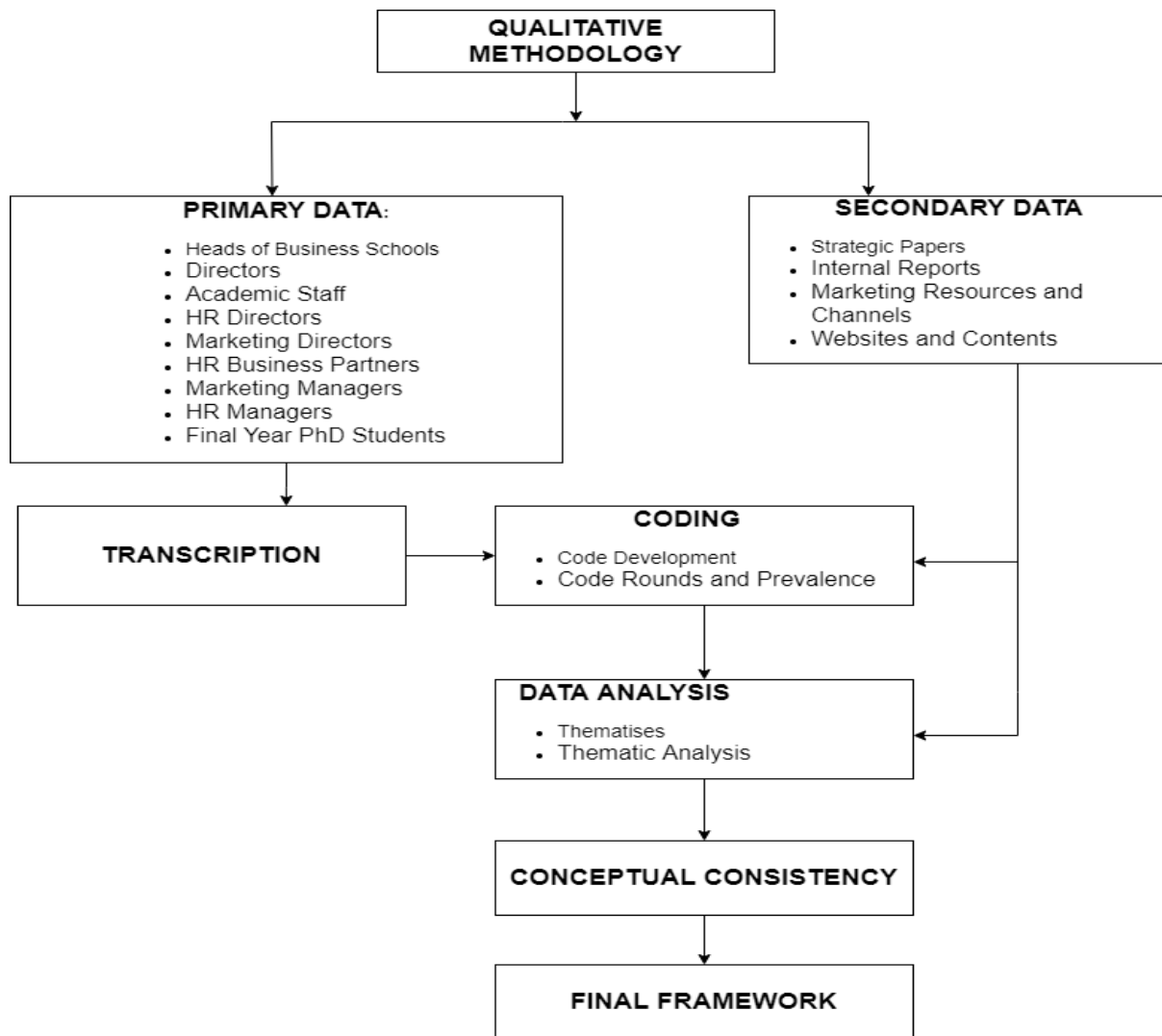
procedures (Charmaz, 2014) which afforded the researcher the opportunity to systematically analyse employer branding processes and their antecedents. I familiarized myself with the dataset by reading and re-reading the transcripts and making initial notes during the process as well as writing down ideas in my codebook. The purpose of the exercise was two-fold; namely, to verify the accuracy of the transcription and to gain deeper understanding of the participants' responses to the interview questions on the transcript. In compliance with standard qualitative research practice (Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2016) and as part of the coding process, I generated initial codes by highlighting selected lines that I considered important or relevant to the overall research analysis and the particularly to the research question (See Appendix). To strengthen the premise of this chapter, illustrative quotes from the interview participants are presented to provide to support findings and themes generated that for the purpose of analysis. It also serves the purpose of providing raw data evidence for interpreting raw data when an inductive approach to explanation is adopted for analysis by moving from specifics to general phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014). The section also provides tables highlighting the corresponding sub-themes emerging from the coding process and further deepening the rigour and complexity of the analysis.

The search for themes involved the collation of similar codes and grouped into potential themes. After which all data were gathered for potential themes. Themes were reviewed that means; they were checked to determine its relationship to the dataset. A thematic map and diagram were generated, and words were checked for their fit to the dataset.

4.8.5 Selection of Themes

Themes were selected by identifying and refining selection of themes through their linkages to the overarching question; their relevance and significant impression they made from the lens of the researcher as well as the emphasis provide by the participants. Thus, themes were derived from the aggregation of the highlighted accounts from participants known as first/ second- order coding process (Saunders, 2015). Specifically, through this process, I was keen to find specific of linkages between participants' responses and look for complexity and associations that will present

Figure 6:Flow Chat of Research Method



meaningful ideas to support the research. To this end, themes were chosen by the frequency of their occurrence and the depth and level of intensity in which they described the phenomenon relative to the research questions. NVIVO was primarily used as the tool for thematic analysis. Information was fed into the NVIVO 12 software and then coded based on prior expert knowledge of the subject and from the conceptual framework derived from the literature review. The initial coding produced over 45 themes. They were subsequently recategorized into a second coding and then conceptual inferences were derived to inform theoretical inferences. I am aware that a researcher's point of view in deciding what selection of words to highlight and subsequently code for themes is of themselves subjective, however I understand the limitations in authentic and true realities of the participants because they present a disparity between the experiences of participants, their realities, and their experiences (Brunner, 1986) therefore, capturing the whole experiences of participants through interview responses are of themselves quite limited. However, my responsibility as a researcher required remaining as true as possible to the views informed by

the interview responses to perform my analysis. A significant point to note is that the interview guide (See Appendix D) was primarily to ensure that I covered the relevant areas for my research during the interviews whereas, the main determinant of the interview flow were the participants as they allowed for a deeper conversation and subsequently producing a richer and robust dataset for the research analysis.

In reporting the findings for this study, the challenge of drafting and re-drafting the findings were not anticipated but became very essential and an on-going process to underscore the iterative process of a qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) and to address in-depth, the questions posed by the research. During the process of drafting, I found it challenging to let go some data however, I opine they were necessary to allow for coherence and density (See appendix for amount of data used from each participant).

4.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, chapter discussed the philosophical framework that underpinned the research. In doing so, it considered, the research thesis as a means of contextualising the philosophical paradigms on which research are carried out. It also recognised the debates surrounding management research philosophy and identified my position within the debate. Moreover, it addresses the underlying assumptions that make up the components of a research philosophy, which include the identification of the research paradigm and aligning it to the key assumptions that make up the research paradigm namely: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and the research method. Furthermore, it identifies and show clarity in the direction of the research both in the design and in structure of the research project. It also clarifies the anticipated contribution to the field based on the philosophical underpinning of the research. By addressing the research philosophy, this section provides justification to the type of data the research has gathered and the approach to data analysis.

Given the fragmented nature of management research philosophy, this study recognised that philosophical assumptions underpinned every research whether explicit or implicit and that they embody key elements that inform the design and evaluation of the research project as well as contribute to achieving the objective of a research. These elements were considered central to research and invariably affected the quality and components of management research (Easterly-Smith et al, 2015). On one hand of management research, the unification paradigm proposes a strong research philosophy, paradigm, and methodology whereas, to understand the diversity of research and the strength it brings to research, pluralistic approach argues that it enriches business and management research (Saunders et al, 2015). My research however argued that business and

management are not mutually exclusive and that the diversity and multiplicity of paradigms is a strength to the course.

The section further argued that an understanding of a research philosophy fulfils vital contributions to the research work by providing clarity to theory of knowledge. It In so doing, researchers can clearly position their epistemology and research methods order to make creative contribution to the field of study. The chapter also provided insight into the research design by clarifying the kind of evidence this study gathered and how the researcher interpreted data to provide answers to the research investigation. It further helps researchers understand what works best for the research project based on the objectives of the research. In the next section, the study will discuss findings from the empirical research. It will be closely aligned to the research questions as proposed by the study in the previous chapter.

The qualitative study will draw on data to be collected at selected business schools in the UK to address the overarching research question: **RQ. 3.** How does HEI employer branding processes influence employer brand outcome?

To achieve this aim, **semi-structured interviews** across selected business schools in the UK will form the primary empirical material to answer the research questions (Myers, 2010; Lee, 1999). To understand the employer brand process within each business school, the study will interview heads of business schools (HoS), deputy (HoS) and senior management. Interviews will also include Academic staff including HR, with in-depth knowledge of university branding, staff recruitment and employee well-being and competences.

The study will utilize where possible, secondary data in the form of strategy papers, internal reports, marketing resources and channels, employed by the business schools, to establish linkages between the first research question and the overarching subject of this study. Similarly, to achieve a cross-sectional understanding of the impact of employer branding on employees' intention to stay, the study will also interview through random selection, academic staff, including junior and senior academic staff, relatively new and longer serving academics. Key areas of expertise where the researcher will focus the interview include employer brand strategy, internal and external communication, and employee attraction and employee retention.

Chapter Five. Findings

5.1 Introduction

Adhering to a grounded theory approach, participants were asked the same questions, and, in some cases, questions were further explored depending on the answer from participants. Care was taken to ensure that additional weight was not added on the codes. For example, every participant was asked questions regarding what they enjoyed about being working in a university but not every participant was asked the question about the importance of leadership to the attractiveness of the university as an employer of choice. The later question was asked of participants 13 through 75 since leadership began to emerge as a code after the first 13 interviews were complete. In the following sections, emerging themes from the code are presented. There were three themes with sub-themes emerging from the codes: employer brand antecedents (EBA), employer brand stakeholders (EBS) and employer brand process (EBP). It was observed through the analysis of the findings that there was a relationship between employer brand antecedents and employer brand stakeholders. Furthermore, within employer brand stakeholders, an active relationship between the key actors of the employer brand stakeholders was also observed.

5.2 Synopsis of Research Findings

Having discussed the method of data analysis in the previous section, this section outlines the findings that emerged from the dataset. The findings from the empirical analysis focuses on understanding the operative mechanisms that explain employer branding processes in UK higher education institutions with particular interest in Business Schools, and the implications on talent management outcomes such as employee attraction and retention. Given the qualitative approach to the study, it was crucial to present the work in themes. As a result, the subsequent chapters are organized into the themes that have emerged from the study with each section covering the employer branding process.

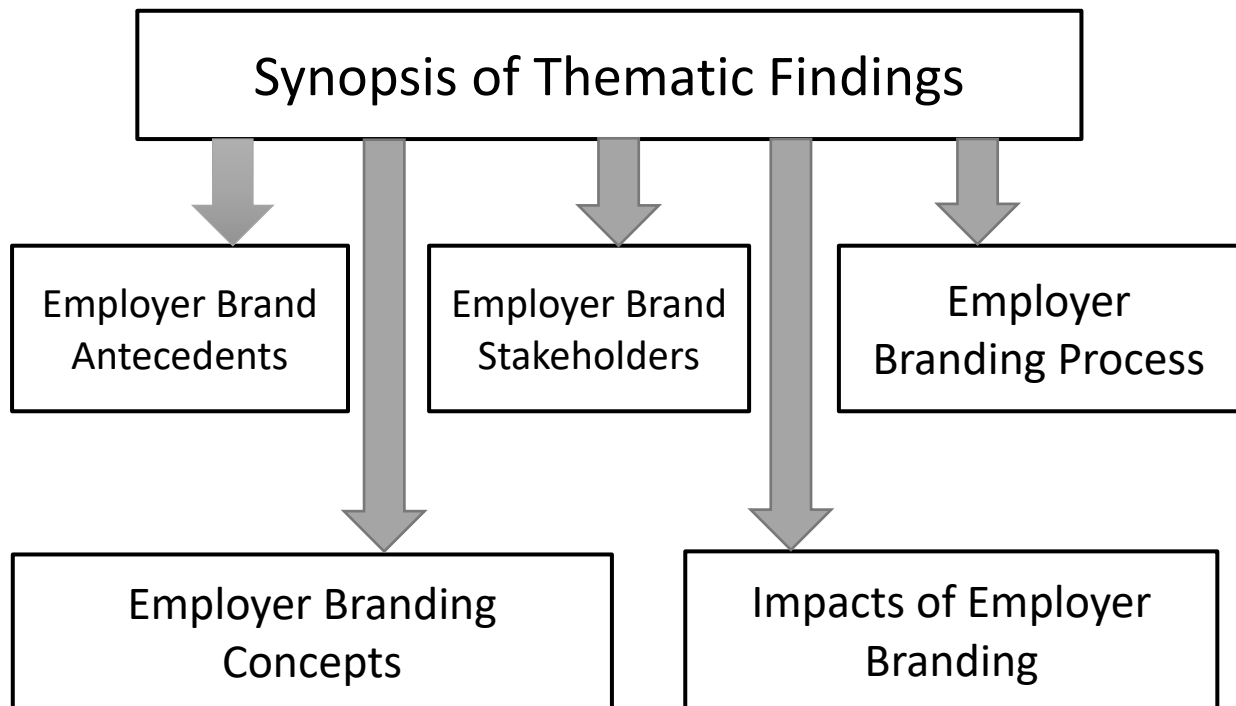
The first section presents the antecedents of employer branding from the perspective of employees which underscores the importance of building an employer brand strategy from the perspective of stakeholders interpret the brand process and the extent of their engagement in the employer brand process is also presented in this section. The process of building the employer brand is the focus of the third section. This section presents the empirical evidence to the operative mechanism of UK higher education's employer branding. Section four of this chapter presents data on

implications of employer branding to talent management. The focus is on the outcome of employer branding on talent management.

Table 11: Thematic Analysis

Key Factors (Themes)	Key Dimensions	Associated Dimensions (where applicable)	Associated Research Questions
Employer Brand Antecedents (EBA)	<i>Employer brand attributes</i>	▪ <i>Employer value propositions</i>	RQ1*
	<i>Employer brand concepts</i>	▪ <i>Brand Reputation</i> ▪ <i>Brand Awareness</i> ▪ <i>Brand Positioning</i> ▪ <i>Brand Identity</i>	
Employer Brand Process (EBP)	<i>Brand building</i>	▪ <i>Brand attachment</i> ▪ <i>Brand autonomy</i> ▪ <i>Employer brand architecture</i>	RQ2
	<i>Brand communication</i>	▪ <i>Touchpoints</i>	
	<i>Brand alignment</i>	▪ <i>Facilitators</i>	
	<i>Brand delivery</i>	▪ <i>Enforcers</i>	
Employer Brand Stakeholders (EBS)	<i>Organization</i>	▪ <i>Human Resource</i> ▪ <i>Talent management</i>	RQ3
	<i>Current employee</i>	▪ <i>Employee voice</i> ▪ <i>Psychological contract</i>	
	<i>Potential employee</i>	▪ <i>Brand visibility</i> ▪ <i>Person-fit</i>	
	<i>Former employee</i>	▪ <i>Brand Ambassador</i> ▪ <i>Brand Influencer</i>	
Employer brand relationships (EBA/EBS)	<i>Talent attraction (+)</i> <i>(-)</i>	▪ <i>Current employees</i> ▪ <i>Potential employees</i> ▪ <i>Former employees</i>	RQ3
	<i>Talent retention (+) (-)</i>		

Figure 7: Synopsis of Thematic Findings



5.3 Employer Brand Antecedents

Employer brand antecedent emerged as an umbrella term used to describe the key dimensions that trigger the employer brand strategy. Within this umbrella, the findings observed two key dimensions to the theme. The first dimension is the employer brand attributes. It is used to describe the elements that make up the employer brand value propositions. These are essentially, the sets of values that employees perceive as points of attraction and on which they make their decision to work for an organization or remain in the organization. Two participant AT1 and AT2, notably capture the essence of brand attributes as the set of tangible things that draws a potential employee to the organization

That's what you actually get to see before you have any experience with the brand itself. So that again, if it is positive, it draws you in, if it's a bad reputation, or, but if it's not that good, or just very, maybe average, then that may be something that may be something which is a deterrent to you at the time. So really, so there's that element of what draws you in, then at the point of now you decide that you want to go somewhere, then you have this stage of life, you're called in for the interview, and you get to actually know more so about that specific role, because they're very different for different people, then at that point, you can actually decide that it is not the place for me, or it is a place for me based on the specifications of the role **(Participant AT1)**

Participant AT2 underlines employer brand attributes as key messages targeted at the intended audience to attract them.

You see that in terms of what you are doing, the message you're passing across to them and working in attracting those target audience that you want. (Participant AT2)

The second dimension emerging from the findings of employer brand antecedent is the brand concepts. These are a set of conceptual processes that contribute to building the employer antecedent. In the following section, these key dimensions are explained and supported by excerpts from interview transcript of participants.

5.3.1 Brand attributes

Over fifty -five codes were assigned to brand attributes as a key dimension of the employer brand antecedent. Based on the responds from participants, sixteen associated dimensions were identified as value propositions of the employer brand. These value propositions represent a set of key elements that make up the attractiveness of the employer to the employee or potential employee. They are based on the questions asked participants on what key factors informed their decision to apply for a position at a university and how these factors have influenced their decision to stay longer in the university. The question further explored participants response on how these factors influenced their decision to leave the university for another university. Based on the response from participants, sixteen value propositions were identified as factors influencing academic talent attraction to higher education institutions and responsible for the retention of academic talents in UK higher education institutions. Higher education employee value propositions are addressed in the next sections with supporting direct quotes from participants. The study identified two key value proposition factors: (1) attraction factors and (2) retention factors.

5.3.2 Value propositions

The study identified thirteen (13) value propositions by participants who asserted that these factors played key roles in their decision to apply to universities and were key points for consideration to stay longer in the university or decide to move to a different university. (See Table 15). The first set of value propositions were observed to have higher ability to influence talent attraction to higher education institutions. They are explained below.

Table 12: Analytical Impact

Attraction Factors	No of Vignettes	Retention Factors	No of Vignettes
Location	40	Career Progression	29
Ranking	36	Collegiality	20
Reputation	38	Diversity	14
Remuneration	19	Leadership	43
Reputation	19	Reputation	38
Immigration Support	7	Research Quality	50
Job Content	23	Support Culture	27
		Work Environment	40
		Workload	15

1. Immigration Support

Participants shared a unanimous response that providing immigration support to potential employees were of paramount concern to them when seeking for institutions to work. About 10 percent of the respondents had immigration backgrounds and the 100% of these categories of respondents agreed that visa support, immigration sponsorship and the type of contract for example permanent as opposed to fixed flexible contract were elements that influenced their decision to a university for employment. Participant IS1, an ECA in reputable business school notably responded when asked the question.

I mean, that's a given, isn't it? Why would you apply to a university that doesn't offer sponsorship for international students? I mean, I don't even think about that anymore. It's so engrained I only accept offer to universities where they do sponsor **(Participant IS-1)**

Two participant who had recently finished their PhD and were searching for lectureship positions was asked if that is a criterion when looking for a role in a university:

I mean, instant filtration happens in my head. I don't even think about it. So yes, we were all for sponsorship **(Participant IS-2)**

The second participant responded noting that value propositions for international applicants has a slight emphasis on immigration support by the potential higher education institution that was currently hiring:

I think taking it from the international student perspective, the main thing I'll look out for if I put my academic society in, I take the international student perspective, then the job should be able to, to give me that security in terms of probably applying for visa. In my mind, that is the most important thing I look out for best. **(Participant IS-3)**

In general, immigration support represented a value proposition that is peculiar to special category of academic talents in the UK higher education sector. These are academic talents with immigration backgrounds. It was observed that these set of academic talents were mostly represented in the early career academics which included fresh international non-EU doctoral students. However, it is believed that post-Brexit, this factor will become a key value proposition for many other international academic talents as the UK no longer have its member in the European union.

2. Job Content

Participants were keen in mentioning job content and job expectation as key point of attraction to the university. It was observed that 75% of participants across the key interview participant categories responded to this question and affirmed that job content or the job expectation from the university was a key factor that influenced their decision for a role in certain universities.

I look out for jobs that suits well with my capabilities (Participant JC-1)

Another participant emphasised the importance of job description as a factor for application:

I also look at the other staff members, other lecturers in and university in my department that I hope to go in for the dual credit courses that they teach and see which ones are qualify and have your certificate, the job descriptions and person specifications that they put on their sites. (Participant JC-3)

An experienced career academic shared her motivation in moving to her current university to be the prospect of the job role:

I'm a professor of business education. It is quite a rare role in business school. So there aren't that many of us there aren't that Many business schools have them. And I'm only aware of sort of now, and I'm trying to make contact with other people in a similar role in other universities. But I'm only aware of sort of two or three of the universities have a similar role. (Participant JC-5)

Principally, it was observed that academic talents focus on teaching or research. Therefore, participants identified these key components as points of reference when searching for a role in the universities. Participant JC-4, a mid-career academic emphasised her passion for teaching as expressed the comments:

If I find something that pleases me, in terms of like you have your teaching, you have some of the research (Participant JC-4)

It was observed that across the range of participant categories, emphasis on job content/job expectation varied among participants. While some participants were keen about the job content, other participants at a different career stage did not identify this value proposition when compared to across the participant categories. The following comment from an experienced academic, clearly support this finding:

*Well, at this stage of my career through retirement, not that far off. And evidently, there's a certain amount of repetition to every aspect of the job, and that I've done much of it before and after many times, but at this point, the thing that most excites me and pleases me is getting on with my research, published a book last year called *Management Studies in crisis*, which I greatly enjoyed doing, and I'm still busy promoting that and different forums. So I would say fundamentally, at this stage, what is most appealing is the research and the writing, what is least appealing is the administration and anything to do with a management rule, which I have never wanted, and have managed to largely avoid and try to very senior management rules* **(Participant JC-6)**

Other academics have diversity of interests beyond teaching and research. This is evident by the impact their research makes in the business environment. Subsequently, they are drawn to job contents/ expectations that allow them the opportunity to make impacts outside of academia. This was clearly captured by the comment from (Participant JC-8)

Well, I enjoy research in teaching very much. And I enjoy the impact side. So going out, and, you know, dealing with parliamentarians, MPs, politicians, pressure groups, trade unions, I've always really enjoyed that. I enjoy the research side, you know, the thinking, the lonely time, when you're reflecting on what you're doing the crafting of purpose, I do enjoy that. And I really enjoy teaching, if I could spend all my time research and teaching, I would happily do that. **(Participant JC-8)**

Participants have differing opinions on the job content offered by higher education institutions. Essentially, three key pathways were emphasised by academic talents. The teaching pathway, research pathway and enterprise pathway. Participants were interested in a combination of the three pathways depending on their interest and priority. It was also observed that job content/ job expectation was common value proposition among the three sub-categories of interview participants.

3. Location

Location received about 40 vignettes as gained an important point as a key value proposition for academic talents in UK universities. About 50% of interview participants mentioned location as factor they consider when they consider when thinking about a move to a new university. A lecturer in university in the southeast of England responded:

also sometimes also consider the location of the institution that you're going to, sometimes it can be on the random outskirts of the UK and you're thinking as a very big move to go, you know, also looking at its location in relation to maybe certain areas more local, more central areas rather. So they're affected academia, there's so many factors to consider. But some of them I think the ones about location are more personal factors more so than based on **(Participant L-1)**

Proximity to the university and the attraction of the city or town where the university is located is an important factor to consider for prospective academic talents. 50% of the participants alluded that the town where the university is located is a strong factor to consider. About 35 % of the respondents were male participants and of these, those with families felt that location was important in their decision for attraction. A female participant and an early career academic, when asked to describe the process that led to her current employer she responded in the following comment:

I was applying to universities in the London periphery, because I live in London. And for the time being back then, I didn't want to change. I wanted to give myself a boost to be able to commute. So within an hour within an hour and a half one way and a half. (Participant L-2)

Yet, another participant was excited about the proximity of the workplace to notably famous cities.

I think it was for me for three things. I mean, obviously, its location in in London, and London. And, and the point being is, is that it is London is a world class city. I've seen London over my time, you know, change, evolve, grow on whatever and is one of the you know, it's not the greatest. It's certainly the one of you know, always be in anyone's talk to, you know, if you're American, you're probably still think a little bit of New York. You know, whatever the Chinese you're probably know, but reality is London's always on the list. Yeah, the one we're working on, is right in the heart of the city. (Participant L-3)

Another participant, a female early career academic with an international background addressed proximity to key infrastructures for example, the airport as an added advantage to location. It was observed that this factor can compete favourably among other value propositions like competitive salary.

They offered a kind of competitive salaries. Despite isn't London the salary was pretty good. And for me being a foreigner a way to attract me so was this location close to an important airport to be able to go back to my country. So I'd say those were the things that attracted me the most, the convenient location close to London and close to Stansted (Participant L-5)

This value was highlighted by a senior HR director as important factor to consider for the talent pool and prospective employees. The participant commented that universities in certain location tend to be more competitive than universities in other locations evidenced by the applicant traffic whenever a vacancy exist in highly sort after locations.

So you know, where we are located, we are attractive because we are quite near London. And having said that, I noticed because I used to be a manager, I used to be an acting head of a department of 40 people. So I know that when we advertise, we don't attract as many applicants as universities in XXX. Like people in XXXX tend not to want to travel all the way to West London. Well, whereas if you're in XXX they get more applicants. Okay, so what is the location we are not as strategic strategically placed as the

London university but still good, we are still in the south in a, you know, quite a well populated area. So that's what one attraction (Participant L-2)

The campus location is another attraction factor for potential academic talents. A participant who had recently moved to a new university addressed the question on attraction point like this:

I think the location is also of interest. I've seen people come up that I was delighted building. Okay. Yes. It's using the layout of the compass. I think that makes people won't trust that in that walking there. It looks like a proper University (Participant L-3)

However, as a factor, location while very effective in bringing talents to the employer may not be very effective in keeping talents. An experienced female academic from a reputable university in the Midlands commented on the shortfall of location as a value proposition:

So some new location decision, so my wife lives and works in Nottingham, we were both students at Nottingham. So we had a house here. So when I started doing my PhD, I did my PhD in my hometown in Sheffield. But I was really still living in Nottingham and commuting. So after I did my PhD, took a research job at Cardiff, but I was doing a long commute from Nottingham to Cardiff, then working my way back closer to home, I took a job at Nottingham, and I left Nottingham mainly because I've just been there a long time (Participant L-4)

Location was considered an effective attraction value proposition. Findings show that it competes arguably with other value propositions in terms of geography and university campus aesthetics. However, location is observed to be limited in its ability to sustainably influence talent retention.

4. Ranking

University rankings among academics was mentioned with 36 vignettes representing about half of the participant responses. Ranking, as a value proposition was observed to be common among mid-career academics and experienced academics. The finding observed that different academic talents had differing mind set about the role of ranking on their choice to remain in a university or be attracted to the university or business school.

In some cases, participants looked beyond other value factors for example, the research interest and focused on the ranking of the business school or university. It was also observed that ranking was different from the reputation of the university. One participant, a mid-career academic, was elaborate in responding to the question about the factor that endear them to the university:

I guess, for me personally, it is getting to a place where in my specific area, not just in terms of the university, has a good reputation and we are ranked because you will look at the league tables (Participant R-1)

Two participants and senior lecturers from a reputable UK university responded when asked to describe key factors they consider influencing a decision to move:

I looked at the rankings before I move to the university. The department in particular is ranked high, in the UK. (Participant R-2)

The second participant indicated the level ranking play in the process of application.

I feel like primarily it is the ranking or standing of university kind of will dictate now, what comes after that (Participant R-3)

Participants suggest the role of university league tables in the process of finding the best place to be and universities show this as a key signal to indicate their position and highlight where they stand in the higher education labour market. A senior HR officer highlighted the importance of leagues tables in talent attraction clearly in the following comment:

So, for employee mostly I would say that..., we look at the league tables for the ranking. So, we are very conscious about where we are under the tables (Participant R-4)

A mid-career academic was very apt in responding to the question about what they like in their current university which further underscores the role of the league table:

It is not a Russell Group University, which I would possibly prefer (Participant R-5)

Ranking remains a strong factor for talent attraction in higher education institutions. The level of its influence as an employee value proposition is very high however, it is not considered a high influencer in talent retention.

5. Remuneration

Participants expressed interest in remuneration including financial rewards a value factor for talent attraction in higher education. Remuneration had approximately 19 vignettes which represent about 20% of participant response. This was in response to the question about what attracted the employee to the organization. In some cases, the question was further explored to mean what employees look for when seeking to move to a new employer. A mid-career academic was highly spirited in their response almost laughing:

They pay much, much, much higher salary (Participant RE-1)

Another mid-career academic participant ranked this factor very high on a scale:

Yeab, for me, this (Money) is the most the most important factor for instance, I cannot say that I fortunately or unfortunately, money is a part of life... (Participant RE-2)

In response to the process of application, an experienced academic in a reputable university stated the following:

So, I look for vacancies. And I saw that XXX had the highest minimum salary (Participant RE-3)

Participants noted the importance of competitive salary as an important factor for attraction however, it was also observed that this value proposition had the ability to act as a trade-off for

other value propositions for example ranking. A participant who is a mid-career academic responded and demonstrated this observation in the following comment:

So, our salary is reasonably good, unless you go to other universities, which require a completely different kind of ballgame altogether. right here you can say that the salary is very competitive, right? And even if I now move to an out of Russell Group, I may have to sacrifice my salary, or I will have a very marginal increase
(Participant RE-4)

6. Reputation

University reputation is known by participants in terms of the perceived prestige the university has acquired either through outstanding research quality, departmental research impacts or the quality of individuals that make up the research environment. One or a combination of these factors define the reputation of the university or business school. Participants were asked to address key factors that got them attracted to the organization. They were further asked in some cases to name factors they would be looking for when seeking to interest in anew university of business school. There were varied responses. As a factor, reputation received 38 vignettes representing about 50% of participant responses. This weighting underscores the importance of reputation as a value proposition for talent attraction. For example, a participant who is a senior lecturer in a business school was keen on the reputation of the programme offered by the business school. His response is captured in the following comment:

In terms of my academic career, it's to get a very highly reputable university with excellent IB programme international business. So that's from the career side. **(Participant Rep-1)**

Another participant was very expressive when responding to factors that influence the decision to choose a university for employment in the following comment:

obviously, also, the reputation of the business school is very important. **(Participant Rep-2)**

Participants were observed to have this factor as the key reference point but also and system to measure other value propositions for example research quality. A mid-career academic addressed this factor in response to the question on talent attraction:

...looking for a unique university that has a relatively good reputation. And for me, that is also an indicator of the type of work that you will be required to do. **(Participant Rep-3)**

This sentiment of quality linked to reputation echoed by a senior academic of a prestigious university:

I like the most, the quality of the business school. I could say in a way, we have that reputation of being a good business school **(Participant Rep-4)**

Another participant, a male experienced career academic highlighted the importance of this factor by rating it as mentioned in the comment:

Okay, that's gonna be first thing, a university with a good reputation, very important. So, I would not go, let us say, to a worse University, I would need to go to more reputable than UVA higher in the rankings, including in the area working. (Participant Rep-5)

A professor who has spent more than 10 years in the university responded to the question metaphorically:

It's like saying you're for Barcelona or Manchester United or Chelsea, helps you know, your value as a player is enhanced by the fact that you play for a prestigious side. So, the fact that you are, you know, in a prestigious team helps. (Participant Rep-6)

However, despite its importance as a factor for attraction, not every participant was enthusiastic about it especially those in certain stages of career progress. This is supported by the comment from a professor at a mid-range business school.

If I was 20 years younger, I might pay a little bit more attention to it, because I will be thinking about, well, maybe, I will have another move ahead of me. Therefore, the reputation of the business school might matter to me a little bit more. (Participant Rep-7)

The opinion by the participant however does not reflect the consensus opinion of many participants interviewed for this study. The narrative seems to suggest that university reputation matters for the both the university as well as the employees. A senior school management official responded to this question from the management pointing out the importance of change where it was this factor was identified as being deficient. This is captured in the following comment:

I think, the business school has not got a brilliant reputation for research. And I think that does put some people off, even though we are trying to change that. (Participant Rep-8)

A second category of value propositions were observed to have high propensity for talent retention by academic talents. They were also reasons for academic talents' intention to leave their current academic institutions. They are discussed in the next section.

7. Career progression

Participants understood career progression as how enabling the institution is towards employees in terms of promotion but also the opportunities available to promoted including the ease of career promotion. Career prospects received 48 vignettes representing more than 65 per cent of participant responses. This underscores the significance of career prospect as a value proposition capable to influence talent attraction and talent retention.

Participants mentioned promotion as a major factor determining their decision to stay or leave their current employment. For example, when asked about the factors that are important to make employees commit to stay longer in the university, a participant who is a mid-career academic responded in the comment below:

When I decide to move from any business school to me what is more important as an academic is, obviously that I get a promotion. I think this was the main reason to move.

to me, but it is important, not the number. Good living a good way of working. It is number one, maybe progression, which here progression goes hand in hand with the with doing your best and believe the there is a good relation between reward and the hard work here. So eventually, progression matters, but it's not the number one for me here, okay, maybe number two (Participant CP-1)

Seventy-five per cent of participants mentioned career progression as a motivating factor and that the pathway for progression was very clear for them from the first time they got into the institution. This assertion was captured by the statement of a male academic lecturer who also viewed career progression as a self-driven process:

I think it is more of a career progression. You don't just have to stay in one place as a lecturer. What's more responsibility as you improve yourself? (Participant CP-2).

Another participant supported career progression as an important value proposition however, they expanded their understanding by mentioning the support from the school and colleagues as equally important in the process as well as the possibility of seeing it happen:

I suppose my next step now would be becoming an associate professor, at some points, to see that the way, those possibilities, and that you would get the support from your head of department and your colleagues to do that. And not to get stuck, you know, I see lecturers that are lecturers for 15 years, and because they don't have that support, so I would want to have that support. (Participant CP-3)

Other participants think promotion is on the list of the top factors for talent attraction and retention. For example, three participants were very expressive in their response:

I think top of the list is promotion. Everyone's talking about promotion, you know, they want to work for a university that they can get promoted quickly recognise what their effort, security, I wouldn't say is the top but it must be important. (Participant CP-4)

Another participant was expressive in their response:

It's amazing I can rise to be an associate professor. (Participant CP-5)

This factor was observed to be linked to the overall personal development of the employee as expressed by the comment from this participant:

I think I was forgetting that progression is also important. Yeah, like an institution that way I can grow, where I can then be promoted, where I can expand to get increased my skills and be able to solve in higher capacity, things like that, yeah, progression is very important. (Participant CP-6)

8. Collegiality

Participants were keen to address collegiality as a factor that for talent attraction especially in when it comes to the decision to remain longer in the organization. Certain expressions were observed

by participants when describing this value proposition for example the ability to cooperate and gain support from both colleagues and management teams of the university or business schools. To underscore its weight, collegiality was assigned about 20 vignettes. It represents a significant value proposition for academic talents. Participants were commonly agreed that collegiality mattered to them within the business school. Participants described collegiality in a variety of ways including friendliness:

matters an awful lot and and you feel it as soon as you're there. friendliness, you can walk around people will smile at you people will ask in the corridors etc or visit all affairs that ask him or your kid you know where you're going. It's just this kind of really positive supporting culture (Participant Co-2)

An early career academic summarized his experience in his current university as noted in the comment emphasised a sense of cooperation among colleagues:

We frequently hung out together exchange or ideas together. So that makes us see the special characteristic of this group. The unity very important for many, many other colleagues.

(Participant, Col-1)

Another participant, a mid-career academic further shared details as to what collegiality meant for them. She describes it as a sense for community:

There is a real sense of community on a small campus, and you can't walk for more than five minutes without bumping into at least two people that you know, who you need to catch up. And that sense of community is really, really important. (Participant CO-2)

Having a sense of community within the business school and among colleagues help promote cooperation on campus and they were highlighted by the interview participants as what constituted a collegiate atmosphere in the following comment by a senior lecturer at a university in Southeast England described it.

three things that we always try to highlight to you mentioned, well, one, you mentioned collegiate atmosphere, which I think XXX is very good at and to others (Participant CO-3)

Other participants mentioned the sense of support to mean collegiality.

It is a collegial place to work where you feel supported (Participant Co-4)

They felt that a collegiate atmosphere in the university should also include the ability to talk to each other in research or even in teaching and offering the support that each other need. This was the response offered by the dean of a business school while explaining the importance of collegiality among academic employees.

I would like to see more college, I would like to see a business school where people talk to one another, where it's not just about either research, or teaching (Participant Co-5)

So one is a workplace where my colleagues are college. I mean, collegiality is one of the things that and I don't think I'm saying that because I'm at XXXX. But one thing I've seen is people sort of work together, these are very friendly environment.

An early-career academic was further stressed the importance of this value proposition as being influential for her decision to remain in the university.

I first started the job, and then got another offer, in another one of the great universities that I was actually really wanted to go to, but I was already two months into this one, bout see the way they treated me those first two months, actually, you know, really made me stay till now. And you know, the people, everybody was really friendly.

Collegiality addressed talent attraction to the university however, it is observed to have higher influence in talent retention.

9. Diversity

Over 14 vignettes were assigned to this open code and participants addressed the importance people and their backgrounds. Participants were not shy to explain and describe their feelings about the mixture of different people and backgrounds within the university. Participant Di-3 discussed how she felt that the most important thing for her were the kind of people one meets in the department and further described that there are people also she may not necessarily get along with however a diversity of people is important.

I think most important is the kind of department you Burke for the people, the people are probably the most important. By far, obviously, there's always one or two people who you don't get along with but you need to Good people from different backgrounds. (Participant Di-3)

In exploring further, the idea around diversity, an early career academic as a strong motivator and one that allows her to stay and feel comfortable at a place for a long time. They also link diversity to the ability to take up leadership position and be comfortable in delivering those roles.

Diversity is a one very important point here, which can also be a very strong motivating factor for me to sustain for a long time and for others to come. Diversity. Right Brunello is not, of course, I'm not sure I'm sure you will not have mentioned that. XXX is not a white men's club. It doesn't have that culture. Never had it, not only in business schools across the university is very diverse. Right. And like, no different Head of School is not ethnic British. Even formally, when I joined the Head of School, was not ethnic, European. So, we had some good evidence of leadership taken by people of ethnic backgrounds, not only ethnic, British, but also overseas. (Participant Di-2)

Some participants described diversity to affect their ability to take up leadership positions and be comfortable in executing those roles.

And that's also that diversity issue comes in, because in many universities, you will see that ethnic staff members, I'm not talking about you think as in Europe and non-white, beyond Europe, right. So they are reluctant to take up the admin roles, senior admin roles, because they always consider that research is the only way for them to move forward. And that is mostly the case because there is a glass ceiling in terms of senior management positions **(Participant Di-4)**

A participant who is currently an MBA director in a reputable business school in southeast England described the role motivation played in his ability to take on the challenge of accepting and delivering a the MBA director role. He describes this factor as important too in building confidence and a perception of acceptance.

I know that MBA director positions are pretty much a white men's club. Right. And I was I was pleased that Britain never discriminated me on that. When I go to MBA directors' meetings, I can see that I'm very, very minority there. There, a big chunk of MBA directors is either European or British. Right? Even if they are ethnic, they will be British born ethnic. So, for an overseas person like me, it is challenging, right. But XXX has given me that to accept the challenge opportunity to accept the challenge. **(Participant Di-4)**

An early career academic describes her experience when she first turned up at her current university.

Brunel is a very, very diverse organisation. For me, it was a little bit of a shock early on how diverse the cohort is that you literally walk into a room that looks like a United Nations assembling all. And it takes some getting used to, but now that I'm used to it, I quite enjoy it. And I'm also pleased that I do it very well. **(Participant Di-5)**

When asked the question to probe on what is attractive to the employee and what they see as factors to keep them longer, participants agreed that diversity plays a role in talent attraction and positions them as employers of choice. The also describe diversity to address issues around inclusivity thereby creating an environment where employees are happy and work at peace.

I think that's an important question. Yeah. Because I think an employer who has an international outlook, like multiple ethnicity would really be attractive, because you want a place where you can be happy in terms of interacting with an international community, you don't feel like you're out of place. Yeah. In the common answer, really, that one will definitely look at, when they are looking for a job and issues of, of inclusivity Yeah, so I already talked about that, but, but how inclusive are they how often that they employ more diversified cohort of of staff, I think that aspect of inclusivity and a wide reach in all fields, even not just in Mississippi, but even in terms of people with a friend. Capacity capacities, for example, then examples, and people with them. Now, the limitations, if that instruction is inclusive, without a fan, I think it creates an environment that one can work at peace and work, I mean, happy. **(Participant Di-5)**

While discussing with a participant who is the head of a business school, they agreed that diversity was important in the recruiting mix. He further describes this factor as being important yet a required experience.

The main reason is that I think is the most important single thing we do. recruiting people, I think is extremely important. It's a very while is extremely important is also very difficult function and requires experience. We moved also towards not just as a faculty, but as a university, we take diversity very, very seriously. And so it's not just about recruiting talents and recruiting very good staff, but is about also trying to recruit the diversity that our students deserve. (Participant Di-6)

10. Research Quality

Research quality was assigned about 50 vignettes underscoring its importance during the open code. Participants described research quality and the ability to collaborate with high impact research opportunities as a factor for attraction.

A senior lecturer mentioned the possibility to be connected with disseminating impactful research as one attraction point for him and a factor why he is staying on in the university.

I think. like high quality research coming out from the six departments. So you see all these people with these big brands and You know, in the news and talking in the BBC and everything, so, and that, in a way, makes me proud, you know, of working there. (Participant RQ-2)

Similarly, the opportunity to collaborate and work in partnership established researchers was an outstanding factor a mid-career researcher in a reputable university in southeast England

I agree with that. Exactly. I mean, I could be a little bit more prosaic as well, on the sense that I think within our five groups, we now have heads of group who have established really good identities for the group, alongside some strong research cultures, you know, people want to work within a site a strong research culture (Participant RQ-5)

Beyond the ability to be associated with impactful research, other participants were interested in the level of leverage and network their university brings to them especially in international conferences and collaborations. This was described with enthusiasm by an experienced academic who is a long time professor in a university.

And I think being qualitative, it might not be Harvard. But I mean, the fact that you go to a conference as far as Australia or New Zealand, and the moment you say, You're from XXX, I mean, people acknowledge you because they know the quality of research, or we are sort of an authority per se, in accounting in emerging economies. I mean, that's something you take pride in. I mean, being many miles from home and just say ethics, accounting. And yeah. Everyone knows about it (Participant RQ-6)

11. Support Culture

Participants emphasised support culture as a factor that attracts and retain talents in higher education institutions. The open code had 29 vignettes assigned to it and was particularly important for early and mid-term career academics. The level and diversity of support was noticed to be wide ranged among participants. Participants either expressed the level of support they received or the kind of support they wished to have and further explained how that could lead to their retention or influence their intention to leave the university. Support was expressed among colleagues in the university generally as a strong factor for retention. An early career academic who spent more than 5 years in a particular business school noted:

Very supportive colleagues very supportive for any and every little thing that you would need, whether with research or logistics or any kind of organizational issues, in general, colleagues are very, very supportive.

(Participant SC-4)

Participants addressed the importance of good working relationship among colleagues since they spent considerable amount of time on campus. This view was expressed by over 50 per cent of participants. For example, a male senior lecturer expressed this view:

Because we spend a lot of the day here so it's quite important the relationship with with your colleagues.

(Participant SC-3)

Another expression of support by participants was based on the level of assistance offered academic staff to develop academic and peer research. For example, a male mid-career academic noted:

So as an academic it was the ability to support you in going for conferences, again, the ability to support you in develop as an academic, in terms of DVM be able to develop good papers and these kinds of things.

So I think that's what attracted me **(Participant SC-7)**

Two early career academics further expressed their views in the following comment:

Maybe if you need more support, in terms of teaching abilities, then again, you might have to ask him, ask for support, also outside the school and go more, and get more support in time for these from the university.

I mean, that is something I didn't need to so I cannot really talk about these. But if you need them, I'm sure the university will be able to support you in this finger. **(Participant SC8)**

Well, it is important because you can communicate with them. And we will have you have a nice news then we can talk with them and there is always Faster. And this allows me to have a good boss. Because if you need any help or any assistance, because we're always lecturers are our new academics. So we might need assistance when it comes to advice, publications, how can get promotion, so you got a good boss, you can get he can sell. **(Participant SC 2)**

Clearly, participants noted that support culture as a value proposition is discovered when an employee is already employed. Participants generally agreed that organizational support culture

was a string factor in their decision to remain in the organization and therefore has significant influence on talent retention. It also influences talent attraction through indirect means by influencing existing talent within the organization.

But this is something you cannot discovered before applying for a job is something you have to discover once you are in, in the place. So I do think that in this case, having a good Professor sense of a good senior staff that can support you, but is more formally, not something that is written anywhere, is something you can discover once you get a job. I think having a great support from your colleagues in your group is great, because this is something that we can change the way you feel in the environment. That is a think, very important, but also is like the environment of your colleagues, your young colleagues, and the kind of environment you can farm in, I told you the friendships that I have with the person that brought you here. And I think that's something that is very important to be able, at least in the beginning, I don't say probably at senior level. But when you start as a young academic, I think having a group of people that senior level support you but also at a young level, that kind of you can relate to, I think is something that is important in that in any university **(Participant SC-3)**

A participant, dean of business school shared her view, emphasising the category of employees who value this proposition:

I think we, for people who are older and perhaps more established, we probably look attractive, because we've now got a culture that, that really supports staff and supports people to do research, or has got more of a research feel about the place **(Participant SC-7)**

Another dean of business school noted collaboration as an outcome of support culture among knowledge workers:

It's about collaboration. It's about working together to support one another and to support our academic staff. I guess I'm looking for more of a almost a bit of an incubator for ideas, as opposed to what usually happens is we're a bunch of knowledge workers who go off and we do it Research, and we prep for our classes and we deliver our sessions and our lectures and seminars and the white papers and submit stuff **(Participant SC-9)**

12. Work Environment

Work environment was observed to cut across different dimensions of employer value propositions among participants. This dimension received about 40 vignettes in the open code emphasising its importance among academic talents interviewed for this study. Work environment was related to the reputation of the organization, the nature of support constituting the organization as well as the enabling environment that makes up the organization including how these elements are coordinated to reflect a warm and pleasant work environment. For example, an experienced academic commented:

With the type of environment, you'll be working in, it's kind of like when people are looking at schools, and all school answers and reputation you can what activities they're doing, say with your children. Yeah, so what they offer, what they're going to get possibly out of being there

I also think is very important, the environment where you're going to work (Participant- WE-2)

Participants when asked about what it was like to work in the current employment, some were particularly excited and expressive

And it is an environment that everything I've asked for in terms of support, whether it is mentoring, whether that was research assistance. When I was applying for projects, everything I've asked for, I have been fortunate enough to been granted. And the the people I work with are excellent. (Participant WL-4)

The significance of this value proposition was expressed by an experienced academic:

Because we spend a lot of the day here so it's quite important the relationship with your colleagues (Participant WE-7)

the right environment, where I'm based where I go Monday to Friday, in one point territories, I think with metallic would matter more to me, than the university because if I have a university the big name, then that's a I don't have very good support as an Emerging Scholar, maybe a boss that is not very friendly, etc, that may affect my growth and yeah, development (Participant WE-5)

Participants keenly expressed the view that a significant point of attraction and retention in their current universities were how pleasant the atmosphere was and how supportive the environment was to them. For example, an early career academic expressed his view in the following comment:

So, since I joined in, the mood has been pretty much positive, were reaching, were achieving and when you're in an organisation that is on the up, trend, you also feel energised, you feel challenged, but challenged in a positive way. So, the, the mode, the tone of the organisation has been quite positive. I know that was not always the case. But I was lucky with the timing of my joining that it has been very positive, and the overall tone set by the top management has been of empowerment, yes, we can do it. Let's give our best. Yes, of course, we are pushed, but in a good way, in a good way. So that makes the workplace a pleasant place to be because yes, you're challenged, but you're also appreciated, you're validated (Participant WE-2)

In some cases, absence of this factor has caused some employees to leave the organization as expressed by a participant about his former university:

But I mean, these stats period that a lot of people see those who have been at XXX left, that was very unique. And when they're compared with my previous University, even when I tell my friends of my experience at XXX, who I know the university was the fight, it was very interesting and to be a very good working environment. Now we go and bowling together, I mean, from the head to the another goes for drinks when it's evening. So we used to, we would do one socially Fantasia barbecue as a department, or

even go pinball. Yeah, shooting. So yeah, all those things that I think make me feel that every day, I look forward to working with those people. (Participant WE-4)

13. Workload

For academic talents, workload appeared to be an important factor for talent attraction and talent retention. A total of 15 vignettes we assigned to this value proposition on the open code.

Among other factors, workload was identified to be effective in academic talent turnover especially for example in teaching load.

And then, obviously, other things like your teaching load, how much you teach, per turn, how much research allocation you have, how much funding you get for research for conferences. If they give me a lot of teaching, I think it would be the reason why I would move So it's not something that will keep you (Participant WL-6)

A mid-career academic expressed some factor he is interested in a university in the following comment:

...research and the workload things interest me in the university (Participant WL-6)

Other participants were enthusiastic about the teaching workload in their current universities and expressed positive reactions about them. Some of them addressed the fact that they were not sure about the workload before taking up appointment and others very excited about the amount of teaching load as a factor for retention in their universities. For example, a mid-career academic expressed the following comment:

So, and then, and also the teaching load was quite low. Right. Something that we cannot discuss during the interview board is teaching load, we should not right? And when I was moving from XX I didn't know how much how many hours of teaching I will be doing at Brunel. Right? I kind of thought that okay, I was doing 12 hours of teaching every week, on an average. So anything less than that is good. But I didn't realise that. In three years time, I'll be teaching only three to four hours a week. Even when I joined as a lecturer, even the maximum I was teaching was seven, eight years, seven, eight hours. Right? So at XXX the teaching load is remarkably low. And now that has gone even lower with the staff number increasing. Okay, so, so then I realised that yes, and that is offers one of the factors which enable me to research. (Participant WL-9)

I've got like way less teaching workload than I ever expected. I thought maybe I'll be teaching five hours per week. So on average, in I think I do two hours, or maximum three hours per week. I don't have any teaching for the whole of autumn time, they're coming on time, but in the springtime, I'll be teaching. So when you average, you see I mean, it's way less than expected (Participant WL-5)

As a strong factor for retention, participant expressed desire to stay compared to moving to a higher ranked university:

And aside from some of the wrestling groups, I think our research profile is comparable to many of the research led universities including the likes of XXX, and XXX and XXX, who are ranked higher compared to us, but the people still don't want to leave, because of these reasons. Wow. And also, teaching law, as I said, that even in the crisis moment, when we had a lot of colleagues leaving, I would say that my teaching load was still not as bad as many other universities and the colleagues and colleagues who went to XXX, they say that their teaching load is reasonable. But the marking load was huge (Participant WL-4)

A participant expressed the importance a viable workload as a significant element for academic talents in the following comments where the Vice Chancellor of a university was willing to double the number of student but was not enthusiastic about the teaching load of academic staff without a reflection on the performance level of academic talents in the following expression:

For example, I remember being interviewed another university, its Vice Chancellor, the still its Vice Chancellor told me that his big ambition was to double the number of students coming into the campus using mostly overseas agents in order to recruit them. There was no mention of doubling the number of academic staff who would handle this vast increase in students. And that was an example of that 100-metre setting, even if you offered me this job, I wouldn't take it. There's something going to take about this. And you really work yourself to death with teaching, while at the same time still expecting enormous research achievements. And some of those environments. I rather fear that even if you work seven days a week, you would still be failing on several fronts, because the performance expectations are too ludicrous. (Participant WL-10)

5.4 Employer Brand Concepts

A second key dimension of the employer brand antecedent (EBA) is the brand concepts. Through the open code, this key dimension gathered about 35 vignettes. Following the open code process, employer brand concepts was observed to consist of 4 associated dimensions: brand reputation; brand awareness; brand positioning and brand identity. Employer brand concept in the context of this study is a term that explains the features of the employer brand antecedents. It is based on RQ1 namely, **how do employers' brand themselves**. In seeking to answer this question, participants explained their understanding of the employer brand and explanations were aggregated to produce the brand concepts.

5.4.1 Employer Brand Reputation

Participants were asked questions to ascertain their understanding of the core employer brand concepts and to validate professionals' awareness of the major underpinning framework that

governs the employer brand process (See appendix for interview guide). Based on the responses, it was observed that participants aligned employer branding with reputation as illustrated in the following comment:

I'll tell you, when I first comes my mind, so I would like to explain to you, I guess, reputation's how it can generate synergies in terms of adding value to me. (Participant BR 2)

Following the comments from Dr Jerry, it was observed that participants understood employer branding as a concept that has an underlying value laden reputation. Participants were also keen on aligning with the university's employer brand reputation to leverage their self-development as illustrated by the comment from Participant BR2:

...Some specific organization could open you and facilitate your further development and how it can generate synergies.

Other respondents assume the perception of reputation as aligned to branding is possibly diffused in the academic community. It is assumed to be the overall working conditions that a specific employer provides. According to the participants, this is what informs the reputation of the organization. It is the risk, access to resources, administrative systems, impact on policy and so forth. The combination of these features form the organizational reputation of the brand.

As illustrated in the following comment:

It is that element of the brand that makes an organization attractive. It is what it is known for. What it offers and the factors that come together to create the brand for the university. It is how you package yourself and make yourself attractive (Participant BR 1)

A Senior lecturer who recently started in a new university commented:

We look forward to employers and higher education stuff. It's usually the reputation of the institution is important because we want to be in a place that when we say to our colleagues, not only quality, but the people we know. And we would want them to at least have an idea of this university institution.

It was observed from the responses that majority of the participants understood employer brand reputation as how the external environment looks in at the organization and their perception of the organization as an employer of choice. Participants often responded by addressing what pull the organization has on the external market environment and the extent to which they influence prospective applicants. The following comments by the head of a business school in illustrates the point:

What I understand by that is how the external environment in a way looks in at you as an employer of choice or not, you know, how, what is the pool that you have on the external environment, so on the on the market for applicants, and the, the market for academics, not surprisingly, is that even by reputation, and

reputation and quality, the whole world of business school is about reputation. (Participant BR 5, Dean of Business School)

However, the reputation of the organization is backed up by a set of identifiable values which sets the organization apart as an employer of choice. One respondent, dean of a business school narrated their experience as illustrated in the comment:

And when I first came, we had no accreditations, we had done very well in the in the year 2008. So we had that, which was very important. But that was the only thing we had to say, really, personally, there's always been a good employer and we still are a good employer in terms of in terms of behaving by our values So, it was it was a an exercise in ensuring that we were selling all our assets, we were communicating everything that an employee may like to see at the same time, not overselling and not obviously, you know, being true to what we were, we were to the message that we were trying to convey, and this was easier in some subjects than others. (Prof Dyson, Head of Business School)

It was also observed that business school showed their reputation through the level of their research work and expertise in one or more subject areas.

For example, some had quite a strong reputation in research in economics, so, that you know, advertising posts, a lectureship in economics, we will receive 120 applications or which may be 60 worth appointable. So, you know, that was the quality (Prof Chucks, Dean of Business School).

The Professor went further to comment:

And in some subjects, we now quite strong in marketing, but because we have managed to attract two very good professors, and then that subsequently managed to attract talent at the lower level. And, and so employer branding reputation is a term that needs not empty. So it's not about having a good brand is about actually making sure that that brand is filled with real talent. That is, you know, that you're not selling an empty box, if you see what I mean. Because I think the academic, I think the market for academics is fairly well informed. (Prof Chucks, Dean of Business School).

Besides the subject area, participants also noted that employer brand reputation is preceded by the perception of the external environment to the values and innovative characteristics of the university. Other values that constitute the reputational value of the of the brand in at he academic environment include teaching, research and quality of research published. Within the academic context, some, there are universities, with higher prestige and reputation like Oxford and Cambridge- the so-called *Russell Group of universities in UK which also has prestige attached to it.*

For example, a prominent professor and chair of a leading research centre commented:

You know if you're high up the league table probably (you) are attractive for research staff.

So, I think those are examples of some brands I know there have invested who are known for disciplines or particular fields like XXX for example is quite a good department so what will Business School for example then it's quite reputable when it comes to such or related courses.

Participants further observed that the case of reputation also served as a platform to engage in awards. A professor currently in a Russell group university stated in their comment:

I tend to see more of the reputation. So how reputable is this university? And how reputable in terms of you know, the University of becoming a platform to engage with award. So when I was XXXX either outside the management space, most people hardly know about XXXX, whereas XXXX so when I go for conferences or elsewhere, once you mention XXXX people know a leading scholar there so that does the magic, kind of visibility, global visibility.

Despite the agreement on reputation, it was observed that it could be challenging to attract talents who can fulfil all the obligations of the brand value which informs the brand reputation. As illustrated by a few participants:

And it was very, very difficult to attract the talent in terms of what you will define as a well-rounded academic so somebody who can communicate well teach well, but also do research and publish and you know, to do the whole would you expect an academic job to be so it was very subject specific what we could, although the advert was very similar in any in any subject, we would advertise We knew that we were needed to work harder in some subjects than others. (Dr Pajras, MBA Director)

Participants also acknowledged separate branding for the business school due to the reputation mechanism involved. The following illustration supports this notion:

the business as a separate brand is recognised in the university that business schools need to be branded or separately from university because they're reputational mechanism for the university.

Notably, from the interviews was the fact that talent attracts talent, so new people and new researchers out there were clearly attracted to the university mainly because of the reputation in those subject areas. As illustrated by the following comment:

I should think Branding, and Brand would probably be the value that employers name or image or you Yeah, core notes, some kind of reputation that the employer has built for the self out of employee has positioned their self in the industry (Dr Tozak, MBA Director)

This understanding was shared by most of the participants who were mostly current employees of the organization.

5.4.2 Employer Brand Awareness

For most of the participants, employer branding was synonymous to a well-known brand. Participants mentioned that the concept of employer branding is highlighted by what is talked about in a brand and how those specific elements talked about helps attract potential employee to the organization. More importantly, the employer brand awareness functions more, in the way in which they are developed as strategies to boost organizational image. For example, a marketing communicational professional of a university in South-East England commented the following:

In your case, because you're talking about employees, it is the way they do attract their employees. So is the way they develop strategies. So, in my view it is a way to attract people.

Another participant mentioned that employer branding translates into “*characteristics of the brand that are well known within the market*”. This level of awareness by the stakeholder within the market is accentuated by the kind of communication strategies that underpin their delivery. It is also a function of how the organization communicates its values to employees and prospective employees alike. According to Professor Jones, head of a leading business school in the southeast of England:

You know, we have this at XXX, we have this at the macro level, and there is a sense of what XXX is about, given its traditions, its founding was very much positioned as in some sense in opposition to traditional university education around the silos. So, there's a strong sense of inter-disciplinarity, we have, so that I think there is a sense for many people about what it means to teach at XXX.

The participant was keen to highlight the element of the university which people are aware of and accordingly, they hinge their brand message on those elements to project their level of awareness. In the case of this particular university, it was the sense of awareness that people have about what it means to teach at the University of XXXX. Despite the disjointed history of the Business school because of its recent creation, yet they have hinged their brand awareness on the long-standing history of the university and the key departments that have enormous economic and social policy research as the original units of their university. As a result, this certainly sprues as a brand with a strong sense of positioning. They have carefully and strategically articulated the values and intellectual history about the university which in return has created the needed brand awareness and help turn the school to a reputable one.

5.4.3 Brand Positioning

Out of the 75 respondents, fifty of them alluded to the fact that employer brand positioning was becoming increasingly important. They were in consensus agreement that as a brand organization need to stand out because of the increasing competition in the knowledge skilled labour market. As illustrated by an academic staff of a university through this comment:

Particularly with universities, there are so many business schools even in the UK alone, and there's not much difference to be honest, in terms of the programmes as such. It's almost like standardised programmes, we have MSc marketing of MSc in international business. If you look at the modules, they are also same often similar, same textbooks. Same topics, there's not a lot of variation in terms of the content. Yes. So how do you distinguish yourself as a business school? (Dr Chidi, Senior Lecturer)

Therefore, a key factor for maximizing employer brand impact was demonstrated by how universities position themselves to attract and retain or even not necessarily attract. This was illustrated by the comments from a lecturer in a post-92 university:

So my understanding is like all you came from the University of So you must have some certain particular set of skills. So you must be very skilled in this type of field or, you know, the XXX business school is very high rank, so you must be very good.

Through participants' responses, it was observed that clear employer brand positioning was an indication that the employer is well recognised and that will accentuate their position in the market. For example, in the UK higher education scenario, there are university league tables like the Russell Group universities. Universities belonging to this league clearly have a brand. Characteristically, the Russell Group, have different levels scale of payment and they have a benchmark in terms of various welfare activities; studying and how they encourage people to go for research as well as their expectations to review the impact of research to the wider business environment. In contrast, post-92 or teaching universities occupy a very distinct positioning in the higher education market and attract talents differently too. This illustrates the importance of employer brand positioning to both current and potential employees. The empirical findings observed that talents in the higher education sector considered this as a strong factor in determining their choice for employment. The following comments illustrates the point by an early career researcher:

I would say the brand is in terms of the ambience in terms of the league table ranking, in terms of the world-renowned scholars that in terms of like, for example, when I came here, like I was attracted because I said interdisciplinarity; plus, there are three Nobel laureates in science. It's like in the past, so those things, views and like a few kinds of fainting nation for us. (Dr Jake, Lecturer)

Similar response was observed by the dean of a reputable business school highlighting employer brand positioning based on university league tables (See Appendix). It is illustrated in the following comments:

So the employer branding for employee is mostly I would say that, like a student, we look at the league tables for the ranking. Plus, we look at the scope for growth within the school, and they're there. The welfare just understood the staff welfare they have, basically, like for a researcher, they say, like, I have seen several schools in the UK, like how much time they devote towards research, for example, 10 to 40%, there, they protect 40% of your time for research. Whereas if we go to other schools, it's like only 25% so which is which is attractive for people to come to xxxxxx (Prof Mark, Dean of Business School).

Our findings observed that factors like the welfare activity, the growth prospects or time allocated to research are highly valued in the market and depending on the factors that potential employees look looking at from a marketing perspective. Subsequently, employer branding is how these universities position themselves to attract talent, but also how they sell their products to potential employees.

For some, it is about the good stuff they write in the job profile, when the advertising the job, just to make you think, Okay, this is a good place to work. So for you to come. So I think a lot of things will be involved in employer branding (Prof Sarah, Dean of Business School)

However, not all participants agreed with the measurement standard of league tables as distinct brand positioning factor as illustrated by the following comment:

I think Yeah, that's a bit of a split one. I think as an institution we are a lot better. I might be biased because I work there. But I think we are a lot better than our league table position suggests. So on the latest league table position. I think we're much lower than we should be. And I don't think that helps our branding when we're in advertising for new colleagues. On the plus side, I think we do get good student feedback. (Prof Mark, Dean of Business School)

However, they do agree that it may be challenging to attract high quality staff by reason of not being on top of the league table ranks. The following comment illustrates this point:

So we are not the Russell Group University. So it, it probably is harder to recruit research staff. In admin staff, it makes no difference to them where they go before. Just like yourself, belonging to well, working for well-regarded University probably makes a difference (Prof Sally-Paul, Dean of Business School)

Another interesting observation was the fact that potential employees was the kind of recognition that the universities have. For many potential employees, the recognition of a university positions the university to attract certain kinds of talents. In this case, universities with recognition for teaching excellence will attract certain talents compared to universities that are recognised for outstanding research excellence. At the same time, others may be interested in the level in which

the universities engage with social issues for example gender equality and diversity. The following comment illustrates the finding:

So if I, if I look for in an organisation, if I look for a new institution, I would always look at, you know, what do they have? I think that's one recognition. What is the I think that's one of the combinations of that institution? Is it bronze? Is it silver? Is it gold? Which gives you a different thing? If I were to look more specifically, for example, in terms of business schools, one thing, which is quite important is what are the different accreditation standards for for for the business school? You know, are they accredited by? For example, AACSB? Are they attracted by Equus? Are they accurate by Amber. And once you see the brand of the employer, together with these quality standards, quality stamps, basically, it's something that gives you the assurance and I know that most of the time these are students facing bronze, you know, the AACSB, and Equis..

From a strategic viewpoint, it was observed that business schools are very intentional in how they position themselves and to what target market they wish to attract. This viewpoint was common among deans of business schools during the empirical work. Specifically, the strategic positioning of the business school is influential in attracting academic talents to the institution. The comments by the dean of a business school illustrates this:

We at XXXX were not really a business school until quite recently. We became a business school because of the associations with that word business school. It was felt that that would help to position us more advantageous like the market for students and staff. We then had a bit of a bother trying to figure out well, what exactly is their need?

Participants also interpret positioning as ethical values- how you do things for example, having the silver rating in teaching, which may indicate the strength of the institution and the potentials it has in other areas like research. It also a way of doing things in terms of what is believed to be right therefore, participants argued that –

your branding has to go with how we do things and what we you know and what we believe is the right way to go. (Prof Momor, Dean of Business School)

The question of need is important in the positioning of the institution to the target market. It involves the identification of the industry in which they are interested in as well as their strengths and competitive advantage compared to the institution for example in the area of research or teaching excellence.

5.4.4 Employer Brand Identity

Finding from the empirical study highlighted employer brand identity as another concept on which employer branding thrives. Participants from the study suggested that employer brand identity is an element of the brand that makes the institution attractive and compared it with symbolism that are based on various factors for example, what it is known for, its reputation and what it offers. Accordingly, they all come together to create the brand for the university. Essentially, -

it's really how you package yourself to make yourself more attractive. And how you make yourself remain attractive (Dr Mogel University Lecturer)

Another respondent defines it as this:

I think it's the way they sell themselves. (Dr Chelsea, University Lecturer0).

It is an organization want to be seen or perceived or how they want other people to perceive them as illustrated in the comment by a university lecturer: *how you want people to perceive you, as an employee, or as a company. And as an institution, how do you want people to see you? (Dr Isa, Lecturer)*

Majority of participants also suggested that-

an identity is what you want to portray and exactly what you want people to know about you. So apart from you being an employee, they also so they have two people, I mean, where a lot of stakeholders. So for a university, they will be interested in attracting, you know, people, I quality staff, at the same time, they want students as well as a quality student. I think each branding identity has to do with what they want to be known for. Okay, mainly, what they want people to think of them. So when you think of XXXr, what comes to your mind? Yeah, either as a prospective staff or as a student.

A director of business school narrated an experience for which they went through a massive business school change exercise in order to accurately and precisely answer the question of what their organization stands for. The business school was completely rebranded to give it a new sense of mission, the values were revisited completely and further, the organization spent a year or more in shaping this new mission, vision, values, and the MBA programme of the school. They also worked to engage and align people to the project. In doing so, they opened up opportunities for people to comment and contribute to how they viewed their strengths and weaknesses as well as their values. They observed that it provided a substantial buy in by the staff into what the business school stood for. After this exercise, staff feedback was that they now had a very clear sense of what the business stood for. Furthermore, their employer brand has now taken shape with certain plaques and posters printed out over the walls of the business school so that faculty could see what the business school's mission is. They also responded that there was a clear sense of vision with regards to what the business school was up to and that the exercise was very significant in creating

a sense of identity for current employees but also providing the tools for current employees as brand ambassadors. The comment below illustrates this point:

It is this idea of creating a brand or some sort of identity, organisational identity for staff to sort of engage with. So there's sort of this idea that if, if you can increase non-monetary benefits for your organisation as somebody who people want to work for, then you can reduce your wage cost.

The implication of a strong employer brand identity as observed by the respondents goes beyond attracting quality talents to the organization, it also has a direct impact on the organizations bottom-line. The observation from this finding suggests that a strong employer brand identity significantly lower the cost of employing quality talents while at the same time presenting the organization as an employer of choice.

While employer brand identity may be viewed from the point of values-research, teaching or others like, student satisfaction, it was also observed that the identity of the organization is also linked to location and even the buildings in the organization. For example, a participant responded that one interesting thing about their university was the town in which the university was located especially the image of the town was clearly associated with the business school and therefore has a shared value based on that. The participant noted in the following comment:

If you think about it, why isn't obscure town in in the fence? It is not Cambridge, or a bleak Scottish you know, coastal town, which has got nothing else in it but a golf course. And Andrews is able, you know, to project this image. (Prof McAndale-Deputy dean of Business School)

Similarly, another respondent highlighted the impact of buildings in the formation of their brand identity. It is illustrated in the following comment:

I think we are, I think we're fortunate to be in a fantastic building. And I think we are quite strong. And we have quite strong values, I think XXX business school that we try and portray outwardly through our courses. And we want, I think, not just individuals that have fantastic papers, and, and, you know, can go on and do fantastic things in the world of research and education, people that fit our values as well. So I think it's, it's quite clear from the type of environment that we work in, and you go on to our website, we're very inclusive type of environment, type of institution. (Prof James, Head of Business School)

Participants commonly agree that the value of projected by the university relates to the culture of the institution. Therefore, a significant boost to the identity of the organization lies in projecting consistency but at the same time reflecting those values to staff so that staff can feel a sense of belonging with the identity. Participants also agreed that where this was not met, institutions would struggle to maximise the impact of the employer brand. A participant reinforced the point by suggesting that at some point, the institution must have to say this is who we're going to be. Their understanding of this concept was based on the meaning of branding as an image of the institution.

They also commonly agreed that the identity of an institution or organization should have a positive element of life associated with it.

5.5 Employer Brand Process

Following the thematic analysis of the empirical study and by application of step-by-step process of coding and recoding of interview transcripts, employer brand process emerged as the second key factor of the empirical study. A total of about 62 vignettes were assigned to the employer branding process. The empirical findings were outcomes of RQ2 where professional practitioners specifically-HR practitioners, marketing communication directors and executives were asked to ascertain the event and sequences of the employer brand process. From the thematic analysis based on an open code, four key dimensions emerged which we identified as main stages of the employer brand process: stage 1: brand building; stage 2; brand communication; stage 3: brand alignment 4: brand delivery. Findings in this section are drawn from participants' responses. They form the basis for the lateral and in-depth understanding of the theme. As observed participants, the employer branding process constitute contributions from multiple stakeholders including the HR to transition the employer brand to a major strategic project. It is the process of structuring and in some cases, restructuring the organization and changing its culture to a recognizable model viewed from the perspective of current and potential employees, known as employer brand stakeholders. During the employer brand process, brand message is crafted with intention and delivered with precision.

The need for institutions to focus on marketing and recruitment targeted to engage with potential employees is significantly important for the employer brand especially in crafting its message to resonate with categories of employees considered to be stakeholders of the employer brand process. This proves important as organizations address the shortage of knowledge intensive talents. This viewpoint is illustrated by a participant who is director of human resources at a reputable university in the Southeast England:

A lot of it is about making sure that we are presenting the brand in the way that not only works with students, but also employees as well (Ms Pearson-HR Director)

The participant's view sets the pace for how the employer brand should be crafted and the elements that should be carefully considered throughout the planning and delivery stages of the process. Accordingly, the employer brand process was observed to be reflective of the way stakeholders engage with brands and the medium that are used, to provides a flexible and evolving avenue for brand delivery to create the needed impact for the organization. Participants observed that the employer branding process needs to be built on the clear identity by expressing what the organization stands for, and the values and behaviours of the organization. Participants also agreed

that a good employer brand process should be ready to change itself by becoming more vibrant, exuding the feeling of being alive as opposed to being rigid and too structured. Failure to do so may result in the organization being out-dated and dis-jointed from the realities of the external environment where they operate. Participants also mentioned that for the employer branding process to be successful, a team should be delegated to take the responsibility for the brand building process. A marketing director addressed these issues following this comment:

The brand is an enabler, and a facilitator of what the organisation is trying to achieve. And making sure that we achieve it in a way that's consistent with our principles and values. But it got to kind of support and enable people to do what they need to be able to do, which is why everyone needs to be able to own it and feel protective of it, and, but also protective in terms of who they are their respect for it and, and the wanting to support and make it work and so that everybody's working in delivering it, and therefore it feels authentic, and never goes become kind of old fashioned and Rogen out of date. (Ms Walter-Rex-Director of Marketing).

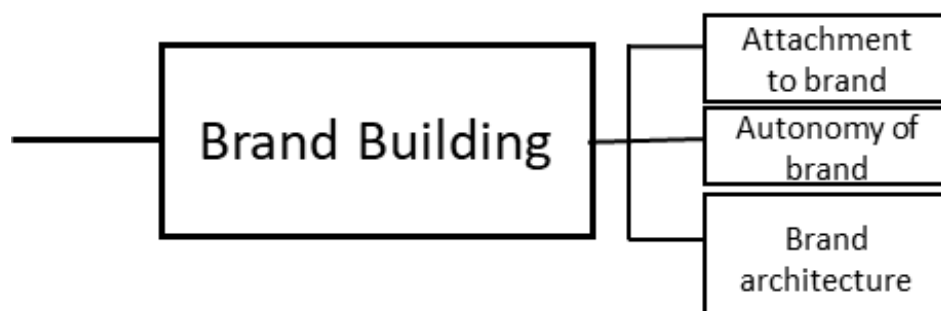
From the findings, the employer branding process is divided into four key areas as projected the diagram below. This section will discuss each area separately before a consensus is drawn.

5.5.1 Brand Building

Findings from the empirical study observed that an important element responsible for a strong and effective brand building is the identification of the key values that the organization is known for. These values range from strong collegiality, location, research excellence. It is illustrated by responses from the following participants. Below is a list of factors identified by participants to constitute the value set for the employer brand building. Over 30 vignettes were assigned to this dimension of the employer brand process.

Empirical findings observed four associated dimensions to the effectiveness of employer brand building. These include (1) attachment to the brand (2) Autonomy of the brand (3) Definition of the brand image (4) defining the employer brand architecture. (Insert diagram)

Figure 8:Dimension of Employer Brand Process



5.5.2 Brand attachment

Brand attachment in the context of this study represents the extent to which employees own the message and the perceptions that an employer attempts to present of themselves. This was in response to RQ2 which attempts to discover the events sequences and functional mechanisms on which universities craft and deliver their employer brand. Participants were asked questions for example: how do you carry out your employer brand process?

One of the problems observed by participant with regards to their relationship to the organization is the sense of belonging individual academic talents have to the organization. The attachment to the brand is influenced by the sense of belonging the employee has about the organization and is linked to one or multiple factors. Employee sense of attachment is observably linked to the higher education institution or the university. In some cases, the attachment may be linked to a specific school and not the university primarily. Employee sense of belonging goes beyond their association to the university or specific unit of the university. Sense of belonging can be influenced by the duty of the employee in that university, and this can develop into a strong attachment to the brand. It is also observed that some academic talents develop attachment to the brand due to the specific field of study offered by the university. These factors were observed to create a strong attachment to the vision of the university and were influential in creating a strong sense of belonging among participants and subsequently, a greater attachment to the employer brand, as illustrated by the comments below:

Academic individuals feel a sense of belonging to the school, not to the university. So for example, if people who work in the Business School, yeah, they go to work at a university, because of the quality of business school university has within it. When you look for a job, you don't look for a university, you look for a business school that fits with your specific personal career plans. (Ms Walter, People Management Director)

The career plan becomes the centre of focus for the employee, and it is a factor that cultivates their sense of belonging. There is even a sense of emotional attachment to the organization based on identifiable features, peculiar to the organization.

Another participant, an assistant HR Director of a reputable university in Southeast England, confirmed this observation as illustrated in the comment below:

People will join the university and have a sense of belonging and duty to that school or area of work, but not necessarily to the overarching organisation.

Furthermore:

Quite often there will be that sense of belonging to the specific field of study, but certainly not to the organisation.

Therefore, the first stage to an effective employer brand building is the identification of the unique features that produces a sense of belonging to the employee. Employees are attracted to firstly to these features and more aligned to the vision of the organization when these features are clearly identified and projected to the employee.

5.5.3 Brand Autonomy

The independence of the brand is a functional factor to the image that is projected by the brand as observed by responses from the participants. This is particularly important in the case of higher education institutions especially where there are multiple brands within the university. It was previously observed that academic employees develop a sense of belonging to schools within the university and not necessarily with the university. The empirical findings observed that where there was a certain degree of autonomy with the school, it made it more effective among academic talents to develop more association with the school. Participants responded that the reason for this was their ability to explore their skills in a wider context that was less restrictive for example, the ability to teach and do consultancy and create meaningful impact with people outside. Furthermore, the ability to do projects in one owns time if the core duties of the university was observed. This is due to the independent factor that the brand commands and which is built into the fabrics of the brand strategy, making the brand more appealing to the employee and more effective in projecting the image that aligns itself to the overall strategy of the university. At the same time, maintaining its unique autonomy. This factor is expressed by the following comment from Prof Jill, Chair of Research Institute in a Russell Group University:

I know of a lot of people who have got a really good sort of deal at the University of Edinburgh, wherein you get to teach, and you get to do consultancy, and, you know, for people outside, we whatever we, you can do projects, but in your own time, as long as you're doing the university job. So the university is not controlling your consultancy, you can do what you want to do. And that is a separate entity, but you get to teach as well, which sort of, I like that it sounds good.

One head of a business school described the process of restructuring the business school from a department, moving from formally having eight departments to a business school as on eof the departments in the college of Business Law and Social Sciences. The participant alluded that this move has alluded that this move allows them more autonomy however, it also means that the head of school has more issue to manage and in some cases is more independent to pursue their strategy. The participant summarised the experience in the following excerpt:

Unless you are independent, like the business school, like your whole entity, you are not a proper business
(Prof Julien, Head of Business school)

Findings from respondents suggest that the structure of the university matters in capturing the kind of image the university projects and the level of independence given to the university. Academic talents were particularly interested in the level of autonomy that the business school must allow for a particular type of brand image. Participants also discussed the kind of relationship that exist between the university and the constituent departments and colleges that make up the university. From their responses, it was observed that academic talents understand the differences with university colleges and the extra layer of administrative structures that exist with the university system. Academic talents understand that business schools with a clear independence regarding their own bursary and administrative systems have a reputation around them and can allow for an independent approach to work and research. The understanding of the business school structure when compared to more established business schools in the UK, projects a different kind of image and subsequently does not allow for the kind of flexible interaction that certain high quality academic talents desire. This context therefore suggests that business schools are not entirely isolated from the wider university context. Primarily, the empirical findings suggest two types of business schools. Firstly, there are business schools who basically receive significant investment and significant autonomy and freedom. These business schools are clear with their vision and the relationship that exist between them and the wider university. They are the business schools that usually seem to drive the business concerns and maintain Triple Crown and double accreditations. Such business schools promote the level engagement described by some participants that allow them to engage both in academic and consultancy operations on the other hand, are business schools that are only converted by the universities to cash cows that require to be fed otherwise their sustainability is called to question. It was observed that such business schools when not provided the necessary investment, resources and freedom to actually move forward and flourish, they tend to be limited in their level of achievement. Another dimension to business school autonomy is how the business school is situated within the wider university structure. This will impact the financial decision-making apparatus as well as the ability of the business school to project its image a way that aligns to the vision and mission of the business school. Accordingly, the type of accreditation that such a business school will aim for will be projected as part of its branding mechanism. Prof Vrom, former deputy dean of a business school illustrates this assertion as he narrates the process of acquiring the AACSB and EQUIS for their business school.

And then I would tend to look at the university and where the business school sits within the wider University structure as I said in terms of autonomy, financial decision making and everything lined up and as having done the AACSB process and to a certain degree, the EQUIS process for the business school gives me quite a lot of insiders information and appreciation of the way the business crews interact with the

University and I can read between the lines, when it comes to the you know, the way that the relationship is articulated in different documents. (Prof Vroom, Deputy Dean of Business School)

Business schools in the UK strive to stand out as independent and autonomous. When asked, a third of the business schools where interviews were conducted distinguished themselves as though they were independent even though they are still part of the wider university structure. The deans of these business schools suggested that it was important focusing on creating a sense of autonomy among themselves because it allows them the opportunity to project a certain brand image for effective attraction of high-quality academic talents but also to show that they are independent from the university and are capable of making decisions on their own. As discussed by the dean of a reputable business school in the Southeast of England,

And for example, now can Business School has acquired some accreditations, so which is give them some recognition international? Yeah. So, so I think looking at the business school itself is important, although not forgetting that I am University institution because there are other variables also that come in like for example, the ref science. I forget what it is. But it will also show how that university is around in terms of research and anyone wants to associate to me that inverted that is because belonging in adversity that is time to better also gives a higher credibility to your research. (Prof McArthur, Dean of Business School)

5.5.4 Brand Architecture

The relationship between the university and the business school emerged as a factor building the brand. Essentially, it was noted from the empirical work that universities have the licence to brand themselves as a separate brand that is recognized by the university or on the other hand, be branded separately from the university because of the reputational mechanism for the university. For example, the dean of a business school asserted that this was the case for their business school. Another university dean reported that their law school was branded separately from their university as illustrated in the following comment:

So the for law department, we've now externally branded as the law school, Business School is actually separate in terms of branding that we use in law school.

This phenomenon as related by the participants is termed brand architecture. It was observed that business schools are differentiated by different types of brand architectures. Some participants mentioned the brand architecture of their universities and business schools for example asserted by the following comment:

Yeah, it is a branded house, because XXXX is the brand that has appear everywhere and we are proud to have that because that makes things very consistent even for the MBA programme, we said the XXXX MBA has the strong culture to use the XXXX corporate brand along with all the product brands.

So that that is that is very much to them. Now, when it comes to attracting new writer good So, again getting back to the point that that people to my understanding, come to Brunel not because that Britain has got a high guardian or the ranking which you don't, but see we get very good profile colleagues coming in that is because we have got a nice place to work right. So the corporate brand and but yes, having said that, you would know that a significant number of people in this country are aware of pronoun, right

Many participants summarily agreed to the element of brand architecture especially in term of the alignment between the institutional mission of the university and the business school's mission. However, some respondents argued that they do not want to be completely misaligned because they assert that that the business school need to be a citizen within the institution and how the decision-making mechanisms are operated is based on the brand architecture of the university. Therefore, this projects that elements of employer brand architecture and the position of the business school within the architectural structure can basically be differentiated form other schools. This is illustrated in the following comment:

You know, a lot of a lot of business schools, good business schools in the UK, they almost follow their own base game, because they need to provide market supplements to strong academics to join them. And that's one one important thing that, you know, someone needs to take into consideration how far how far the business could have that. Also awesome autonomy, and they can basically do what what they need to be doing. (Participant BA 3)

The basis for which a brand architecture of the organization thrives depends on the relationship that and the understanding to that relationship as observed by comments from participants of the empirical study. Participants on the management structure of the university and business schools agreed that relationships between the university and business schools are very good especially where these brand architectures are prominently expressed. Participants were of the opinion that a good relationship was based on understanding of presentation and effective presentation, for example, a participant agreed in the following comment-

I think the university understands our needs for presentations. And it's a communication piece, you have to make sure that things are well communicated, the needs were communicated, and that your superiors understand where we are going with these and what we are doing.

So, their relationship with the services also is quite good, partly because all emphases in the universities that we should be working work together as teams arrive from the top right from the Vice Chancellor, he has a very, very little time for people. Quibbling and not getting on together is a bad message comes very clear all the time.

Equally important was the relationship between the school brand and the university where the person is operating from. Accordingly, individuals within the university were observed to be strongly associated with the brand personally and often compliment themselves. A respondent made the following comment:

the relationship between the scholars brand and the university where the person is operating from So when did you Hi they can complement themselves well, but it doesn't mean that so you might be in October you're not g march in terms of your personal brand and Knoxville brand will help you You might also be in an environment that is not talk so but a big guy there your own brand will help you to annex them. Oh, if I did not have in both of them then makes a lot more sense to me.

It was observed therefore that employer brand architecture has a two-way dimensional impact on the organization—firstly, it allows the organization to leverage on the strengths of its units or subsections and to project its values through that association. In the same way a valuable segment of the organization can benefit from the strength of the organization and by doing so, increase their brand equity. Secondly, employer brand architecture can affect the relationship of the employee as well their level of association with the organization as was observed that while employees may be associated with the sub-category of the brand others may be more associated with the brand than the sub-category. Each level of the association defines the relationship between the brand the employee.

5.5.5 Brand Communication

The fourth dimension of the employer brand process is concerned with how the employer branding process is delivered once it has been identified and packaged. Participants were asked to address the means of communicating the employer brand and the impact it has on the overall brand process. Most universities and business schools agreed that the marketing team leads in working on a consensus alongside the human resource department to deliver the employer brand and how it should look like from an employee point of view. Respondent CD3, communication director from a reputable university in the southeast of England argued that the mode of employer brand communication depends on

“how you take that and our strategy and our values and turn it into a compelling offer, internally, alongside the intensive mechanisms that will involve coming up with a narrative sort of internal narrative and messaging that we use really consistently for staff about who we are, and what we do and how we fit into that” (Respondent CD3).

They recognise therefore the internal mechanisms and communication channels that exist within the university from which the agreed values and organizational mechanisms that make up the

employer brand strategy. This includes different communication channels at the disposal of the university or business school from which the organization can disseminate information and distinct messages. Primarily, these channels need to be identified and depending on the content, campaigns can be rolled out with the intent to engage directly with the target stakeholder. In preparing the content, respondents agreed that it was necessary for the localization of the contents especially where there is a multi-dimensional department within the organization. The marketing and communication officer of a business school in Southeast England agreed that the

“Next step of that, as well as that you would also then take those ideas and work with them locally. So, there is no level or a departmental level so that where people are coming up with their own strategies in their area, for their teams, they are linked to this” (Respondent MO 2).

The next step has to do with getting the ground up for engagement. Respondent CO, a expressed the process in the following excerpt as an as an example;

Let's say that, can we, we make everyone's lives great. That's the top line idea. And as a staff member, I make everyone's lives great. And then you'd say, Okay, well, in the Department of Finance, we make everyone's lives great by doing x, and then your job further down, as whatever you decide, it means that that's, once you've got that central bit established, you then work in different areas to make them, see how it makes sense for them (Respondent CO 2). Although the process of brand message communication was shared by most respondents responsible for brand communication, a few practitioners in this field argued that this the process is possible when working with a central leadership organizational structure where in this case, a bottom-up structure will be more appropriate. A director of human resources with the remit of organizational structure responded by saying that in their case,

“So you would go around the home, as much of the organisation as you could in some form, and try and get collected agreement on what people feel like University is to them as an employer, and then try and bridge the gap between that and whatever external brand idea. So you get something that that people feel is theirs (Respondent HRD-3).

5.3.3 Touchpoints

Touchpoints in this study refers to all elements of communication that interfaces between employer and employee for the purpose of brand message communication. Following the responses of the participants, it is important to suggest that stakeholder input is important in the decision-making process of the employer brand communication process and that the point of interaction differs depending on the organizational structure require frequent review within each

university of higher education institution. This is referred to as the internal and external communication interface.

This position was observed by a participant who shared their position.

I think that's part of the problem now is that because we do not have a strong set of internal channels now, we're moving towards it.

Participants also observed that there was a challenge to communicate by audience for example, *a lot of our internal communication is done via email which is obviously pretty but not very flexible and very two-way. In some way we are using the website more than we probably should, which should really be an external audience, but we are moving towards that with the Office 365 suite would be having a proper staff intranet.* (Communication director)

Participants who had knowledge of communication agreed that there were different types of channels that could be used internally to disseminate information. Such channels include social media like workplace by Facebook, or Yammer, which comes with a 365 suite are ways for that softer engagement across teams.

This is where you can give people room to talk about the non-work side of things. You then got teams, which we're using now, which gives you channels specifically by area that people can, can work with. And I think what these do is, as you open up a bit more space with your channels, you're going to have more video content, you can then have more branded content and employee branded content, you can then have another have kind of suite of things that it's almost like you create a what would be what the external world sees, you create a similar sort of thing internally.

Relating to employer branding, *it reflects in using the same video content see, all your documents have the same branding on it, and it starts to make a bit more, which should make a bit more sense* as commented by a participant. (Communication Director)

5.5.6 Brand Alignment

Brand alignment in this study is observed to mean how the mission, vision and the recruitment process aligns with the positioning of the school to employees. We talk about the positioning of the school and what our values are, and so forth even during interviews.

We make it very clear that we're interested in responsible enterprise and Social Justice Society, and that we talk about being specific interview questions around being practice lead and researching and looking at the application and application of knowledge to enhance practice, and that we're very focused on preparing learners to enter practice valuable strategic goals that we have around inclusivity and diversity.

So we look at the practice. know about know that kind of Proposition.

The study observed another factor of the employer brand process as the strategic alignment of the employer brand to the vision and mission of the organization. It was observed that the university brand, although it normally arrived at with respect, really to student recruitment, not staff recruitment, but that university brand, and then how that becomes manifested in how you engage with potential employees.

But I mean, I think we have not really created a specific brand to think about that. I think if we look at the university, the marketing communications professionals employed within the university there, that primary thinking is around recruitment of students, not recruitment of staff.

5.3.4 Explicit Message

The study observed that the extent of brand effectiveness depends on the explicitness of the brand message. It was observed that while certain business schools were clear about the message, majority of the participants agreed that a major challenge they faced was in delivering a message that was explicit in nature to the target audience. Participants were asked to describe their attitude towards the message they pass across and how explicit they were to the target audiences. A communication director in a reputable business school responded in the following comment:

I think that I think that message is in the kind of the information that goes out to applicants, but I think it's not in so much of everything else, you know, they get a letter from the Vice Chancellor, which, which is important, and they get a letter about the history, you know, they get information about the history of the university and everything. And, and I think we should think I think the whole thing about this, for me is about thinking about how we, how we tell our story, because the way that we tell our story at the moment is just in black and white, on a page with this last in a job description as well. And I think there's better ways of doing it. But don't ask me what those weights are. I just think there must be a better way. And I think it was quite explicit in the interview stage, which has to do with a recruitment element. So in the interview stage, when I when I asked the questions around the panel in terms of resource allocation, time allocation, for research, opportunities for Superman, things like that, then bear in mind that I was, I was a principal lecturer at Kingston, so I was expecting to return back as a senior lecturer at Cannes.

And those reassurances were given to me, and both from the Dean of the Faculty, John Weidman, who chaired the panel, as well as Paul Phillips, who was the director of the school at that at that point. So it was almost very clear, bear in mind that before that interview, I had also an informal discussion with the head of the school, xxx, in terms of the potential roles that I could be from feeling for the school what I could be doing, and how he sees the school progressing. So I had a lot of information beforehand.

And obviously information during the interview that gave me the certainty Look, I'm moving into an institution which is committing itself to research is committing itself to quality, and it's committing itself to development

We try we try our best I'm not sure we do. But we do. We do try? Um, because Yeah, because they, we you can tell that some people come to interview with the idea that we are all about teaching. And that's good. We are a lot about teaching but we are also about research. And we do some very good research and saw that message. And you know, people listen to their supervisors and listen to the places they come from.

. So I am I try to be as clear as I can and answer questions that interviews clearly so that people go away with a an idea of who we are. But sometimes it's a difficult message because you're going against maybe what the person is somewhere else before.

Yeah, I think it's quite clear, Chris, it's quite a critical thing that runs through every HR professional's role, because actually, we are responsible for supporting the workforce. Okay, we are doing that on behalf of the organisation.

So sometimes we, we might be telling the messaging that they don't want to hear. So like, if we're managing someone's performance, we will be there alongside the manager supporting them. So if you're an employee, you know, you will, you know, you will think that we're on their side. But in actual fact, in terms of our role with employee branding, we're there to make sure that everything happens correctly. And actually, that they that, you know, that that that individual on the opposite side of the table is working for an employer of choice, and is actually dealing with things in a lot in a more professional way. So we're just making sure that their experience as a member of staff, is a good one.

I suppose that explicit message is, and, gosh, the way we market ourselves and all of the information that we put out there, and clearly, you know, as everybody can see, we do we market ourselves as a European, very friendly University, and definitely marketing ourselves using that European branding strap line all of the time, because, you know, we also close and we've got the centres as well set up in European centres in Belgium and Paris as well

And I think that's the message that we want to, to continue marketing ourselves is becoming that employer of choice in those areas, where people can market themselves and use the skills to lead teach it with their own specialist brand of research or whatever. But and it's around also, those softer skills, those softer things that people also look for, you know, that employer of choice, that one that looks after its people, when people look at family friendly policies, depending on your own personal circumstances

normally, that some of our messages are quite standard and quite set in stone that we use, and you get to sit, fit, and messages that you agree about your university. And that comes from all of your, your overarching strategic documents, the university has a plan, it has an operational plan, and how we go about getting to those points and places. So those those initial messages will come from where that university wants to get to, and how it intends to get there.

And part of that is we intend to get it through the people that we bring into work, it was only bringing in fantastic people and help us to become a really fantastic University, and that those explicit messages will all come from those strategic lines of direction that the university is working towards. And then you get the softer sides of things, which and I guess it depends on the type of on the role that you are recruiting to because every role and has has different requirements. So whether it be a senior role or a more junior role, that will almost drive the strategic need and the message that that should get it out there.

it's a mixture of various things, that clear definition of what what the university is and does and where it's going and how it wants to market and attract both and both students and staff, very different categories that you're looking at.

And having the very same branding is quite difficult to, to flex and achieve all of those aims. But then, because each job is so different and so varied, it's really really difficult to have this one overarching brand that works for everything, it's just not flexible enough

. I guess what I say in terms of what we say that's really distinctive about Ken, really distinctive, we have dampened that down. Because some of those things we need to move on, but will only begin to explicitly review that brand. And that messaging, when we have put in place, some other bits of the jigsaw that are around organisational change. Otherwise, we wouldn't be reflecting reality, we're going to have to judge At what point we start changing our messaging.

And so when it comes to recruiting academics, I would say and the employer brand, I think there is more work that we're still trying to do at the moment to make sure the institution overall is clearly understood and what we stand for, as well as the expertise in certain subjects in order to help attract the best applicants because the best applicants are in high demand

5.5.7 Brand delivery

In this study employer brand delivery is when stakeholders feel that the values, they look for in the organization are effectively communicated to the target. Employer brand delivery is considered actualized when the elements of the brand process is fulfilled from the employee's view point for

example, a feeling that the location meets the expectation of the potential or current employee or that the work load is commensurate with the expectation of the potential of current employee. This can lead the employee target to feel they have a person-fit for the organization. Participant 8, an academic lecturer who was seeking to move into a new higher education institution responded like this;

I did not know the business school if that makes sense. So, I asked my colleague, to show me around the business school, and just had a look around sort of the offices and where I would be likely to be located and, you know, that kind of thing, and decided that it looked really, nice. So it was both sort of needing to feel that I fitted in academically, and that the business school had a lot of things that I would enjoy getting engaged with, in terms of teaching and research, but also sort of that I needed to feel that it would be a comfortable place to work as well, which is kind of ironic, given the current situation,

5.3.5 Enforcers

The study observed that for employer brand to have a successful delivery, the brand strategy, values, and attributes must be woven into the fabric of the organization and should be clearly seen in how it is presented. This position was expressed by participant where it observed that there were differences in the perception of the target stakeholder where the brand delivery process was not very clear.

And I don't think that's clear. So I think we have to take a little bit more risk in terms of identifying the package of research being done in this school, this is where we want our mission to take us, this is what we want you to fit in with.

Participants expected that attributes like collegiality and workload needs to be clearly defined

And that includes being collegiate, you will get a heavy teaching load, but we will also expect you to turn up when you're not teaching, you know, it's not the kind of job where you go in and do your lectures and come away again, you do have to be present, you do have to go to school activities, not just your own teaching commitments or research commitments.

Participants itemised key areas where they feel their employer brand message is embedded and enforced: *I think that because we have this own identity in our way, and is more embedded throughout everything we do. You know, we have our own branding, we have our own colours that are different to the university, we have our own templates to be using and you know, in terms of PowerPoint and everything, I think they put a lot of emphasis a making people you know,*

Participants were asked to identify areas where the routes where employer brands can be enforced. Participant XXX HR director of business school asserted they *recruit from so many different departments and professional service areas.*

I suppose XXX Business School is very different to the law school, which is very different to the school of fire sciences, which is very different to come into work in human resources or finance. Yeah. So I guess the only way that we can determine is basically by having those conversations with the hiring manager and what the hiring manager is looking for, which is essentially, most of the time not that clever, because people tend to do like for like recruitment. And yeah, they might look for people, that they are comfortable working with people who they that they know, it is quite difficult to take a hiring manager out of his or her comfort zone and stop them for recruiting in, in their own vision.

The role of HR in enforcing the brand message is wrapped up in a lot of other things according to senior HR officer of a university in southeast England.

So you come out and say, This is a piece of work that HR do around transitioning the brand, because where we are, we are at the start of a major strategic project currently, okay, is about restructuring the university and changing its culture.

Similar sentiment were shared by participant 11 and 12 however specifically mentioning some key elements of the challenge in change especially to leadership.

And as a part of we're changing the leadership model, we're changing what we expect of our leaders. All these things have to be put in place before you can start to change your employer brand messaging

5.6 Employer Brand Stakeholders (EBS)

About 56 vignettes were assigned to the general term, employer brand stakeholders emerging from the thematic analysing process during the open code. The study observed the employer branding to consist of key stakeholders that make up the employer branding process. These stakeholders include: the organization, current employees; potential employees and former employees. The thematic process also identified associated dimensions to the key dimensions of employer brand stakeholders. The next section will describe the key dimensions and further provide details of the associated dimensions of employer brand stakeholders. Excerpts from the interview transcripts will be used to substantiate the findings. Essentially the section will describe the role stakeholder plays in the employer brand process.

This theme emerged as participants were asked to describe what employer branding means to them. Participants were also further asked to explain their understanding of the employer brand in relation to the context higher education. More than 85 per cent of participants responded to this question. Respondents were mixed between academic talent respondents and professional respondents. Participants generally agreed that employer branding focus was current and potential employees. Their further identified organizations as a functional stakeholder in the employer brand process. Participants mentioned that the role of organizations as the central element responsible

for the strategic communication of the employer brand allows them the opportunity to be stakeholders in the employer brand process.

My personal view for this, we have a centralised system, I think it would be better if every school could run its own, control its own operations. So you don't need to send it as a middle school to send me back to the ethics of it all. Because it takes more time delays, that even delays of application of students of time she may make an offer. Haven't seen when they see that they offer. me see and to us because sometimes things won't be working faster in a more efficient way for academic perspective. When the system was more decentralised.

They further identified key arms of the central organization responsible for employer brand process namely, the marketing department and human resource department.

Findings from the research support that employer branding is generally supported through an internal process by the university central command. However, the operative mechanism of the employer brand is mainly directed by the same department. The human resource department although required to perform more operational functions, findings show that most universities do not rely on the human resource department in delivering the operational role employer branding.

5.6.1 Organization as Stakeholders

A senior management staff of business school, described his understanding of employer branding in the following comment:

While the employer branding for me is the way an employer presents itself to not only its current employees, but potential employees as well. It's information that exists to the public domain, in terms of practices. And when you put it at the higher education, you've got several different practices institutions subscribed themselves for different initiatives. And obviously, these are there to tell people from the outside that we're doing certain things properly. And of course, you know, for people that currently work for that organisation, give them the assurance that the organisation is moving in the right in the right way. (Participant SH-3)

The participant mentions two functional components of the employer brand process which we identify as stakeholder. The role of the institution in presenting itself with a certain image or reputation. They also mention the role of the employee in recognising that image. This sets the pace for the strategic interaction of the employer brand.

Another participant iterates the role of the organization however, with regards to certain signage that accentuates the employer's reputation as an employer of choice.

So employee branding for me, employee branding wouldn't necessarily be simply the, the sign of the organisation but it would be the, the overall kind of image that this organisation is presenting in the sense

that look, university for example, you would expect universities that are properly managed to subscribe to things like Athena SWAN (Participant SH-5)

This is the only thing I would say. But overall, everything was as I was told there wouldn't be eah, no, I think it's the fact that them. As I said, I'm, at the end of the day universities are bureaucracies and they have regulations that are cumbersome, and there is no flexibility to change to quickly adapt to such a quickly evolving situation as the one we find ourselves we're presented with. So there's a lot to be said about the system and how the system is designed to operate. And the system has been operating like this for decades and decades and never had to deal with the challenges that we were facing and there was never tested in terms of its flexibility and adaptability.

for example, seems systems like operations, like HR, finance, so the system is a little bit slow. In the current world where we are living in a digital world, literally. Hey, I was Foster, I think I got stuck. Can you hear me? I think there was a little bit of the glitch of the system, I thin

It was observed that organizations view of employer branding is built on the values that it projects to the employees. These values are primarily hinged on the opportunities employees can access by working for the organization and the ease of progression in accessing opportunities. Ultimately, organizations were observed to have particular interest on retaining employees even though talent attraction was still important to the process.

5.6.2 Organization

Yeah, I think so. Sam said, I think I've managed to achieve that in terms of people grown to the management responsibility, but I think in terms of other so the progression in terms of grades, which relies upon their research outputs, and such, like, I think that could be stronger. And if we had that, that might help retain research active staff better. If they consider they can develop to read them professor here, then that they may not go elsewhere to research active universities.

we do have a special mentoring offer for them when they come in. So we make that often the professor's we really try to keep our recruitment and lecturer level that we specifically go out there looking for people who've just completed PhD.

I don't always have to be exactly the same amount of school in another university. But at UVA, at Norwich Business School, it has been and obviously gave me you know, the promotion is very fast, because I became a professor four and a half years after my PhD. Wow, it was relatively fast. And in that in that sense. So I think that that combination worked well. quite well.

I mean, you cannot do that. Maybe there was a little bit. What's the word? I was a little bit aggressive in the way I was looking for promotions, maybe. So maybe? I've made many, many people, many academics who do not apply, for example, they they're very shy in applying the see.

No, not as critical, you know, the tabs open? Like I think we have, because we go through our research. And we, we try to publish and we get a lot of beating when we publish. Because we get a lot of harsh comments. I think a lot of academics are inside this self criticism, again, no path. Increasingly, people who do not apply for promotion, they say, Well, I'm not ready yet, you know, haven't published my amazing four star papers, I haven't done this, I haven't done that they will reject me

Yes, I was taught at least I also saw the document when I applied. And do you also, they already included the progression. So when you come in at this level, you move to this role, you move to this role. So there's that progression there. So for example, by September, my provisional Buber provision in brown is two years. Yeah, it's only universities is three years. So once you finish your provision, and then you can begin to put in for your application, if you so the next role would be to become a senior lecturer. And all the criteria and everything I remember when I started my Dr. Doe school said, Allah Guan donload, to criteria for senior lecturer, and start working your way towards that. So that by the time it is your We are ready, you are ready as well, because they need to just tick the boxes for you

and there is a there is a very clear metrics of what the school requires, once you tick the box, you walk for promotion

5.6.3 Employee as stakeholder influence

Findings underscored the role of employees as stakeholders in the employer branding process. Over 45 vignettes were assigned to this dimension during the open code process. The aim of the theme was to answer RQ3 of the empirical study. Participants generally agreed that employees have significant role to play to in the employer brand process and therefore were deemed as component stakeholder in the employer branding process. The findings further suggested that employees interact with the employer brand strategy mainly as ambassadors of the brand and subsequently reflect the brand values based on their experience of the brand. Participants were asked to the extent they were committed to the organization by recommending the organization to potential employees. It was observed that participants would recommend their current employers based on certain element of the brand value proposition.

Yeah, I would recommend it. And I have recommended it when I've known people have been looking for jobs. I had a couple a couple of friends who worked elsewhere. And you know, I'd notify them when post was coming up with us. And one of them, yeah, was interviewed and offered a post as well, which I was delighted about.

For example, a mid-career academic expressed the view based on the quality of research conducted in their university and the kind of research interest within their department.

I think it's a very good university, it's a very good business school universe of readings. Also good is well known. The Business School is very well known for IP, especially international business has a long history, long tradition. But I think also the other departments, I close contacts with leadership and organisation behaviour. And again, I look at the people also, okay.

Another participant would recommend the university based on the leadership value existing in the university.

There seem to be in that department leadership, organisation behaviour, there seem to be more cohesion and they got along better I felt as a kind of department or the head of the

An early career academic highlighted the location of the university as a factor that resonates well with them and therefore was confident to recommend the university to potential colleagues.

I've, I'm aware of the area, but it's not my, in my research area. So I think that's always one of the reasons why I felt Okay, there's a lack of lack of collegiality, okay. 15. Okay. But I would recommend it definitely to other people. Reading is also if you look at the location to live, it's an excellent location close to London, Paddington, etc, to get to Oxford to Southampton.

Another mid-career academic stressed the importance of collegiality as the reason to recommend the university further.

I would still recommend it now in terms of colleagues, academics, because of the category the students, their academics, for sure, because coming back to the physical things, at least I can refer to those of the ISO 46 conference resuscitating not only physical reality but the allocation the way between teaching the receipts is quite manageable

The importance of career progression was highlighted by many participants as reason for attraction and retention. In reflection, participants were willing to recommend their university to other colleagues based on the ease of promotion clear career progression pathways they have experienced in their current universities.

So I would definitely recommend it especially for people who are looking for for either say for promotion or a first appointment Sophie UVA is probably universally good I mean across departments and across an institution is exceptionally good as a place where you can get you know say if you if you're getting your first appointment as a lecturer that's probably one of the best places I can imagine. Because the package they give you is really really nice. And also you know, if you're coming say from your lectures on where you want to come a senior lecturer probably be the same or if you're going to take your first professorship it will be exactly the same I would say it's a very attractive place for your first appointment us something on the roll. I think it might be a little bit more difficult for us to recommend it to established appointments.

Other participants focused on the work environment as the basis for recommending the universities to other colleagues. For example, an early career academic expressed their view:

You know, we're also different individuals. Yeah. Sometimes you could be in that kind of fantastic environment. And at least I know, you put our admit, the left few months into when I go there, and they will tell me their wounds and everything. So Boy, you know, looking back, I'm like, Oh, this place is done. So it's again, it depends on the individual. So I'm an easygoing person, I'm not going to disturb you. Even if you're looking for my trouble. I just do what I need to do. I just go on. So but at least from my own point of view, if I have somebody, a couple of my friends, I've told them, we are recruiting, please apply. Oh, that's good. Yeah. So I will recommend really, anyone

An early career academic who also has an international background expressed the ability of the university to sponsor their visa as a key reason to recommend the organization.

Oh, gladly, without any hesitation, I will recommend my department, I recommend the university to especially my international colleagues, because XXX offers a very, very good support in terms of you coming in sponsoring you licence and all that India has very good at that they will, it's a good incentive

About 50 per cent of participants mentioned leadership and leadership structures as a motivation to recommend their universities to potential employees. One participant, a mid-career academic commented:

I would certainly recommend business school. I think it would be difficult for me to comment on other areas of the university. But certainly the business school is extremely well run extremely well led, and, and provide lots of opportunities for staff, which I think is really positive. And I think it's not the same across the whole university. And I think the thing with academic departments is that they are very dependent on who needs them. And if you've got a strong really good leader, then your department is likely to be a happier place to work, I think. And so, yes, I definitely recommend the business school couldn't really comment on other areas of the university.

The leadership structure in the university was noted as a factor to enhance the opportunities of academic talents. The following comment from an experienced academic justifies the position.

You can shape your own little work life for little or big, it depends. But you can shape your own life at XXX, if you have an initiative if you have ideas, you can, you can try things and you can set your own path down. So I think you can have opportunities in an organisation like this.

Participants were fully diversified in the factors that triggered their affinity to the employer and thereby creating the willingness to be active in promoting the current employers as a brand to be associated with by potential employees. Among these factors were the remuneration of the current employer, the location where the campus was situated as well as the ambience of the campus. These were highlighted by current employees issues they mentioned to potential employees. Participants also mentioned the teaching load and the general support culture of the universities as issues that they talked about with potential employees during conversations.

I certainly would recommend them. The organisation. First of all reasons I okay, just the very pragmatic basic ones, salaries are about pretty much above industry average, which is for many is an important factor when they're considering employment. It is a nice, it's a pleasant place to work. It is a collegial place to work where you feel supported, you feel heard you feel seen. And that that is important. It is important. And lastly, I think you can shape your own

Workload

But I was recommended, I would definitely recommend that because I'm working here brings you, as I said, when when I share with some of my colleagues in other universities, how much I have been teaching around, you don't have a lot of international teaching experience in less than three years, that some of my friends have been, you know, that have been working for longer don't have. So that's one of the main things I could say, obviously, not everyone travels depends on your department and everything else.

Supportive culture

It's really a lot of this is underpinned by the really simple thing, that it's a friendly, supportive environment to work to work in.

Yes. I would. Basically, I am happy that I obviously find the academic staff are very collegiate. Now, I can't speak for other school because I don't really know them. My experience when I would, before I joined the business school, they were always happy to help very supportive. And the business school has a very good, how do I say, like ethos helping each other? You know, so that when I, for example, if I can finish marking at some problems at the colleagues are always willing to chip in, you know, that i like i like about that. And people are generally sort of friendly. You know, I'm not obviously, you know, they'll be the one or two a pain in the neck. But But, but most of them are good, so I would recommend people to work there.

Location

Well, I wouldn't do that. Although I think that the next year plus, universities in general will be recruiting very many people. I think there are a number of advantages I would recommend to people, first of all, the campus is beautiful. It's situated in a very beautiful part of the country. The downside is that they can be quite expensive to live in and buy houses. But that like a lot of my colleagues items some distance away. And that isn't particularly problematic. And I would say to them, that it's got a reasonably seen working environment for people. I mean, there are downsides to it as well, which I can mention, if you wish. But those are the main reasons why I would say to people, well, it's worth thinking about working in the place.

Diversity

I would recommend it, I would recommend it. And because exactly, it has this open character of accepting values views of they have a very diverse workforce, first of all, and we are, like culturally, very diverse, first of all, so you never feel alone, because we have I think there. And from many different national, I have

colleagues from different nationalities that I haven't even heard of, you know, before. So it's very open and diverse, it has a very, and the colleagues seem to be very supportive to each other. And it has this career probe it, at least in them in the first levels of hierarchy. It seems to be very supportive the business school in alone in promoting you. And also, our head of department always stresses us to our meetings that we want to have internal, how they call it, they want to, they want to have people becoming professors from starting from lecture to a senior lecture, you know, they don't really like to hire external people, they would like to at least that's what they say. They would like to force their, you know, their already existing workforce, and to support it in becoming, you know, in a senior lecturer, editor and a professor. So, you know

Research quality

So my co authors are usually because I was working with a really well established professors, the co authors I used to have would be also from his connected research area. So they are much better position than I am, most of them are already full professors all around the world. So for them, because I know that that their pay scale is higher, and they are in a different position, if they were to be coming to my university, they would probably have higher positions with key areas. And I don't know how it works in that positions. But if it were to be a friend of mine, who is finishing a PhD working as an early career researcher, yeah, I would be able to provide some information. And I would say, Okay, this is a good university, the workload

5.6.4 Current employee

Findings support the idea that employees of an organization are valuable assets of the employer brand process and organizations must understand that employees are key players in the employer brand process. For example, participants were asked to describe their job application process and avenues they took to know more about their employers. Participants were frequent in responding that they were in contact with current employees of the organization to verify facts and confirm perceptions regarding the institutions they intended to apply for. Therefore, employer branding was *perhaps more important for potential or current employees.*

Just a helpline, and if there is maybe a phone number on their website with you. And they are saying that you would like to know more information about our institution, you can call these and them and when you call their pastor person on the other side is well informed can be able to give you and answer all your questions. I think that will also help because, yeah, if really an institution is that willing to you, you will try all you can to find as much as possible of including making phone calls and speaking to relevant people in that institution. I think if there is an open line where people can call in and find my bargain tuition, and that can also help.

5.6.5 Potential Employees

Participants responding to the interview questions were frequent in talking about what they look out for when they are ready to apply to other universities. This provided the mindset to view potential employees as stakeholders in the employer branding process.

I have a sense of how an organisation might communicate its value to employees or prospective employees
Potential employees had interest in looking at key value propositions as points of interest for them and motivation for a potential decision to apply to a university. Some of the values were the area of research and the quality of research by the potential university; the kind of modules taught by the department.

Yeah, so one of the first things I would look is the areas of research they are into. So if I was applying for a business school, and they didn't do any kind of like, Social Research, in a way, they wouldn't do any research into business and society, sustainability, that would attract me, because I know straight away that I wouldn't have my group there. So I work in Marketing and reputation department here. So I would then go to a university that would only have, you know, marketing, HR, finance, and, you know, so that would be one of the first things I would look at.

Potential employees looked at the modules offered by the potential universities:

then I would also look at modules. So, you know, when I came to do the interview, apparently, I asked what models I could be teaching, because I know a lot of people that, you know, have gone to universities and are teaching things that are not really their area, and I don't see them happy, you know, some friends of mine. So I think that, you know, I, I may be very idealistic, but I want to teach and research and things that I'm passionate about, because I think that's a way you do a good job. Yes, trying to find something that connects to to my areas of interest.

Employer branding in higher education therefore includes the way the university presents itself both to current and potential employees.

So in terms of the employer branding, I suppose some of the things the university sponsors are the employer branding for me is the way an employer presents itself to not only its current employees, but potential employees as well. So it's, it's information that exists to the public domain, in terms of practices. And when you put it at the higher education, you've got a number of different practices institutions subscribed themselves for, for, for different for different initiatives. And obviously, these are there to tell people from the outside that we're doing certain things properly. And of course, you know, for people that currently work for that organisation, give them the assurance that the organisation is moving in the right in the right way. So that would be employee branding and from for me, employee branding wouldn't necessarily be simply the, the sign of the organisation but it would be the, the overall kind of image that this organisation is presenting

in the sense that look, university for example, you would expect universities that are properly managed to subscribe to things like Athena SWAN

5.7 Analytical relationship between EBA and EBS

Further analysis of the empirical study highlighted a relationship between employer brand antecedents and employer brand stakeholders. Specifically, employer brand attributes were observed to have varying influences on potential and current employees. Invariably, these influences were felt by former employees as they were observed to have direct and indirect influences on potential employees. The influence was primarily observed on talent management outcomes, more specifically on talent attraction and talent retention.

The study observed that certain employer value propositions had differing influence to attract potential employees to the organization. In some cases, other value propositions had more influence on academic talent retention. See table 16.

Table 13: Influence on EB Outcomes

Attributes	Respondent Type			Influence on EB Outcomes	
	ECR	MCR	ER	Attraction	Retention
Collegiality	✓	✓	✓	Low	High
Diversity	✓	✓		Low	High
Job Content	✓	✓		High	Low
Location	✓	✓		High	Low
Ranking		✓	✓	High	Low
Remuneration		✓	✓	High	Low
Reputation ^a		✓	✓	High	High
Research Quality ^a		✓	✓	High	High
Support Culture ^a	✓	✓		High	High
Work Environment ^a	✓	✓		High	High
Workload ^a	✓		✓	High	High
Career Prospect ^a	✓	✓		High	High
Immigration Support	✓			High	Low
Leadership	✓	✓	✓	Low	High

ECR-Early-career researcher; MCR-Mid-career researcher; ER- Experienced researcher; High influence; Low influence

^a – Major attributes that optimizes the employer brand of an organization

Following an analytical study of the empirical data, observation was made on the impact of attributes on talent management outcomes. An analysis was conducted on the 16 attributes that

were identified in the study to consist of the employer brand value proposition in UK higher education. The attributes include collegiality-Work environment. Participants were asked questions to explain the factors that attracted them to their current employees. They were also asked questions to describe what has made them stay longer. In response to these questions, participants were further asked to talk about factors that will make them stay longer and invariably, those factors that would make them want to leave the organization. Response from participants were aggregated into two categories. Were participants spoke more about the value propositions as attraction factors, they were further asked if those same values would keep them longer. Participant responses were then aggregated to determine the level of influence each value proposition had on talent attraction and talent retention. (See table 16)

Table 14: Influence Value Based on Attributes

Table Attributes	No of Participant Respondent	Talent Attraction%	Talent Retention%
Collegiality	45	40	60
Diversity	35	40	60
Job Content	55	67	33
Location	53	75	25
Ranking	65	70	30
Remuneration	62	75	25
Reputation ^a	60	45	55
Research Quality ^a	58	50	50
Support Culture ^a	67	55	45
Work Environment ^a	54	53	47
Workload ^a	66	50	50
Career Prospect ^a	50	55	45
Immigration Support	30	75	25
Leadership	45	35	65

The study also observed that participant's responses were based on the category of participants. For example, while some attributes were highlighted by certain categories of respondents as factors influencing their attraction to the organization, other category of employees did not emphasise these factors. Participant categories were divided into early career academics (ECA); mid-career academics (MCA) and experienced academics (EA).

5.8 Employer Brand Attributes

Over the 75 participants were interviewed to understand the factors that influence talent attraction and talent retention. This was aligned to research question 3 (See interview guide). For example, participants were asked what attracted them to the role and to the current institution where they are. Participants mentioned different factors as reasons for attraction to their current roles and institutions. These attributes were termed employee value propositions. The study identified as mentioned in the previous section, about 16 value propositions including collegiality, diversity, job content, location, ranking, immigration support, leadership, and remuneration. Reputation of the university or business school, research quality, support culture, work environment, workload, and career prospect were also identified as value propositions.

5.8.1 Location

Also, the location of cast is pretty amazing because it's basically smacking the City of London. And it has a lot of powerful connections. And which gives you access to data to executives, to a lot of things that are particularly useful if you do our job. So for a business school that I think there's literally no better place to be on plant than in the City of London. I mean, maybe Wall Street, but not even. So yeah, those are all, I think, very, very strong assets.

And Brighton is very convenient. I joined it in the first place. Because in my area of the country, a it was the nearest versus school and be although we have two universities in the city of Brighton. The other university when I began teaching, did not have a management or business school. So I chose Brighton, partly because it was the only Business School local to me. But also because Brighton University is an ex Polytechnic. So it's post 1992 University.

5.8.2 Support Culture

It is a collegial place to work where you feel supported, . But the takeaway should always know that it's always been a very friendly, welcoming place. It's friendly, it's welcoming. It's quite, I think we're quite small compared to a lot of business schools. But because of that, you know, you do get to know your colleagues and you get colleagues who also become friends and you socialise normally Anyway, you socialise outside of the workplace. So that that makes a huge difference when it comes to job satisfaction and motivation.

right, um, just a moment. I'll look it up later. So one is a workplace where my colleagues are college. I mean, collegiality is one of the things that and I don't think I'm saying that because I'm at Essex. But one thing I've seen is people are sort of walk together, these are very friendly environment, and I'll talk with the accounting crew.

5.8.3 Ranking

So these are all things that you look at, but I feel like primarily it is the ranking or standing of university kind of will dictate now, what comes after that

Yeah, of course, because and why we invested all this time into the lesson, but the good investment is always Edison University. So this is relates to all the fights about civic and before university that is on the bottom of the ladder, on the bottom of the list, it will be probably decision based investing, which means that you have no, no obligations, no promotion, all of those things, you know, come together related.

5.8.4 Reputation

So I went there, I stayed there two years, I really liked the environment, they liked me. And when my money finished, basically, they offered they had positions over for lecturing strategy. I applied, they knew me already that seemed me, you know, contributing to the school in other ways. So they offered me the position. And since then, I had offer from other schools, but none were really comparable or really competitive. Either because they were not in a school of equal brand, or equal resources or because they were not in London Because we're not particularly bively tables. I think, I think the business school has not got a brilliant reputation for research. And I think that does put some people off, even though we're trying to change that. Okay, that's gonna be first thing, a university with with a good reputation, very important. So I would not go, let's say, to a worse University than UVA, I would need to go to more reputable than UVA higher in the rankings, including in the area working

I got interviewed in the same week and Roehampton offered me and then I had to go back to Sussex and said I've had an offer and I sort of negotiated with both of them. And it would have been better for us sort of travel wise if I'd gone to Roehampton because that's in London. It's a little bit far out. But it's nearer than Sussex, but Sussex has this really interesting reputation. It also has a sustainable centre, very well respected. And my friend was the head of Global Studies and International Development Studies and they're some of they're supposed to be some of the best in the world.

5.8.5 Research Quality

And also you see like high quality research coming out from the six departments. So you see all these people with these big brands and You know, in the news and talking in the BBC and everything, so, and that, in a way, makes me proud, you know, of working there

And I have opportunity to collaborate with researchers across the world in interest in project, I want everal, which will give me the opportunity to do real life problems solve real life problems, rather than solve economic problems? So yeah, and honestly, I would like a facility which would have access to research grants, access to databases, access to relevant materials and journals and academic literature, and access to relevant staff with relevant competencies

I was just going to be I mean, I mean, I agree with that. Exactly. I mean, I could be a little bit more prosaic as well, on the sense that I think within our five groups, we now have heads of group who have established really good identities for the group, alongside some strong research cultures, you know, people want to work within a site a strong research culture

5.8.6 Support Culture

Maybe if you need more support, in terms of teaching abilities, then again, you might have to ask him, ask for support, also outside the school and go more, and get more support in time for these from the university. I mean, that is something I didn't need to so I cannot really talk about these. But if you need them, I'm sure the university will be able to support you in this finger.

I need to feel that my views are respected, even if they're not agreed. And I'm perfectly happy to have a disagreement with somebody, as long as they can back up with evidence, and we can discuss it perfectly, reasonably and openly. And those are absolutely critical things. And then I guess the third most important thing, which might be the most important thing overall, actually, is about trust being trusted to do the job I've been employed to do so I routinely get excellent, excellent feedback. And that's the kind of reinforcing the positive feedback loop for me that yes, I'm doing well, I want to keep doing well, I want to keep doing better. Therefore, it gives me this personal gratification, personal satisfaction to know that, yes, I'm doing what I'm doing, but I'm doing it well

5.9 Optimal Attributes

Among the attributes that were mentioned by participants, it was observed that some attributes were considered highly in talent attraction and talent retention.

Table 15: Optimal Attributes

Reputation ^a	60	45	55
Research Quality ^a	58	50	50
Support Culture ^a	67	55	45
Work Environment ^a	54	53	47
Workload ^a	66	50	50
Career Prospect ^a	50	55	45

For example, participants were asked about factors that attracted them to their current organizations. Reputation, research quality, support quality work environment, workload and career prospects were mentioned by participants as factors that lead to talent attraction. Participants were further asked how long they have been in their current organizations. It was observed that participants who mentioned these value propositions had an average of 5-8 years in

their current organizations. Participants were further asked why they would leave an organization. Majority of the participants mentioned these factors as reasons to leave the organization if they were not there in their universities. For example, 58 per cent of participants mentioned research quality as factors that attracted them to their current universities. At the same time, 50 per cent of participants mentioned research quality as a factor that kept them longer in their current universities or reasons why they left their previous universities. When asked further to explain, participants explained that the absence of these factor was a key reason why they left and explained they probably would have stayed longer if that factor was not absent. Furthermore, out the 75 participants interviewed, 67 per cent of participants described the type of support they received from their universities as a major contributor to their choice of applying to the institution and subsequently accepting the offer. These were through interaction with current employees in the institutions. At the same time, 55 per cent of participants mentioned that their reason for spending the length of time in their current universities was because the level of support they received from colleagues and management alike in their universities. They further said that without these support culture, they would probably seek to apply elsewhere.

Equally, the reputation of the university, the business school or the department in the business school played a major role talent attraction and talent retention. For example, 60 per cent of participants when describing the factors that got them attracted to their current employers, mentioned that that the reputation of the university or business school had a high influence in their decision. However, this was varied because reputation was either linked to the business school or the department within the business school.

Participants were also asked how long they have worked in their current higher education institutions. On average participants spent 3 months - 8yrs in their current institutions.

5.10 Respondent Type

It was observed that the various attributes identified by participants had different influence on participants depending on the type of respondents. Three types of respondents were identified during the interviews. (1) Early career academics, these were academic participants who had recently completed their PhDs to up to 5 years in the academic field. (2) Mid-career academics (MCA) were participants with over 5 years but less than 8 years' experience and experienced academics (EA) were participants with over 8 years of academic experience. It was observed that the priority of attributes and their influence on talent attraction and talent retention varied among these categories of participants. For example, all participant categories mentioned collegiality and leadership as factors of influence when asked what attracted them to their current employers. ECR

and MCR participants were more concerned with diversity as an influence on EB outcomes. Similarly, job content and location were equally mentioned most by ECR and MCR participants. Ranking and remuneration were observed to be more a priority for MCR and ER participants although with varying levels of influence on EB outcomes. MCR and ER participants shared the same views on reputation and research quality as factors influencing employer brand outcomes where it was observed that ECR participants felt this factor was less important to them. Support culture, work environment and career prospect were factors of influence across ECRs and MCRs. ERs were less concerned about these factors and responded that though they were important, they did not necessarily have high influence on their decisions for attraction to an employer nor were they influential in their decision to stay or leave an employer. However, ECR and ER shared a common interest in viewing workload as an important factor for talent attraction and talent retention in an organization. Immigration support was observed to influence mostly ECRs, more specifically, international PhD students who had recently concluded their doctoral research programmes in the UK and were eager to start working in the UK. These participants were mostly non-EU international students with limited immigration status.

5.11 Influence on Employer Brand Outcomes

Talent attraction and talent retention were identified as the key employer brand outcomes for this study. The study there observed how the attributes mentioned in the previous section influenced talent attraction and talent retention.

Collegiality and Diversity were observed to have low influence on talent attraction. For example, 40 per cent of respondents described collegiality and diversity to have influenced their decision to apply to an employer. They cited other factors however, 60 per cent of participants when asked reasons why they have stayed longer or why they would not want to leave their current organization, cited collegiality and diversity as high influence factors for their decision.

About 67 per cent of participants mentioned job content as a high influence factor in the decision to apply to their current employer at the same time, 75 per cent of participants, also mentioned the location of the university as high influence factors for their decision to apply to their current employers. Job content and location, however, were observed to have low influence on talent retention. About 30 percent of participants said that their job content would not necessarily keep them in their current role and their current employer while 25 percent of participants were willing to stay with their current employers despite the beautiful location and endowed campus where the university was located. The study further observed that ranking and remuneration attracted academic talents more to a university with about 70 per cent of participants mentioning ranking as factor for attraction and remuneration while 75 percent of participants mentioned remuneration

as factor for attraction. When further asked how these factors influenced their decision to stay longer in the organization, about 30 percent of participants mentioned ranking as factor for talent retention while ca 25 percent of participants were willing to stay longer because of remuneration. Amongst participants who were interviewed, 75 per cent mentioned immigration support as a factor to consider when looking at academic job adverts and subsequently applying for those roles however, about 25 per cent of the participants were willing to stay longer on the basis of immigration support considering other factors.

The study however, observed a significant variation in participant responses. Certain attributes had similar influences on talent attraction and talent retention. For example, about 45 per cent of participants mentioned reputation to have influenced their decision to be attracted to their current employer. When they were asked what factor could influence their decision to stay longer, or what factors had influenced their decision to stay longer, 55 per cent of participants mentioned reputation as high influence factor for talent retention. Similarly, about 50 per cent of participants talked about the research quality of the university as factor for talent attraction with about 50 per cent of participants describing the research quality of their university, school or department as the reason why they have stayed longer or as reason why they would not leave the university. Similarly, about 55 per cent of participants mentioned support culture to have attracted them to their current employer and 45 per cent of participants were happy to stay longer due to the support culture in their current university or department. Participants also mentioned work environment as a having high influence on talent attraction with about a similar percentage mentioning work environment as factor for retention. Workload and career prospect were also identified by participants as having high influence on talent attraction and talent retention. For example, 50 per cent of participants mentioned workload as factor to apply for in their current organization, with similar percentage accepting to stay longer because of the workload in their organization or willing to leave if the situation changed. Similarly, 55 per cent of academic participants stayed longer in with their current employers because of the clarity on career prospects in their organizations. About 55 percent of the participants mentioned career prospects as a key reason for their attraction to the organization. When asked about reasons why they would stay longer with their current employers, about 45 percent of participants mentioned career prospect and the clear possibility and opportunities in the organization to grow would keep them longer in the organization.

5.12 Analytical relationship between EBA and EBS

Further analysis of the empirical study highlighted a relationship between employer brand antecedents and employer brand stakeholders. Specifically, employer brand attributes were observed to have varying influences on potential and current employees. Invariably, these

influences were felt by former employees as they were observed to have direct and indirect influences on potential employees. The influence was primarily observed on talent management outcomes, more specifically on talent attraction and talent retention.

The study observed that certain employer value propositions had differing influence to attract potential employees to the organization. In some cases, other value propositions had more influence on academic talent retention. See table 20

The attributes include collegiality-Work environment. Participants were asked questions to explain the factors that attracted them to their current employees. They were also asked questions to describe what has made them stay longer. In response to these questions, participants were further asked to talk about factors that will make them stay longer and invariably, those factors that would make them want to leave the organization. Response from participants were aggregated into two categories. Were participants spoke more about the value propositions as attraction factors, they were further asked if those same values would keep them longer. Participant responses were then aggregated to determine the level of influence each value proposition had on talent attraction and talent retention. (See table 21)

5.13 Summary of Analytical Relationship

In this section, the study analysed an element of employer brand antecedents and employer brand stakeholders. As a key dimension of employer brand antecedent, 14 brand attributes were identified and analysed. They were in analysed in relation to research question 3. Specifically, participants were asked to describe why they were attracted to their current employers. Participants were also asked to describe why they would stay longer in their current employment. Respondent types were early career academics, mid-career and experienced academics. The objective was to understand the influence of employer brand values on talent management outcomes. The analysis suggests that employer brand attributes influence talent management outcomes specifically in talent attraction and talent retention.

Out of the 14 brand attributes, eight value attributes were observed to have varying influences on talent management. The influences on talent management outcomes were either high where many participants described or mentioned a certain attribute to influence their decision to apply for the position or be interested in working for the organization. It was of low influence where fewer participants did not attribute the value as influencing their decision. Similarly, brand attributes were considered as low influence if few participants mentioned them as influencing their decision to stay longer in the organization or high influence if they were mentioned by many participants as influencing their decision to stay longer in the organization.

Significantly, the study identified 6 brand attributes mentioned by participants as both having high influence on talent attraction and talent retention. These attributes are assumed to optimize the employer brand strategy of the organization and identified as major attributes in the employer brand process. They include; (1) the reputation of the organization, (2) the research quality of the business school or department; (3) the support culture of the university or business school (4) work environment; (5) workload including teaching, research and administration (6) career prospect including the clarity of career opportunities and the talent management structures in place for workforce development. The section also highlighted the impact of these attributes on the types of respondents. In doing so, the study findings showed that brand attributes influence respondents differently depending on their career stages therefore while early career academics mentioned location as highly influencing the decision for talent attraction, experienced academics did not generally feel that way and therefore were not mentioned as factor of influence.

Summarily, the study finding proposes a set of six value propositions as the optimal employer brand strategy to influence talent attraction and talent retention.

5.14 Summary of Key Findings

In this section, the study analysed an element of employer brand antecedents and employer brand stakeholders. As a key dimension of employer brand antecedent, 14 brand attributes were identified and analysed. They were analysed in relation to research question 3. Specifically, participants were asked to describe why they were attracted to their current employers. Participants were also asked to describe why they would stay longer in their current employment. Respondent types were early career academics, mid-career and experienced academics. The objective was to understand the influence of employer brand values on talent management outcomes. The analysis suggests that employer brand attributes influence talent management outcomes specifically in talent attraction and talent retention.

Out of the 13 brand attributes, eight value attributes were observed to have varying influences on talent management. The influences on talent management outcomes were either high where many participants described or mentioned a certain attribute to influence their decision to apply for the position or be interested in working for the organization. It was of low influence where fewer participants did not attribute the value as influencing their decision. Similarly, brand attributes were considered as low influence if few participants mentioned them as influencing their decision to stay longer in the organization or high influence if they were mentioned by many participants as influencing their decision to stay longer in the organization.

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The section also highlighted the impact of these attributes on the types of respondents. In doing so, the study findings showed that brand attributes influence respondents differently depending on their career stages therefore while early career academics mentioned location as highly influencing the decision for talent attraction, experienced academics did not generally feel that way and therefore were not mentioned as factor of influence.

Summarily, the study finding proposes certain value propositions that can project optimal employer brand strategy able to influence talent attraction and talent retention.

This section also presented participants' responses based on the semi-structured interviews that were conducted to understand the factors that trigger the employer branding process within organizations. Based on the thematic coding principle, antecedents of employer emerged as the first theme of the empirical study. Following on the key questions from the participants, this study aimed to understand how employers' brand themselves. The empirical study through the semi-structured interviews sought to understand the process by which organizations attempt to distinguish themselves among competitors. Applying a thematic analytical process, employer branding process emerged as a major category of the empirical study. The empirical findings deduced from professional practitioners, four main stages of the employer brand process. In the next chapter, the findings from the study will be discussed. It will reiterate the aim of the research and the research questions and summarize the key findings. The study will discuss the findings by proffering theoretical contribution as well as managerial implications of the study. It will further suggest limitations to the research and future research.

Table 16:Employer Brand Empirical Relations

Attributes	Respondent Type			Influence on EB Outcomes	
	ECR	MCR	ER	Attraction	Retention
Collegiality	✓	✓	✓	Low	High
Diversity	✓	✓		Low	High
Job Content	✓	✓		High	Low
Location	✓	✓		High	Low
Ranking		✓	✓	High	Low
Remuneration		✓	✓	High	Low
Reputation ^a		✓	✓	High	High
Research Quality ^a		✓	✓	High	High
Support Culture ^a	✓	✓		High	High
Work Environment ^a	✓	✓		High	High
Workload ^a	✓		✓	High	High
Career Prospect ^a	✓	✓		High	High
Immigration Support	✓			High	Low
Leadership	✓	✓	✓	Low	High

ECR-Early-career researcher; MCR-Mid-career researcher; ER- Experienced researcher;
High influence; Low influence

^a – Major attributes that optimizes the employer brand of an organization

Table 17: Employer Brand Value Influencers

Employer proposition Influencer Attributes	No of Participant Respondent	Talent Attraction%	Talent Retention%
Collegiality	45	40	60
Diversity	35	40	60
Job Content	55	67	33
Location	53	75	25
Ranking	65	70	30
Remuneration	62	75	25
Reputation ^a	60	45	55
Research Quality ^a	58	50	50
Support Culture ^a	67	55	45
Work Environment ^a	54	53	47
Workload ^a	66	50	50
Career Prospect ^a	50	55	45
Immigration Support	30	75	25
Leadership	45	35	65

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Summary

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a general conclusion to the findings of the study and examine them considering extant literature. The chapter provides a summary of the research agenda and objective, summarising the findings and then provide theoretical and managerial implications for human resource and strategic higher education sector practitioners. The chapter will also discuss limitations to research and suggest further research trajectories for future studies.

From a wider spectrum, the changing nature of global employment market calls for a re-examination of current human resource (HR) activities especially in the management of best fit talent. This comes on the backdrop of a labour market faced with the increasing challenges of globalization, pressure for speed of innovation, competitiveness and uncertainties further redefining employment paradigms. Equally challenging is the scarcity of talents necessitating a strategic tool for its management and addressing questions of attraction and retention of talents in times of uncertainty. However, within academic literature, talent management lacks currency. Its limited empirical studies and lack of theorization weakens its grounding in research in addressing these changes and an identity crisis as it is less distinct from traditional HR practices. This presents a knowledge gap.

This study investigated the relationship between talent management and employee branding. Applying a qualitative research method, the research collated data from selected higher education institutions within the UK using a semi-structured interview. It further drew samples from three sources namely- potential, existing and ex- employees of designated business schools to undertake the empirical analysis of the research questions.

Given the lack of empirical debate and the limited theorization in the talent management literature, this study contributes to the debate on employer branding as a construct in the HR academic literature even as the need to explore both the empirical and theoretical becomes imperative. It also leans theory to practice and provides a platform for further research in the field of people and organizational management.

6.2 Objective of Research

This study set out to investigate the impact of employer branding processes on employer brand outcomes within higher education institutions. The research identified higher education institutions as the context for empirical research. Two factors have influenced this decision. First, there is a growing and expanding market for knowledge intensive sectors globally and the UK

plays a significant role in this sector (Beaverstock & Hall, 2018). More specifically, higher education market has witnessed increasing expansion over the last two decades and the UK is a global player within this sector therefore, market change externalities including global labour demand has an impact on the UK higher education market. However, despite the growing interest in employer branding both by practitioners and in academia, the operational mechanism that perpetuates and delivers employer brands have received insignificant attention resulting in the lack of empirical literature to engage in this critical aspect of the subject area. Previous research has focused on the importance of human capital development and human capital management to meet organizational bottom line however, these two important research areas continue to develop in silo, focusing on the antecedents and effects of employer branding on talent management. Employer-branding process however has received very little attention-particularly, the operation of mechanisms at the firm and individual levels that shape and advance the employer brand (Moroko & Uncle, 2009).

As an overarching concept, employer-branding process involves the functioning mechanisms on which the employer brand operates-starting from firm level mechanism that shape and define the brand to factors that underpin its continuous implementation. It further considers the interactions at the individual level that is- between existing and potential employees, taking into consideration, the process of brand association, brand meaning as well as brand loyalty for the employer brand (Moroko & Uncles, 2009). This prompted the need to investigate what constitutes the employer branding process through a broader review of the literature and empirical studies. By doing so, it allowed a mix of concepts ranging from corporate branding, human resource, and organizational behaviour literature as well industry journals to deconstruct the relationship between employers, employees, and prospective employees.

The study contributed empirical knowledge by understudying the impact of employer branding on talent management outcomes in UK business schools. While previous studied understudied impact of employer branding in private organizations, this study extends the body of research and contributes knowledge to the literature by investigating employer branding in higher education institutions. It further establishes knowledge and contributes to the literature by investigating the process of employer branding in higher education institutions. The study is significant in the attempt to propose a best fit model of employer branding for organizations and provide empirical evidence to the concept of employer branding as a growing phenomenon within human resource management literature. To achieve this objective, the researcher acknowledged philosophical debates that underpin management and business research and influences the researcher's worldview in terms of the research design for example, the method of data collection and analysis. The section addresses the empirical findings by summarising the sources of data, reviewing the

research question with a view to discuss the findings based on extant literature and empirical evidence from the study. The section will also provide theoretical and managerial implication of the study to the body of knowledge. Furthermore, it will outline the limitations to research and propose future research trajectories.

6.3 Summary of Data Sources

For this study, interview respondents comprised of academic talents at various academic cadres in universities around the southeast of England. They were categorised into academic lecturers, comprising of senior lecturers, professors, and chairs of research institutes. A second category of interview respondents were human resource practitioners, marketing consultants and marketing communication directors of universities. A further category was heads of business schools and Directors of Human resource management in higher education institutions. Access to participants was gained by following the criteria for research participant as mentioned in the previous section. Firstly, an internet search was carried out on university websites in the southeast England region for academic lecturers and heads of schools. Interest was for academic staff and heads of business schools. Based on the result of the internet search, 15 universities were located who had outstanding business schools and, in some cases, they were called management schools. In this case, they were not substantive business school and did not share the level of autonomy that business schools share within the university organizational structure.

This study focused attention on potential participants who had responded to our initial contact. 80 contacts gave direct positive response and willingness to participate in the interview. These group of participants were then followed up with further emails to establish contact and discussion on the study and more interview details for example, appointment dates, were scheduled. The study applied random sampling strategy to choose a sample from a population (Saunders et al, 2012). According to Gravetter and Forzano, (2011) the method allows for less bias from the selection procedure and should result in representative samples. It is also suggested that findings from a random sampling strategy allows for generalization due to the representativeness of the sampling technique (Saunders et al, 2012). A disadvantage of the method is that it may be costly for a face-to face interview due to geographical location and time consideration. However, due to the disruptions of lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the study proceeded to conduct the interviews virtually after initial face-to-face interviews were interrupted by the lockdown. Table 21 presents the summary of data for the empirical study.

6.4 Research Questions

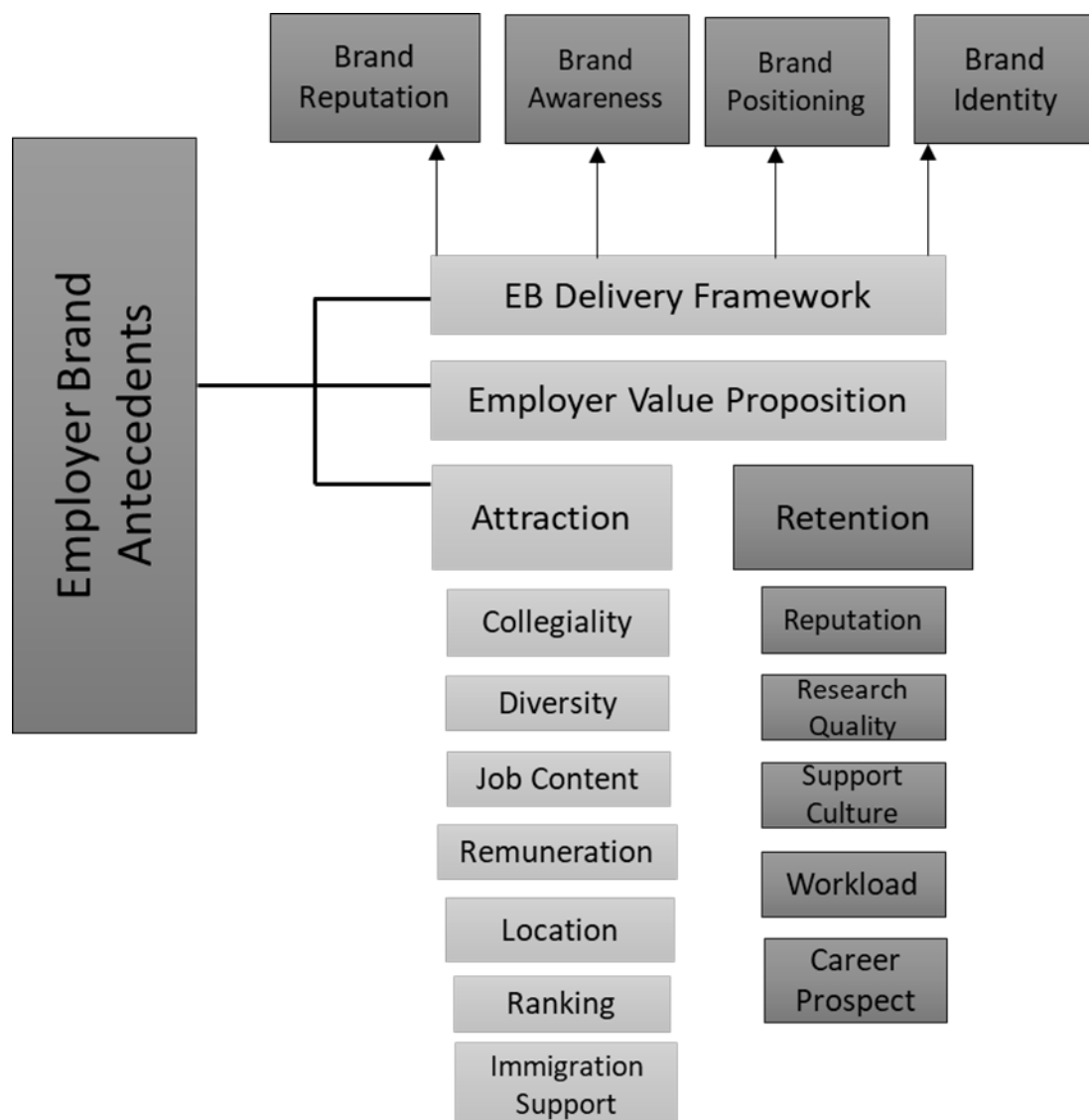
Practitioners and academics agree that employer branding is important to talent attraction and retention (Wallace et al, 2014; Cascio, 2010). There is also a consensus that the employer brand is a desirable component of the talent management strategy of the organization (Ref). However, perceptions of successful employer brands have not been empirically examined neither has much attention been given to the employer brand process defined by Moroko & Uncles (2005) as the distinctive events, sequences and operative mechanism that bring the employer brand to life. As a result, it is difficult to determine a best-fit model based on an empirically tested brand process and key dimensions of its employer brand constituents explored. This is the gap within the employer branding literature. While the literature on employer branding seem to suggest a positive outcome of employer brand effect on the organization, there is a question regarding the functional sequences that produce these outcomes and the extent to which these functional sequences or processes deliver successful brand outcomes. There is also, the question of unintended consequences that may have been overlooked during the employer branding process. This study therefore examined the process in which industry experts apply to develop and deliver their employer brand as a starting point to bridge the gap in knowledge and add to the body of theory in this area. By understanding what constitutes the functional developmental factors of the employer brand models. To achieve this purpose and based on the theoretical foundation identified from the literature review, the study proceeded by asking the following research questions: **RQ1.** How do HEI's brand themselves? **RQ2.** What are the events, sequences and functional mechanisms that constitute the employer brand process? **RQ3.** Considering the processes of employer branding, how does employer brand influence talent management outcomes

6.5 Summary of Findings

Finding from the empirical analysis identified employer brand attributes and employer brand concepts as key dimensions of employer brand antecedents (See figure 8). The study findings identified 14 value propositions that are grouped together to constitute the employer brand attributes. They were analysed in relation to research question 3. Specifically, participants were asked to describe why they were attracted to their current employers. Participants were also asked to describe why they would stay longer in their current employment. Respondent types were early career academics, mid-career, and experienced academics. The objective was to understand the influence of employer brand values on talent management outcomes. The analysis suggests that employer brand attributes influence talent management outcomes specifically in talent attraction and talent retention.

Out of the 14 brand attributes, eight value attributes were observed to have varying influences on talent management. The influences on talent management outcomes were either high where many participants described or mentioned a certain attribute to influence their decision to apply for the position or be interested in working for the organization. It was of low influence where fewer participants did not attribute the value as influencing their decision. Similarly, brand attributes were considered as low influence if few participants mentioned them as influencing their decision to stay longer in the organization or high influence if they were mentioned by many participants as influencing their decision to stay longer in the organization.

Figure 9: Employer Brand Antecedents



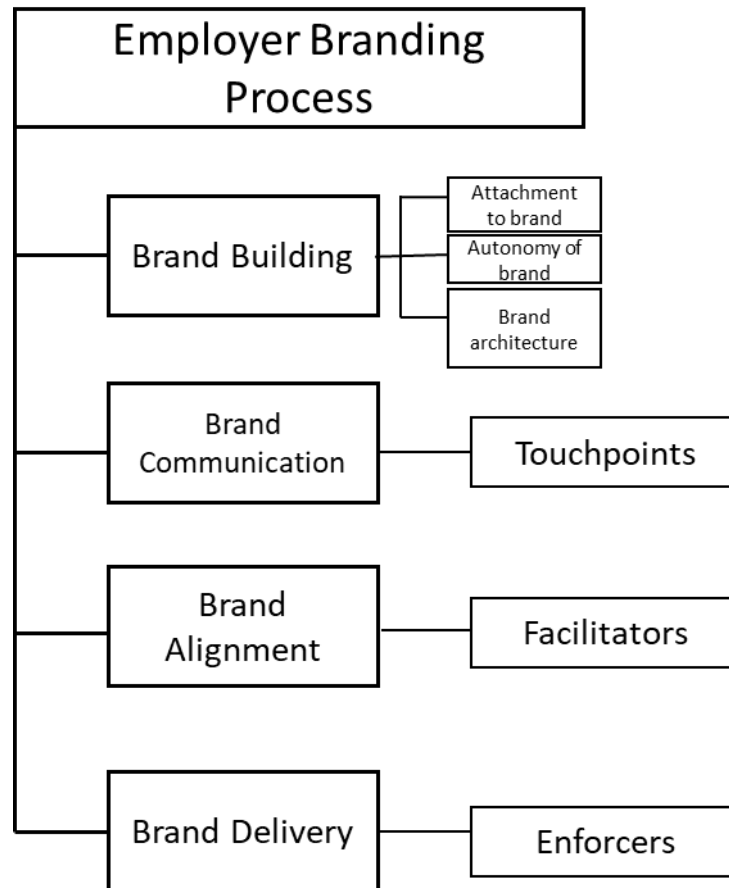
Significantly, the study identified 6 brand attributes mentioned by participants as both having high influence on talent attraction and talent retention. These attributes are assumed to optimize the employer brand strategy of the organization and identified as major attributes in the employer brand process. They include;(1) the reputation of the organization, (2) the research quality of the

business school or department; (3) the support culture of the university or business school (4) work environment; (5) workload including teaching, research, and administration (6) career prospect including the clarity of career opportunities and the talent management structures in place for workforce development.

The section also highlighted the impact of these attributes on the types of respondents. In doing so, the study findings showed that brand attributes influence respondents differently depending on their career stages therefore while early career academics mentioned location as highly influencing the decision for talent attraction, experienced academics did not generally feel that way and therefore were not mentioned as factor of influence. Summarily, the study findings suggest that there are value propositions that can project optimal employer brand strategy which are able to influence talent attraction and talent retention. This provides a theoretical contribution toward the understanding of employer brand antecedents in higher education institutions.

The second key dimension of the employer brand antecedent were four brand concepts identified from the empirical findings as (a) brand reputation, (b) brand awareness, (c) brand positioning and (d) brand identity. The study found that these four brand concepts constituted the strategic framework that can help build and deliver an effective employer brand of the organization. Elements of the Reputation, Awareness, Positioning, and Identity (RAPiD) framework were observed to be significant in building the employer brand process and constituted the foundation of a strong employer brand delivery. This contributes a theoretical framework to the study by providing strategy for building an effective employer brand.

Figure 10: Employer Brand Process



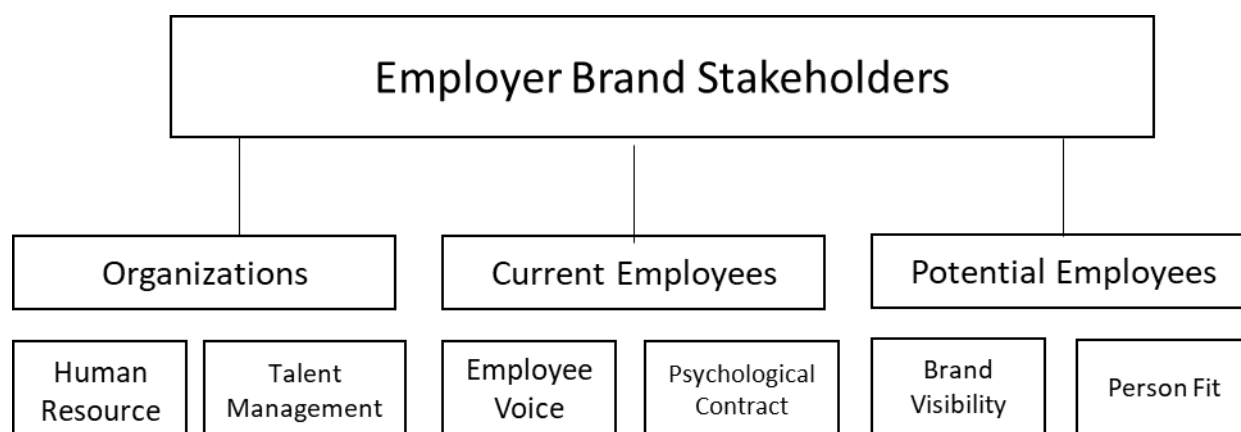
Employer branding process emerged as a key theme of the empirical analysis. The study identified four characteristics of the employer branding process. The first characteristics include: a) Brand building. Under this characteristic, the study observed three dimensions to employer brand building. The dimensions are namely, creating a definite attachment to the brand, the level of brand autonomy and the constituent architecture of the brand.

The second characteristic of employer branding process observed from the empirical analysis is brand communication. It involves the art of engagement with target audience of the employer brand. Brand communication is underpinned by the advantage to leverage on communication touchpoints. Brand communication is followed by brand alignment according to the empirical analysis. According to the study, it is the level of response to the values that constitutes the employer brand. It validates the message of the brand and projects the brand in its true form. Brand alignment is driven by elements described in the study as facilitators.

The third feature of the employer brand process observed from the empirical analysis focuses on the mode of delivery that constitutes the employer brand. Participants observed that there is a wider impact of employer branding on talents in relation to how the employer brand is delivered. The empirical data however suggest that higher education organizations generally need to be

bolder in presenting the package that constitute the employer brand. The study observed that different universities have different modes of employer brand delivery, and the effectiveness of the brand delivery is related to the impact it creates in delivering sufficient talent management outcomes. As suggested by a participant *...for me is about thinking about how we, how we tell our story, because the way that we tell our story (Respondent CD 4)*

Figure 11: Employer Brand Stakeholders



The empirical analysis identified employer brand stakeholders as a major theme emerging from the study (See Figure 10). Accordingly, the employer brand process revolves around key actors known as employer brand stakeholders. These stakeholders are categorised into three components namely, the organization, current employees, and potential employees. The study further observed a functional relationship between the three key stakeholders and the role they play in influencing talent management outcomes. Both academic and professional participants contributed the empirical observation of this theme. Subsequently, organizations play a key role in the employer branding process by acting as the progenitor of the employer brand process as supported by a participant: *I have a sense of how an organisation might communicate its value to employees or prospective employees (Respondent MD 4)*. The study observed that it is within organizations, employer branding process is mainly concerned with the role of human resource managers, their knowledge of the employer brand process and their willingness to engage in the strategic delivery of employer branding. It was also observed that organizations also promote talent management prospects both by monitoring and designing the intended outcome of talent management within the employer brand process and building it into the employer brand strategic design. However, while acting as a conduit, the organization's role in the employer brand process is to present a compelling package to the employee as well as the potential employee. This observation is captured by participants in the following excerpts: *So, you know, when I came to do the interview, apparently, I asked what models I could be teaching, because I know a lot of people that, you know, have gone to universities and are teaching things that are*

not really their area, and I don't see them happy, you know, some friends of mine (Respondent BS 7). This observation supports human resource management theory as well as talent management theory and the role in the effective delivery of employer branding.

Secondly, the empirical study captured the relevance of potential employee within the process observed by the participant in the following excerpt *I suppose some of the things the university sponsors are the employer branding for me is the way an employer presents itself to not only its current employees, but potential employees as well (Respondent BS 5).* Participants acknowledged the role of current and potential employees in the employer brand process through the interaction of the as target audience for the employer branding. While current employees are relevant as key tools for organizational performance, they also act as sources of relevant information dissemination both for the organization and the potential employees. On one hand, current employees are seen as brand ambassadors and consequently validate the value propositions of the and functional packages presented by the organization thereby making them useful tools for the organization, on the other hand, they serve as contact points for the potential employee who seeks to validate the package and values presented by the employer brand. This observation contributes to human capital theory and its role in talent management. The findings also provide empirical support to resource-based view theory which aims to view human capital as viable and functional element of organizational success.

More so, the role of employees as stakeholders in the employer brand process was observed to allow employee voice in the conceptual framework of the employer brand process. It was observed in the ability of the employee to contribute input in the recruitment process either by referrals or being a point of contact to employees. Furthermore, the impact of psychological contract was observed to influence the level of current employee engagement as stakeholders. The study observed that where there was a positive perception of the psychological contract, employees were more willing to engage as positive stakeholders and where the psychological contract perception was negative, employees exhibited nominal participation and engagement as stakeholders. Current employees' attitude to voice and psychological contract is measured by the rate of turnover and the retention rate in the organization.

Potential employees were also identified as key stakeholders in the employer brand process. During the process, potential employees were observed to be significant in confirming brand visibility. The level of employer brand attraction can be measured by the quality and quantity of potential talent an organization attracts during the recruitment process. This finding contributes to brand equity theory and will be discussed in the theoretical contribution section. Similarly important to the employer brand process was the response of employees to self-select in the talent pool.

Potential employees were able to identify with the organization if they had the person-fit for the organization based on the level of brand visibility. The findings suggest theoretical contribution to talent management and brand equity theories. They will be discussed in the theoretical contribution section.

Table 18: Thematic Descriptions Excepts

Aspects	Observations/context	Exemplary Quotations
Employer Brand Attributes-Value propositions	Academic Participants	<p>I only accept offer to universities where they do sponsor (Participant IS-1)</p> <p>I would say fundamentally, at this stage, what is most appealing is the research and the writing, what is least appealing is the administration and anything to do with a management rule, (Participant JC-6)</p> <p>I think it was for me for three things. I mean, the obvious is location (Participant L-3)</p> <p>I looked at the rankings before I move to the university (Participant R-3)</p> <p>Yeah, for me, this (Money) is the most the most important factor for instance, I cannot say that I fortunately or unfortunately, money is a part of life...looking for a unique university that has a relatively good reputation (Participant Rep-3)</p> <p>When I decide to move from any business school, to me what is more important as an academic is, obviously that I get a promotion (Participant CP-1)</p> <p>It is a collegial place to work where you feel supported (Participant Co-4)</p> <p>Diversity is one very important point here, which can also be a very strong motivating factor for me to sustain for a long time and for others to come. (Participant Di-2)</p> <p>I think, like high quality research...makes me proud, you know, of working there. (Participant RQ-2)</p> <p>So as an academic it was the ability to support you in going for conferences, , the ability to support you in develop as an academic,...I think that's what attracted me (Participant SC-7)</p> <p>I think it is very important, the environment where you're going to work (Participant- WE-2)</p> <p>Things like your teaching load, how much you teach, per term, how much research allocation you have,...would be the reason why I would move (Participant WL-6)</p>
Understanding Brand Concepts a)Reputation b) Awareness c) Positioning d)Identity	Academic and Professional participants	<p>The factors that come together to create the brand for the university. It is how you package yourself and make yourself attractive (Dr Piro, Senior Lecturer)</p> <p>Characteristics of the brand that are well known within the market (Participant BA-2)</p> <p>I was attracted because I said interdisciplinarity; plus, there are three Nobel laureates in science. It's like in the past, so those things, views and like a few kinds of fainting nation for us. (Dr Jake, Lecturer)</p> <p>An identity is what you want to portray and exactly what you want people to know about you (Participant BI-3)</p>

Aspects	Observations/context	Exemplary Quotations
Employer Brand Process a) Brand building b) Brand communication c) Brand alignment d) Brand delivery	Professional Participants	<p>People will join the university and have a sense of belonging and duty to that school or area of work, but not necessarily to the overarching organisation. (Ms W, People Management Director)</p> <p>It is how you take our strategy and our values and turn it into a compelling offer, internally, alongside the intensive mechanisms that will involve coming up with a narrative sort of internal narrative and messaging that we use really consistently for staff about who we are, and what we do and how we fit into that” (Respondent CD3).</p> <p>...for me is about thinking about how we, how we tell our story, because the way that we tell our story (Respondent CD 4)</p> <p>I think we have to take a little bit more risk in terms of identifying the package of research being done in this school (Participant HrD 4)</p>
Employer Brand Stakeholders a) Organization b) Current employees c) Potential employees	Academic and Professional participants	<p>I have a sense of how an organisation might communicate its value to employees or prospective employees</p> <p>So, you know, when I came to do the interview, apparently, I asked what models I could be teaching, because I know a lot of people that, you know, have gone to universities and are teaching things that are not really their area, and I don't see them happy, you know, some friends of mine.</p> <p>I suppose some of the things the university sponsors are the employer branding for me is the way an employer presents itself to not only its current employees, but potential employees as well</p>

The study analysed an element of employer brand antecedents and employer brand stakeholders. As a key dimension of employer brand antecedent, 14 brand attributes were identified and analysed. They were analysed in relation to research question 3. Specifically, participants were asked to describe why they were attracted to their current employers. Participants were also asked to describe why they would stay longer in their current employment. Respondent types were early career academics, mid-career and experienced academics. The objective was to understand the influence of employer brand values on talent management outcomes. The analysis suggests that employer brand attributes influence talent management outcomes specifically in talent attraction and talent retention.

Out of the 13 brand attributes, eight value attributes were observed to have varying influences on talent management. The influences on talent management outcomes were either high where many participants described or mentioned a certain attribute to influence their decision to apply for the position or be interested in working for the organization. It was of low influence where fewer participants did not attribute the value as influencing their decision. Similarly, brand attributes were considered as low influence if few participants mentioned them as influencing their decision to stay longer in the organization or high influence if they were mentioned by many participants as influencing their decision to stay longer in the organization.

Significantly, the study identified 6 brand attributes mentioned by participants as both having high influence on talent attraction and talent retention. These attributes are assumed to optimize the employer brand strategy of the organization and identified as major attributes in the employer brand process. They include; (1) the reputation of the organization, (2) the research quality of the business school or department; (3) the support culture of the university or business school (4) work environment; (5) workload including teaching, research, and administration (6) career prospect including the clarity of career opportunities and the talent management structures in place for workforce development.

The question further explored participants response on how these factors influenced their decision to leave the university for another university. Based on the response from participants, sixteen value propositions were identified as factors influencing academic talent attraction to higher education institutions and responsible for the retention of academic talents in UK higher education institutions. Higher education employee value propositions are addressed in the next sections with supporting direct quotes from participants. The study identified two key value proposition factors: (1) attraction factors and (2) retention factors.

The study observed the employer branding to consist of key stakeholders that make up the employer branding process. These stakeholders include: the organization, current employees;

potential employees and former employees. The thematic process also identified associated dimensions to the key dimensions of employer brand stakeholders.

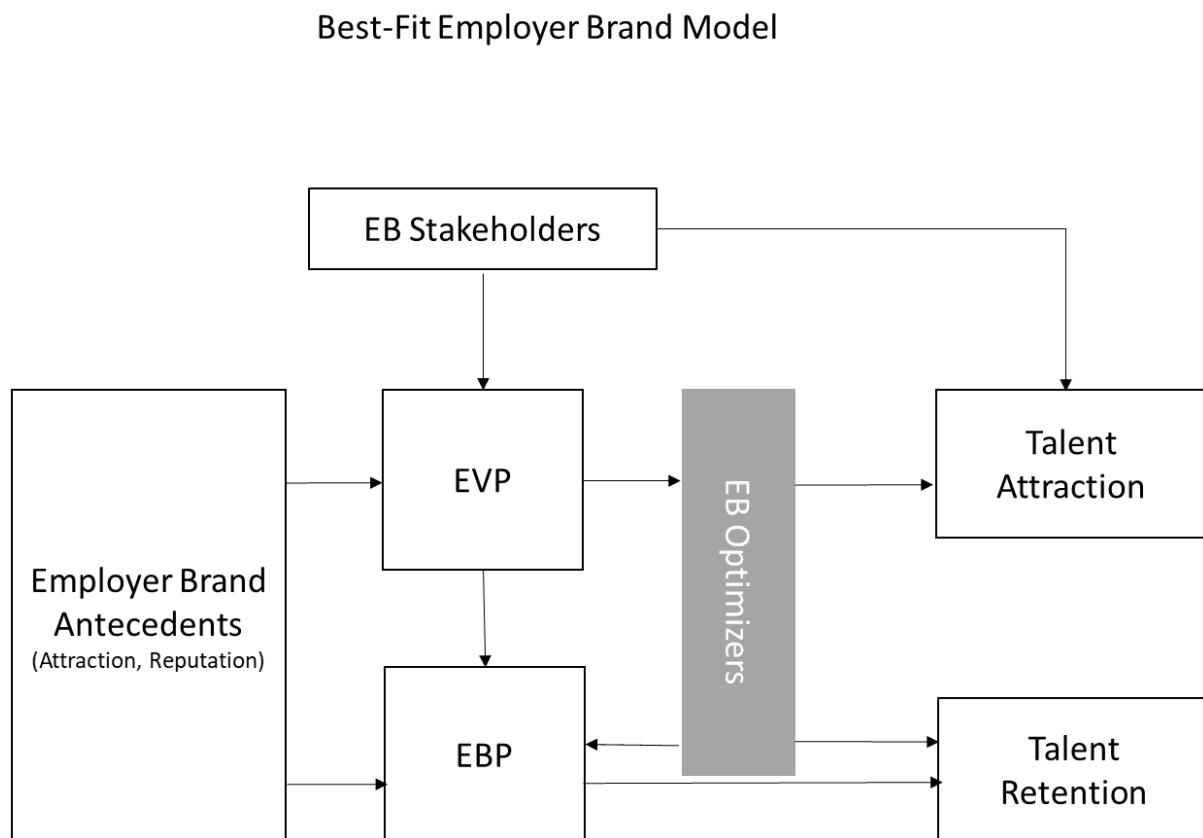
Findings from the research support that employer branding is generally supported through an internal process by the university central command. However, the operative mechanism of the employer brand is mainly directed by the same department. The human resource department although required to perform more operational functions, findings show that most universities do not rely on the human resource department in delivering the operational role employer branding.

6.6 Theoretical Contribution

This study set out to investigate based on extant literature and empirical evidence if it could achieve a strategic framework on which employer brand can provide an efficient and effective influence on talent management outcomes. Based on empirical evidence, this study suggests best-fit employer model for organizations (See figure 13)

According to the model, four main components come together to deliver a best fit employer brand model. Components of the best-fit employer brand model comprises of (a) the employer brand antecedents, (2) the employer brand stakeholders (4), the employer value proposition (EVP), (5), and the employer brand process (EBP). The essential element of a best-fit model involves the determination of the employer brand (EB) optimizer in the model. Impact of employer branding on talent management outcomes is influenced by finding the right optimizing mix for the organization and projecting them in the talent management strategy of the organization.

Figure 12: Best-Fit Employer Brand Model



From the study, employer brand antecedents represent the underlying reason for organizations to undertake an employer brand strategy. They are the trigger of the employer brand process. Extant literature identifies two key reasons for organizations to trigger the employer brand process. The first reason why organizations trigger the employer brand process is the need for attractiveness. Organizations understand the role of talents in organizational performance. They also understand that their ability to acquire the right high performing talents depend on the level of organizational attractiveness. Therefore, organizations attempt to building or summing their employer attributes to ascertain the set of values that makes them stand out and more attractive among competitors within the employment market.

The reputation of organization is another antecedent to trigger the employer brand process. Organizations understand the impact of employee reputation on the general attractiveness of the organization and the compelling influence it has on talent acquisition. Following on this, organizations therefore seek a functional strategy to address their reputation by carefully crafting their image through a well-defined employer brand process.

Employer value propositions are the set of values that determine the unique image of the employer or the organization. Value propositions range from functional attributes like job content, support culture, to reward, location, career prospect and leadership. This study identified 14 employer value

propositions peculiar to the UK higher education sector. The study also found that organizations depend on sets of value proposition to craft their attractiveness to potential employees. Functionally, the study observed a two-dimensional interaction between the employer brand antecedents and employer value propositions. Firstly, organizations need to attract potential high-quality talents depend on their ability to identify key attributes that stands them out within among competitors. Secondly, employee value propositions strengthen the underlying of the employer brand and triggers the employer brand process.

Changes witnessed in the global employment market within the last decade have resulted in a diversity of challenges for organizations. Factors that have affected the labour market include globalization; the pressure for speed and innovation; widespread privatization and the advancement of technology. In the UK, the impact has been exacerbated by the uncertainties of Brexit. These changes, however, highlight the continuous demand for competitive performance which has resulted in strategic organizational restructuring and subsequent surge in the demand for talent (Deloitte, 2010). Talent scarcity as well as the change in employment landscape, has depleted the number of safe-field employments resulting in the war for talent (Frank & Taylor, 2004; Axelrod et al, 2001; Beecher & Woodward, 2009). Indeed, new trends over the last decade show that talent is being sought after by organizations rather than talents looking for jobs (Fegley, 2006; Allen et al, 2013; Capelli and Keller, 2013) and employees are increasingly becoming portfolio workers (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Capelli & Keller, 2013). This presents the need for a re-think of a strategic talent management framework that can address changing HR activities to attract and retain best fit talent in these times of uncertainty and begs the question: How can organizations manage talent in times of uncertainties and deepening competitiveness? More specifically, what tool is effective in positioning an employer as a preferred choice for employee and for retaining the right employee to maximise long term productivity?

The research focused therefore on the role of employer branding in employee retention. Applying a cross -disciplinary approach, the study explored the impact of brand equity to employee retention. It proposed employer branding as a strategic management tool for employee attraction and retention in adverse conditions.

Broadly, talent management literature present sparing definitions of the subject's conceptual boundaries (Collings et al, 2009; Thunnissen et al, 2013; McDonnell et al, 2017). Its definition as activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organizations sustainable competitive advantage and the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles (Collings et al, 2009) is keenly contested (e.g., Jones et al, 2012). Subsequently, talent management

literature is classified under two areas namely management of talent-primarily addressing the organisation's mode of attracting recruiting, retaining, and rewarding performances and talented individuals- this is the focus on what constitutes talent and how talented individuals behave (McDonnell, 2017). This lack of agreed talent management definition constitutes a problem to the understanding of the concept and require further investigation to address its theoretical boundaries. To address this challenge, the study sought participants' opinion on their understanding of employer branding as well as the employer brand process and outcomes.

Existing literature have focused on practices associated with life-time careers (Capelli, 1999) however, over the last 20 years, the profound shift in organizational workforce management mean that the certainty required for anticipating workforce attraction no longer holds (Frank & Taylor, 2004), making change within the landscape inevitable. It has further triggered the increased prominence of external labour market questions which desperately require new answers and call for new paradigms to account for uncertainties (Frank & Taylor, 2004; Martin & Schmidt, 2014). Despite the surge in popularity witnessed within the study area, (McDonnell, 2017) research methodology within the field and the literatures, suggest a departure from this expectation rather it showcases scarce empirical evidence to strengthen the case for talent management resulting in limited theorization of the construct (; Collings & Mellahi, 2009, Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Capelli, 2013; McDonnell, 2017).

Furthermore, research enquiry on talent management is primarily quantitative (McDonnell, 2017). This presents a gap because it does not capture and explain the underlying factors that drive the phenomenon. Factors like intention to leave and psychological contract are variables that may not be truly captured with a quantitative method. More so, the lack of robust empirical research often characterised by an incoherent narrative of the retention and attraction process deserves a rethink. This presented a knowledge gap in the relationship between talent management and employer branding-more specifically in positioning employer branding as a strategic tool for talent management- and the need for a research agenda that focuses on the impact of organizational linkages to specific outcomes like employee attraction and retention. This study will therefore fill this gap. Drawing on a multidisciplinary approach to conceptualise the construct and provide an empirical framework for academic research, this research projects a new conceptualization of employer branding which appreciates a correlation between employer positioning and employee dialogue as a strategic process for talent management thereby adding theory to practice.

Findings from the study does not present a clear process how higher education institutions brand themselves however, the study shows that employer branding is implicitly practiced among higher

education institutions. Participants' responses showed that employer branding is considered an important strategy for talent attraction and talent retention. The study also show that potential and current employees identified certain qualities projected by HEIs as influencing their decision to apply and to stay longer.

The study identified 13 attributes responsible in triggering employer branding process in higher education institutions. The study also supports that notion that employer branding is influenced by the conceptual elements of brand reputation, brand awareness, brand positioning and brand identity. However, the study does not demonstrate evidence of how higher education institutions model their employer branding strategy. Findings from the study demonstrate that higher education institutions in the UK do not have explicit employer brand strategy and therefore it is challenging to express in clear terms to discuss the different employer brand models applied by higher education. Extant literature suggests explicit employer brand strategy as a functional element for successful employer brand process. Previous studies have identified that the academic sector does not comprehensively deploy employer brand strategies in their process to attract best talents (Fieldler & Welp, 2008; Brosi & Welp, 2015) however, studies have suggested that universities who are intentional in signalling their employer brand attributes respond positively to talent attraction and retention (Chalwe & Lenka, 2015; Matongolo, Kasekenda & Mafabi, 2018; Mohammadnezhad Fadandi, 2019). Whereas a previous study by Deloitte (2016) suggested that universities have begun to recognise the importance of placing a strategy that addresses desired behaviour among academics, our study shows that there is little evidence of explicit employer brand strategy in UK higher education.

This is a key finding for this study. Technological innovation, globalization and demographic changes contribute to the disruptive labour market environment where human capital is key in determining the degree of organizational performance and competitive advantage (Rana et al, 2019). At the same time, access to tangible and intangible resources for example technology and human capital prove challenging for organizations to come by, triggering the war for talent (Butt, Lodhi and Shahzad, 2020) therefore attracting best-fit talents is an important aspect of any organization poised to succeed in a disruptive business environment. Such an environment is characterized by distinct employee perceptions, attributes, benefits, and values that are geared towards appeasing the potential employee and increasing the attractiveness of the employer as a brand (Wallace et al, 2014; Valor & Abril, 2018). Previous research (Kashyap and Rangnekar, 2016; Sharma, Singh & Rana, 2018; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019) identified value propositions that determine employer branding for example, employee recognition, career path, training and

development, stimulating working environment, job security and perceived organizational support as values that influence employee retention.

The study was not explicit in providing a clear response to the way higher education institutions brand themselves. Based on the view of participants, higher education institutions generally have implicit strategy to employer branding rather than an explicit strategy. Participant mostly suggested that higher education do not have a clear strategy of how they brand themselves however, universities possess attributes that makes them attractive to potential employees.

Based on the shared view of respondents who participated in the study, this research identified two key dimensions that influence employer brand antecedents: brand attributes and brand concepts. The study identified 14 brand attributes as associated dimensions of the theme namely, collegiality, diversity, job content, location, ranking, remuneration, reputation, research quality, support culture, work environment, workload, career prospects immigration support and leadership. Similarly, we identified 4 associated dimensions from the research that make up the brand concepts: brand reputation, brand awareness, brand positioning and brand identity.

According to Hadi and Ahmed, (2018), talent attraction and talent retention are pivotal in building firm's competitive advantage therefore, for an organization to remain competitive, and survive in the war for talent (Woodward, 2015), they need to be well equipped and strategic in the competition to attract and retain employees by strategically positioning themselves to entice the labour force and subsequently retain them (Tlaiss, Martin and Hofaidhllaoui, 2017; Collins, 2009). This position was earlier affirmed by Xie, (2015) who posit that talent acquisition is vital to organizational survival and development as human capital is a valuable contributor to organizational achievement.

Recent study by Theurer et al, (2018) found that employer branding played an important role in attracting and retaining potential employees if the organization have a significant investment in employer branding strategies. They therefore suggested need to be intentional in steering policies that address talent attraction and talent retention. This follows on the backdrop of Miles and Mangold, (2004) research who suggested that the effective implementation of employer branding process can significantly increase brand image and promote the brand to desired stakeholders.

Employer brand antecedents constitute the components of the employer brand strategy that trigger the employer brand process. Extant literature has reviewed and analysed the employer branding phenomenon by drawing theoretical knowledge from organizational behaviour, human resource management and marketing as a framework to develop the antecedents of employer branding and its impact on talent management outcomes for example, Biswas and Suar, (2014) explored the impacts of employer branding antecedents on company performance. The results of

the research revealed that realistic job preview, perceived organizational prestige, organizational trust, leadership of top management, psychological contract obligations and corporate social responsibility have significant influence on the employer brand of an organization. Their study further identified leadership of top management as the most potent predictor of employer branding. In Sokro (2012), they investigated if organizations use employer branding and how the employer brand influence talent attraction and talent retention specifically in the banking sector. Their study found that organizational brand names have significant influence on the decision of employees' attraction and subsequent retention in the organization. They also found that conducive work environment was conditional to talent retention.

Previous research (Jain and Bhatt, 2014; Arasanmi a& Krishna, 2019; Deepa & Baral, 2019) suggested supportive work environment, informal work culture, fair and ethical leadership, positive reputation as factor that are responsible for attraction of prospective talent and retention of current talents. Their study place high value on conducive work environment as a significant determinant of employer branding on prospective and current talents (Sharma &Prasad, 2018). Other studies support the employer brand attributes targeted at talent attraction and talent retention.

Talent attraction refers to one step in talent management strategy aimed at acquiring best qualified and high performing talents to an organization at the right time. It involves attracting talents with high competencies that will accentuate the competitive advantage of the organization and increase overall competency of the organization (Carusi & Cipollone, 2016). A broad range of methods can be used in the attraction of high performing talents to an organization and thus is incorporated into the talent attraction strategy both internally and externally (Dessler, 2015). Some of the approaches for talent attraction include external talent recruitment, referral programmes by employees as well as advertisements through portals, however, the effectiveness of any talent management strategy is dependent on the constituent of employer value proposition of the organization and the image the organization presents both to potential and existing employees (Taylor, 2014). A study by Conley et al, (2004) identified five reasons that motivate or compels potential to be attracted to an organization. Accordingly, the include competitive pay, opportunities for advancement, work-life balance, recognition for performance and competitive retirement package.

On the other hand, talent retention is the ability of the organization to maximise the outcome of talent attraction by convincingly maximising the durability and sustaining the interest of the potential employee to remain in the organization based on the set of value propositions that attracted the employee. It is comparative that once talents are attracted, necessary steps are taken

to retain them in the organization due to their critical role in the long-term health and success of the organization (Al-Quran, 2021). Talent retention therefore is the ability of the organization to maintain a stable workforce (Rothwell, 2016). It is the activities and processes that allow for employees to consciously choose to remain in the organization and be actively involved in the growth and development of the organization (Garavan, 2012). Studies on talent retention have identified five top employee value propositions considered as enablers of talent retention. They include, career development, training, competitive base pay, clear job description and career progression. Similar studies identified work relationship and communication with leadership as factors enabling retention. The study identified 13 value propositions for potential employee talent attraction and current employee retention. The value propositions are collegiality, diversity, job-content, location, university ranking, remuneration, reputation, research quality, job support and leadership.

Findings from this study support extant literature regarding the significance of value propositions in structuring the employer brand strategy (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017; Wallace et al, 2014; Valor & Abril, 2018). While this study supports extant literature, in terms of identifying value propositions that are required to build veritable employer brand strategies, it varies in part from previous work conducted in this area in the specificity of value propositions. For example, Biswas & Suar (2014) study identified six value propositions which included realistic job preview, perceived organization prestige, organizational trust, leadership, psychological contract, and corporate social responsibility as essential for strategic employer branding antecedents. The study, however, extends the list to include workload, career prospect, work environment, remuneration, location, and diversity. The work also supports Sokro (2012) who identified conducive work environment as a factor influencing talent attraction and retention and therefore, a composite component of the employer brand strategy. Similarly, Kaysharp & Ragnekan (2016) identified employee recognition, career path, training, and development, stimulating work environment, job security and perceived organizational support as key factors influencing employer brand outcomes. The study supports their findings by identifying common factors that are responsible for employer brand success namely: career path, work environment and organizational support. It also supports Jain & Bhatt, (2014); Arasanmi & Krsihna, (2019) who identified supportive work environment, work culture, ethical leadership and positive reputation as factors influencing employer brand success.

The study contradicts previous study regarding the role of employer branding as strategic intervention for talent attraction and talent retention. Deloitte (2016) observed that universities have started to recognize the importance of placing strategy that drives a desired behaviour among

academic talents. This assertion was further observed in a recent research in Yameen, Bharadwaj & Ahmad (2020). However, this study found little evidence to support the assertion that employer branding was an explicit strategy in higher education talent attraction and retention process.

A key objective of this study was to understand the events, sequences and functional mechanisms that constitute the employer brand process. The employer brand process assumes to include the events, sequences and generative mechanisms that create the employer brand (Marokko & Uncles, 2005). These functional dynamisms are responsible for the delivery of the unique package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits that an organization attempts to portray to potential and existing employees. Through these processes, employees can identify with the organization. It also projects the identity of the employer to potential employees. Previous studies have focused attention on the conceptual phenomenon of employer branding process. However, they have contributed less on a broader view of focusing on the processes that births employer branding strategic outcomes.

Previous studies have shed little light on the employer branding process which has subsequently led to the minimal attention directed to the operative mechanisms that deliver employer branding (Erlenkaemper, et al, 2008). However, this study shows that there is a fundamental framework on which employer branding strategy and delivery is built.

Based on this study's empirical analysis, employer brand process is birthed from four key processes (See figure 9)

This study observed that the effectiveness of the employer brand was largely influenced by identified values that serve as the foundation of a viable and effective employer brand

According to the empirical data, the key determinant of employer brand success depends on how the brand is built. Participants from the empirical work identified sets of values that constitute the elements on which employer brands are built. A key observation from this study is that the employer brand process as identified by the empirical work adapts better though a multi-disciplinary approach to employer brand building. Accordingly, brand building has three functional layers that compliments the employer brand building process. Firstly, a strong brand is one that can attract a considerable level of attachment from the intended target. (see attachment). Secondly, the brand needs to develop a level of autonomy to command and deliver the values it identifies with. There is also the functional need to determine the kind of brand architecture on which the employer will be delivered.

Part of the challenge to this debate was in ascertaining the purview where the operational dimension of employer branding is situated. This led to the concentration of debate around what constitutes the driving force for the employer brand strategy within organizations ((Silva & Calisto,

2017, Auer, Edlinger & Moelk, 2014; Aggerholm, Andersen & Thomsen, 2011). Subsequently, they seem to suggest a dichotomy between who delivers the operational mechanism of employer brand strategies-the human resource department or the marketing department (Casio & Graham, 2016; Rampl, Opitz, Welpé & Kenning, 2016). Previous studies have also addressed the view of external consultants in the building and delivery of employer brand strategy (Erlenlaemper et al, 2008; Bodderas et al, 2011). Notably, the understanding of employer brand process has been slow in developing leading to a wide margin of disparity (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Biswar & Prasad, 2016; Karla, Parson & Prisla, 2012) and blurring the consequences and outcomes of employer brand strategy.

The empirical analysis of this study extends the body of knowledge by developing a framework which accounts for the operational mechanism of employer branding (See figure EBP). In doing so, it expands previous knowledge (Maroko and Cahrls, 2010) by providing empirical support to theory and creating a functional framework on which employer brand strategies can be designed and delivered. The study further addresses the apparent dichotomy in the literature regarding the place of employer branding in strategic management literature. This study further posits that employer branding should be viewed from a multi-disciplinary paradigm, bringing together both human resource management and marketing literature to address further theoretical exploration of the phenomenon.

Talent management is defined as the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention, and deployment of those individuals with high potential who are of value to an organization (CIPD, 2020). It further involves the integrated processes, programs and cultural norms in an organization designed and implemented to attract, develop, deploy and retain talent to achieve strategic objectives and meet future business needs (Silver and Dowell 2010:18) Similarly, Collings and Mellahi, 2009:304) posit talent management as the active process involving the systematic identification of key positions which differently contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage, development of talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization. Capelli (2008) further expand the scope of talent management as simply a matter of anticipating the need for human capital and then setting out a plan to meet. It is very clear that the body of knowledge on talent management recognises the importance of talent attraction and retention as a composite element in the talent management process. By projecting a systematic procedure and strategy for talent management outcomes, it

creates the space for the strategic alignment on which talent management outcomes can be achieved.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of talent attraction and talent retention in the talent management process (Capelli, 2008; Collings and Mellahi, 2009; CIPD, 2010). This study confirms the argument that talent management and retention are composite elements of talent management. It further supports the argument that employer branding influences talent attraction and talent retention. A significant finding from this study suggests a best fit employer branding model. This model takes into consideration the four-key thematic of the study. It describes the key elements of the themes and their contributions to the employer brand process. The model further describes the relationship between the identified themes to the employer brand process. A significant contribution of this model is that it introduces employer brand optimizers as a core element of the employer brand model which further influences the employer brand process. The findings assert that the level of employer brand impact on talent management outcomes are determined by identifying the right employer brand optimizers. They subsequently influence talent attraction and talent retention. (See table 18).

Changes witnessed in the global employment market within the last decade have resulted in a diversity of challenges for organizations. Factors that have affected the labour market include globalization; the pressure for speed and innovation; widespread privatization and the advancement of technology. In the UK, the impact has been exacerbated by the uncertainties of Brexit. These changes, however, highlight the continuous demand for competitive performance which has resulted in strategic organizational restructuring and subsequent surge in the demand for talent (Deloitte, 2010). Talent scarcity as well as the change in employment landscape, has depleted the number of safe-field employments resulting in the war for talent (Frank & Taylor, 2004; Axelrod et al, 2001; Beecher & Woodward, 2009). Indeed, new trends over the last decade show that talent is being sought after by organizations rather than talents looking for jobs (Fegley, 2006; Allen et al, 2013; Capelli and Keller, 2013) and employees are increasingly becoming portfolio workers (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Capelli & Keller, 2013). This presents the need for a re-think of a strategic talent management framework that can address changing HR activities to attract and retain best fit talent in these times of uncertainty and begs the question: How can organizations manage talent in times of uncertainties and deepening competitiveness? More specifically, what tool is effective in positioning an employer as a preferred choice for employee and for retaining the right employee to maximise long term productivity?

The research focused therefore on the role of employer branding in employee retention. Applying a cross-disciplinary approach, the study explored the impact of brand equity to employee

retention. It proposed employer branding as a strategic management tool for employee attraction and retention in adverse conditions.

Broadly, talent management literature present sparing definitions of the subject's conceptual boundaries (Collings et al, 2009; Thunnissen et al, 2013; McDonnell et al, 2017). Its definition as activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organizations sustainable competitive advantage and the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles (Collings et al, 2009) is keenly contested (e.g., Jones et al, 2012). Subsequently, talent management literature is classified under two areas namely management of talent-primarily addressing the organisation's mode of attracting recruiting, retaining, and rewarding performances and talented individuals- this is the focus on what constitutes talent and how talented individuals behave (McDonnell, 2017). This lack of agreed talent management definition constitutes a problem to the understanding of the concept and require further investigation to address its theoretical boundaries. To address this challenge, the study sought participants' opinion on their understanding of employer branding concepts.

Existing literature have focused on practices associated with lifetime careers (Cappelli, 1999) however, over the last 20 years, the profound shift in organizational workforce management mean that the certainty required for anticipating workforce attraction no longer holds (Frank & Taylor, 2004), making change within the landscape inevitable. It has further triggered the increased prominence of external labour market questions which desperately require new answers and call for new paradigms to account for uncertainties (Frank & Taylor, 2004; Martin & Schmidt, 2014). Despite the surge in popularity witnessed within the study area, (McDonnell, 2017) research methodology within the field and the literatures, suggest a departure from this expectation rather it showcases scarce empirical evidence to strengthen the case for talent management resulting in limited theorization of the construct (Collings & Mellahi, 2009, Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Cappelli, 2013; McDonnell, 2017). Furthermore, research enquiry on talent management is primarily quantitative (McDonnell, 2017). This presents a gap because it does not capture and explain the underlying factors that drive the phenomenon. Factors like intention to leave and psychological contract are variables that may not be truly captured with a quantitative method. More so, the lack of robust empirical research often characterised by an incoherent narrative of the retention and attraction process deserves a rethink. This presents a knowledge gap in the relationship between talent management and employer branding-more specifically in positioning employer branding as a strategic tool for talent management- and the need for a research agenda that focuses on the impact of organizational linkages to specific outcomes like employee attraction and retention. This

study fills this gap. Drawing on a multidisciplinary approach to conceptualise the construct and provide an empirical framework for academic research, this research projects a new conceptualization of employer branding which appreciates a correlation between employer positioning and employee dialogue as a strategic process for talent management thereby adding theory to practice. Findings from the study does not present a clear process how higher education institutions brand themselves however, the study shows that employer branding is implicitly practiced among higher education institutions. Participants' responses showed that employer branding is considered an important strategy for talent attraction and talent retention. The study also show that potential and current employees identified certain qualities projected by HEIs as influencing their decision to apply and to stay longer. The study identified 14 attributes responsible in triggering employer branding process in higher education institutions. The study also supports that notion that employer branding is influenced by the conceptual elements of brand reputation, brand awareness, brand positioning and brand identity. However, the study does not demonstrate evidence of how higher education institutions model their employer branding strategy. Findings from the study demonstrate that higher education institutions in the UK do not have explicit employer brand strategy and therefore it is challenging to express in clear terms and discuss the different employer brand models applied by higher education. Extant literature however suggests explicit employer brand strategy as a functional element for successful employer brand process. Previous studies have identified that the academic sector does not comprehensively deploy employer brand strategies in their process to attract best talents (Fieldler & Welp, 2008; Brosi & Welp, 2015) however studies have suggested that universities who are intentional in signalling their employer brand attributes respond positively to talent attraction and retention (Chalwe & Lenka, 2015; Matongolo Kasekenda & Mafabi, 2018; Mohammadnezhad Fadandi, 2019). Whereas a previous study by Deloitte (2016) suggested that universities have begun to recognise the importance of placing a strategy that addresses desired behaviour among academics, our study shows that there is little evidence of explicit employer brand strategy in UK higher education. This is a key finding for this study.

Technological innovation, globalization and demographic changes contribute to the disruptive labour market environment where human capital is key in determining the degree of organizational performance and competitive advantage (Rana et al, 2019). At the same time, access to tangible and intangible resources for example technology and human capital prove challenging for organizations to come by, triggering the war for talent (Butt, Lodhi and Shahzad, 2020) therefore attracting best-fit talents is an important aspect of any organization poised to succeed in a disruptive business environment. Such an environment is characterized by distinct employee

perceptions, attributes, benefits, and values that are geared towards appeasing the potential employee and increasing the attractiveness of the employer as a brand (Wallace et al, 2014; Valor & Abril, 2018). Previous research (Kashyap and Rangnekar, 2016; Sharma, Singh & Rana, 2018; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019) identified value propositions that determine employer branding for example, employee recognition, career path, training, and development, stimulating working environment, job security and perceived organizational support as values that influence employee retention.

The study was not explicit in providing a clear response to the way higher education institutions brand themselves. Based on the view of participants, higher education institutions generally have implicit strategy to employer branding rather than an explicit strategy. Participant mostly suggested that higher education do not have a clear strategy of how they brand themselves however, universities possess attributes that makes them attractive to potential employees.

Based on the shared view of respondents who participated in the study, this research identified two key dimensions that influence employer brand antecedents: brand attributes and brand concepts. The study identified 14 brand attributes as associated dimensions of the theme namely, collegiality, diversity, job content, location, ranking, remuneration, reputation, research quality, support culture, work environment, workload, career prospects immigration support and leadership. Similarly, we identified 4 associated dimensions from the research that make up the brand concepts: brand reputation, brand awareness, brand positioning and brand identity.

According to Hadi and Ahmed, (2018), talent attraction and talent retention are pivotal in building firm's competitive advantage therefore, for an organization to remain competitive, and survive in the war for talent (Woodward, 2015), they need to be well equipped and strategic in the competition to attract and retain employees by strategically positioning themselves to entice the labour force and subsequently retain them (Tlaiss, Martin and Hofaidhllaoui, 2017; Collins, 2009; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). This position was earlier affirmed by Xie, (2015) who posit that talent acquisition is vital to organizational survival and development as human capital is a valuable contributor to organizational achievement.

Recent study by Theurer et al, (2018) found that employer branding played an important role in attracting and retaining potential employees if the organization have a significant investment in employer branding strategies. They therefore suggested need to be intentional in steering policies that address talent attraction and talent retention. This follows on the backdrop of Miles and Mangold, (2004) research who suggested that the effective implementation of employer branding process can significantly increase brand image and promote the brand to desired stakeholders.

Employer brand antecedents constitute the components of the employer brand strategy that trigger the employer brand process. Extant literature has reviewed and analysed the employer branding phenomenon by drawing theoretical knowledge from organizational behaviour, human resource management and marketing as a framework to develop the antecedents of employer branding and its impact on talent management outcomes for example, Biswas and Suar, (2014) explored the impacts of employer branding antecedents on company performance. The results of the research revealed that realistic job purview, perceived organizational prestige, organizational trust, leadership of top management, psychological contract obligations and corporate social responsibility have significant influence on the employer brand of an organization. Their study further identified leadership of top management as the most potent predictor of employer branding. In Sokro (2012), they investigated to know if organizations use employer branding and how the employer brand influence talent attraction and talent retention specifically in the banking sector. Their study found that organizational brand names have significant influence on the decision of employees' attraction and subsequent retention in the organization. They also found that conducive work environment was conditional to talent retention.

Previous research (Jain and Bhatt, 2014; Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Deepa & Baral, 2019) suggested supportive work environment, informal work culture, fair and ethical leadership, positive reputation as factor that are responsible for attraction of prospective talent and retention of current talents. Their study placed high value on conducive work environment as a significant determinant of employer branding on prospective and current talents (Sharma & Prasad, 2018). Other studies support the employer brand attributes targeted at talent attraction and talent retention.

The study identified 13 value propositions for potential employee talent attraction and current employee retention. The value propositions are Collegiality, Diversity, Job content, Location, University ranking, Remuneration, Reputation Research Quality, Support Culture, Work environment, Workload, Career prospect, Immigration support, Leadership.

Findings from this study supports extant literature regarding the significance of value propositions in structuring the employer brand strategy (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017; Wallace et al, 2014; Valor & Abril, 2018; Subraiman, Choo & Johari, 2019). While this study supports extant literature, in terms of identifying value propositions that are required to build veritable employer brand strategies, it varies in part from previous work conducted in this area in the specificity of value propositions. For example, Biswas & Suar (2014) study identified six value propositions which included realistic job purview, perceived organization prestige, organizational trust, leadership, psychological contract, and corporate social responsibility as essential for strategic employer

branding antecedents. The study, however, extends the list to include workload, career prospect, work environment, remuneration, location, and diversity. The work also supports Sokro (2012) who identified conducive work environment as a factor influencing talent attraction and retention and therefore, a composite component of the employer brand strategy. Similarly, Kaysharp & Ragnekan (2016) identified employee recognition, career path, training, and development, stimulating work environment, job security and perceived organizational support as key factors influencing employer brand outcomes. The study supports their findings by identifying common factors that are responsible for employer brand success namely: career path, work environment and organizational support. It also supports Jain & Bhatt, (2014); Arasanmi & Krsihna, (2019) who identified supportive work environment, work culture, ethical leadership and positive reputation as factors influencing employer brand success.

The study contradicts previous study regarding the role of employer branding as strategic intervention for talent attraction and talent retention. Deloitte (2016) observed that universities have started to recognize the importance of placing strategy that drives a desired behaviour among academic talents. This assertion was further observed in a recent research in Yameen, Bharadwaj & Ahmad (2020). However, this study found little evidence to support the assertion that employer branding was an explicit strategy in higher education talent attraction and retention process.

A major objective of this study was to understand the events, sequences and functional mechanisms that constitute the employer brand process. The employer brand process assumes to include the events, sequences and generative mechanisms that create the employer brand (Marokko & Uncles, 2005). These functional dynamisms are responsible for the delivery of the unique package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits that an organization attempts to portray to potential and existing employees. Through these processes, employees can identify with the organization. It also projects the identity of the employer to potential employees. Previous studies have focused attention on the conceptual phenomenon of employer branding process. However, they have contributed less on a broader view of focusing on the processes that births employer branding strategic outcomes.

Previous studies have shed little light on the employer branding process which has subsequently led to the minimal attention directed to the operative mechanisms that deliver employer branding (Erlenkaemper, et al, 2008). However, this study shows that there is a fundamental framework on which employer branding strategy and delivery is built.

Based on this study's empirical analysis, employer brand process is birthed from four key processes (See figure 8)

This study observed that the effectiveness of the employer brand was largely influenced by identified values that serve as the foundation of a viable and effective employer brand

According to the empirical data, the key determinant of employer brand success depends on how the brand is built. Participants from the empirical work identified sets of values that constitute the elements on which employer brands are built. A key observation from this study is that the employer brand process as identified by the empirical work adapts better through a multi-disciplinary approach to employer brand building. Accordingly, brand building has three functional layers that compliments the employer brand building process. Firstly, a strong brand is one that can attract a considerable level of attachment from the intended target. Secondly, the brand needs to develop a level of autonomy to command and deliver the values it identifies with. There is also the functional need to determine the kind of brand architecture on which the employer will be delivered.

Part of the challenge to this debate was in ascertaining the purview where the operational dimension of employer branding is situated. This led to the concentration of debate around what constitutes the driving force for the employer brand strategy within organizations ((Silva & Calisto, 2017, Auer, Edlinger & Moelk, 2014; Aggerholm, Andersen & Thomsen, 2011). Subsequently, they seem to suggest a dichotomy between who delivers the operational mechanism of employer brand strategies-the human resource department or the marketing department (Casio & Graham, 2016; Rampl, Opitz, Welpé & Kenning, 2016).

Previous studies have also addressed the view of external consultants in the building and delivery of employer brand strategy (Erlenkaemper et al, 2008; Bodderas et al, 2011). Notably, the understanding of employer brand process has been slow in developing leading to a wide margin of disparity (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Biswar & Prasad, 2016; Karla, Parson & Prisla, 2012) and blurring the consequences and outcomes of employer brand strategy. Based on the empirical analysis of this study, this study extends the body of knowledge by developing a framework that accounts for the operational mechanism of employer branding (See Figure 9).

In doing so, it expands previous knowledge by providing empirical support to theory and creating a functional framework on which employer brand strategies can be designed and delivered. The study further addresses the apparent dichotomy in the literature regarding the place of employer branding in strategic management literature. This study further posits that employer branding should be viewed from a multi-disciplinary paradigm, bringing together both human resource management and marketing literature to address and establish a multi-dimensional framework to the application of employer branding.

6.7 Managerial Implications

Findings from this study is clear about the multi-dimensional approach to the crafting and management of the employer brand process and the importance of projecting an integrated approach to the management of the employer brand process both internally and externally. The study examined the antecedents of employer branding and suggested that employer attractiveness and employer reputation are key triggers of the employer brand process. Therefore, employer in seeking to attract high quality talents need to position themselves by crafting an attractive value proposition for example, location, job content, reward and recognition, support culture to appeal to potential employees. In addition, employer reputation as an employer of choice for potential employees, trigger employers to strengthen their value proposition through a strategic employer brand process by projecting a clear image of the organization based on their identified value propositions. Thus, by having a clear understanding of the employer brand antecedent, senior management of the organization can clearly employ build a strategic employer brand process to target potential employees.

The study further addresses the multi-disciplinary role of the organization in formulation a delivery of the employer brand process. The study finds that the employer brand process requires both the functional expertise and the artistic prowess of HR managers and marketing and communication professionals in the organization to deliver an effective employer brand outcome. HR managers need to identify through a clear and strategic process what constitutes the organizations employer value proposition. Through periodical evaluation and exit interviews, HR professionals should clearly identify the key value propositions of the organization that are important to achieving the attractiveness of the organization by potential employees. Working with the marketing and communication professionals, the employer brand strategy will be better achieved through a collaborative delivery.

In engaging with employee stakeholders like current and former employees, the HR department will have the knowledge of value propositions that relevant to the organization in either in terms of addressing employer attractiveness or shaping the reputation of the employer. The study will therefore allow senior management of organizations for example Deans and heads of business schools and HR directors to craft a clear strategic input into how the organization should position itself within the competitive labour market. The study allows a cross-departmental collaboration of professionals for example the HR and marketing departments to enhance the value proposition offering and generate the right message to communicate the employer brand of the organization to potential employees. The study benefits talent managers especially in the talent acquisition process of the organization. Significantly, the study findings show that a clear employer

brand message is useful in organization's recruitment process to self-select the talent pool. This will allow potential employees understand in clear terms what the organization stands for by matching their skill sets and career ambitions with the ethos of the organization. In doing so, it will help refine the talent pool and allow talent managers acquire potential high-quality talents for the organization with good understand of the organization's culture as well as aligning to the values and ethos of the organization.

The study offers talent managers the opportunity to also maximise talent management strategies with respect to talent attraction and talent retention by introducing the employer optimizers to the employer brand process. Findings from the study identified employer brand optimizers as those value propositions that have higher impact on talent management outcomes based on various categories of employer brand stakeholders. Therefore, where the organization is targeting entry level employees, they will be able to accentuate the sets of employee value propositions that influence their targeted categories of employees. A set of employer brand optimizers that are well positioned, will address talent attraction outcomes for the organization. The study has implications on employee turnover rates where the organization will have the capacity to focus their attention on the sets of employer brand attributes that influence their intended potential employee target group. In doing so, the study provides a strategic framework for managing and delivering talent management outcomes. From an operational point of view, the study will provide a justification for sustainable recruitment budget management. Given the competitive nature of the business environment, the study will allow organizations target talent management strategically by focusing attention and resources effectively to achieve Talent management outcomes of reducing employee turnover rates, and promote employee engagement, increase employee retention and subsequently, the overall performance of the employee. The study also raises the issue of a functional employer brand specialist role that can be created in the organizational structure who should be tasked with the responsibility of planning, coordinating, and delivering the employer brand strategy for the organization. Candidate for this role, should have a working knowledge of general HR operations, marketing with specific emphasis on branding and communications expertise. This will help the organization to build a distinct employer brand strategic framework that will provide support to the senior management of the organization and to the multi-departmental elements of the organization that make up the brand delivery team. It will also provide an explicit platform to the organization to assess the role of employer brand strategy in the overall delivery of talent management outcomes. The study also plays a functional role of promoting the psychological contract of the employees by helping the employees determine the kind of relationship they may want to establish with the organization from the start of their work. The study will also contribute

to the recruitment process by aligning the employer brand message to the composite elements of recruitment procedures through the process of brand enforcements.

The study aims to contribute empirical knowledge by understudying four business schools in the UK. It seeks to propose a best fit model of employer branding for organizations by providing empirical evidence to back up the concept of employer branding as a growing phenomenon within human resource management literature. To achieve this objective, the researcher acknowledges philosophical debates that underpin management and business research and influences the researcher's worldview in terms of the research design for example, the method of data collection and analysis. The study will address the philosophical debates in business and management research as well as the underlying assumptions on which the philosophy builds upon.

This research provided evidence-based strategies to heads of business schools to improve upon their strategies for the attraction and retention of highly qualified and talented academic staff. The empirical evidence will provide a tool for talent managers to focus on needs for talent engagement and thus, increase intention to remain. Through the models observed from research, it will help uncover critical areas in the employer branding process and talent management that have attracted less attention. Further research should focus on three key areas namely: conceptualization of employer branding; employer branding targets and further development of the employer branding process. Within the context of conceptualization, it will be beneficial for researchers to establish the constituent needs in employer branding to show how human resources contributes to the employer branding process. Particularly, the study will benefit from studies establishing the use of indicators that best describe employer branding functions and operations. Studies should therefore focus on employer attraction, engagement, stakeholder practice and process as well as retention of talents but also financial performance.

Further studies should also explore employer branding targets by focusing on stakeholder conceptualization. Current employees as well as future employees experience and job experience levels have been found to impact the perception of organizations and the relationship between employers and potential employees, yet it lacks empirical data to substantiate these relationships. Finally, the employer branding process require in-depth research especially in understanding the impact of explicit and implicit strategy on employer branding results and outcomes. The study also consolidated employer branding as a strategic tool for HRM practitioners, talent managers extending the boundaries of knowledge in talent management. It argued that the seeming satisfactory retention rate in organizations cannot be ignored and required strategic approach to address competitiveness within uncertain labour market conditions. This study, therefore, contributed empirical data to policy practice.

6.8 Limitation and Directions for Future Research

The context of this study was the UK higher education institutions and even though attempts were made to provide a wider coverage in terms of data collection, the study acknowledges the limitation of context and therefore, the overall generalization of empirical findings and therefore confines interpretation of findings to the UK higher education sector. Although the findings show implicit application of employer brand strategy in the UK higher education sector, the study stands to gain wider inference where data collection is expanded beyond the United Kingdom for example, it will be worthy of research to investigate the outcome of the research on higher education institutions in countries like France, Netherlands, and Germany. This study therefore suggests a future comparative study of employer branding process and outcomes to talent management in other EU countries in the context of talent attraction and talent retention. An essential element of the empirical study depends on the access to professionals with expert knowledge of the strategic dynamics of the UK higher education sector. Although efforts were made to recruit a higher number of participants in the strategic knowledge category of respondents, to gain strategic insight to the subject of research, the study had fewer participants in this category compared to other respondent categories. Several reasons may have been responsible for this occurrence, for example, access to deans of business schools and HR directors was one of the most challenging factors to the low representation of respondents in this category. Also, their strategic position within the organization made it very challenging for them to have the time to commit to the interview even though there appeared to be a willingness and interest to participate in the research. It is believed the study would have benefitted more from a higher number of categories and while participation would have included deans and heads of business schools, HR Directors, this study therefore recognises this factor as a limitation to the research. A functional implication of the study suggests that employer branding strategy is linked to the performance of the organization however, it is uncertain how the performance of employer branding strategy implementation can be measured to ascertain its impact on organizational performance.

Further study should explain with empirical support, the need to create a functional operational unit within the organization to manage and implement employer branding exclusively. Employer branding equity is said to impact employee turnover, further study is necessary with empirical support to establish its impact on higher education specifically. It is equally important to understand the differential impact of employer branding on different gender especially from the context of employer brand optimizers as founded in this study.

6.9 General Summary

This research investigated the impact of employer branding processes on employer brand outcomes within organizations. The research adopted higher education institutions as the context for empirical research. The decision to adopt higher education were influenced by two factors First was the growing and expanding market for knowledge intensive sectors globally of which the UK plays a significant role in this sector (Beaverstock & Hall, 2018). Secondly, the increasing expansion over the last two decades in the higher education sector which has positioned the UK as a global player within this sector therefore despite market change externalities including global labour demand made was a strong motivation for the adopting the sector as context for empirical analysis. Previous research within this field focused primarily on the importance of human capital development and human capital management to meet organizational bottom line however, these two important research areas continue to develop in silo, focusing on the antecedents and effects of employer branding on talent management. Despite the growing interest in employer branding both by practitioners and in academia, the operational mechanism that perpetuates and delivers employer brands have received insignificant attention resulting in the lack of empirical literature to engage in this critical aspect of the subject area. Employer-branding process however received very little attention-particularly, the operation of mechanisms at the firm and individual levels that shape and advance the employer brand (Moroko & Uncle, 2009).

As an overarching concept, employer-branding process involves the functioning mechanisms on which the employer brand operates-starting from firm level mechanism that shape and define the brand to factors that underpin its continuous implementation. It further considers the interactions at the individual level that is- between existing and potential employees, taking into consideration, the process of brand association, brand meaning as well as brand loyalty for the employer brand (Moroko & Uncles, 2009). This prompts the need to establish what constitutes the employer branding process through a broader review of the literature and empirical studies. By doing so, it will allow a mix of concepts ranging from corporate branding, human resource, and organizational behaviour literature as well industry journals to deconstruct the relationship between employers, employees, and prospective employees.

The study contributed empirical knowledge by understudying 17 business schools in the UK and in doing so developed a best fit model of employer branding for organizations and provided empirical evidence to back up the concept of employer branding as a growing phenomenon within human resource management literature. To achieve this objective, the researcher acknowledged philosophical debates that underpin management and business research and influences the

researcher's worldview in terms of the research design for example, the method of data collection and analysis. The study addressed the philosophical debates in business and management research as well as the underlying assumptions for the research. The thesis was divided into 6 chapters which covered the key elements of the research. The first chapter introduced the research by laying the ground of the research, outlining the aim and objective of the research as well as the research gap and key research questions. It also highlighted the context on which the research was to be carried out. The second chapter of the thesis addressed extant body of knowledge on which the research is built on. It also introduced key concepts and theoretical frameworks for the research by so doing, it provided the guidance to develop the research question. In this section, the study provided a summary of research done within the literature. This was important in understanding the scope of the literature and strengthen the debates within the literature, by identifying gaps in the literature. The section proceeded by summarising key definition of employer branding to form a working definition of employer branding and providing a summary of debates within the literature. It identified key theoretical underpinning used in previous studies and finally it identified the gaps in literature and proffer how to fill the gaps. It argued that the employer-branding concept originated from the field of marketing and its application to human resources occurred during the last two decades (Ambler & Barrows, 1996). The section as well, presented the systematic literature review process. As a result, it argued that to date, a fragmented consensus of the definitions of employer branding reflects the evolutionary process of the concepts (Edwards, 2012) and the notion that it is still finding its feet within mainstream human resource literature.

As a concept, employer branding as a growing topic in HRM literature still lacks grounded theoretical and empirical framework within scholarly debates. Given the heterogeneous underpinning of the theoretical foundation there is a need for more empirical work to firmly position it within academic literature. In terms of application, its position as a factor for organizational competitive advantage still lacks currency. More specifically within higher education, a few studies have attempted to address this gap in research. This study therefore aims to fill this gap in the literature.

This review had its limitations for example, data set based on Theurer et al, (2018) did not include other articles that investigate employer branding. Likely articles that may investigate employer branding concept, however they may have used different terminologies. Articles in many other countries may be published in different times and places that can contribute to the review however too narrow and may need revamping. Researchers are always limited by the boundaries they put on their own research, and by unforeseen boundaries of knowledge that already exist. These were identified as limitations to the literature review.

The literature review found that despite the growing application of employer branding in talent management, only a few studies apply employer branding to organizational performance and competitive advantage i.e., what organizations get in applying it as an explicit strategy. Even more, there were scanty contribution in theory and empirical studies, the relationship, and outcomes in higher education. This study therefore contributed to the conceptual framework for employer branding and talent retention. It therefore provided empirical data to consolidate employer branding as a construct in HRM literature.

In chapter 3, the study provided a theoretical review of employer branding in the context of higher education and discussed their outcomes with the objective to build a theoretical base for which the study can further expand. To achieve this aim, the chapter proceeded to identify the key elements of employer branding based on the literature review. It described the process by which the literature review was carried out and further expanded on the contextual framework of the research. Chapter 4 introduced the research methodology based on the established theoretical and literature review framework. It discussed the as a foundational framework, the philosophical underpinnings from which the research situates itself justified the methodological tools employed by the research based on the chosen research paradigm. The chapter also addressed the model of analysis and created the framework for the findings in Chapter 5. The findings addressed the research questions and provided empirical evidence based on the research analysis. Findings provides empirical evidence to a best -fit employer branding model as strategic tool for managing talent outcomes in higher education institutions. This is a significant contribution to knowledge based on this research. Findings suggest employer branding as strategic talent management intervention in UK higher education institutions and further highlights key attributes (employer value propositions) that accentuate influence of employer branding on talent attraction and talent retention. The study also suggests a significant relationship and influence of employer brand stakeholders on talent attraction and talent retention. In doing so, this study provides stakeholders with insight into the effectiveness of employer branding as a strategic tool for talent attraction and retention in a competitive global knowledge-intensive business environment like HEIs. The study highlights the importance of multi-dimensional approach to the employer brand process underscoring the dynamic nature of talent management delivery. In addressing the study from a HEI context, this study adds to the literature on talent management in HEIs by providing evidence on the conceptualization and management of employer branding and talent management outcomes. The final chapter provided the opportunity to discuss the findings by providing theoretical contributions. The significant theoretical contribution to this study is the development and proposal of a best-fit employer brand model which allows organization to contextualize their

employer brand process to deliver target driven talent management outcomes. This is the key contribution to knowledge for this study. The chapter also provided managerial implication especially for strategic managers in the higher education sector as well as talent management practitioners in the higher education sector.

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Appendix

A. Extensive Literature Review Table

Categories	Themes	Literature Samples
Employer branding Concepts and models	<p>Application areas and target groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly competitive market High value-added, knowledge intensive service businesses Framework organization career management programme or concept for talent management strategy Target groups are potential (i.e. external context) and current (i.e. internal context) employees <p>Functional responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sole management through HR Function or in cross-functional teams (e.g. collaborating with marketing) Company specific factors determine responsibility for employer branding (e.g. executive sponsorship, company brand architecture, degree of functional centralization) Dominant signal of corporate brand mixed with strong influence on other brands. Concept require close alignment Brand consistency and clarity influence credibility and levels of attractiveness <p>Employer Brand Theoretical Models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer brand and employer brand activities are linked to coherent models Brand management activities with different levels of effectiveness on employer knowledge dimensions Different outcomes proposed based on external (ie. Recruiting) or internal (i.e retention) focus of employer branding Employer brand capital ad reputational capital (assets) as major outcomes of employer brand signalling <p>Employer brand Associations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer branding process highlights product (i.e., job) and non-product (i.e., non-jobs) related brand associations (image attributes) 	<p>Ambler & Barrow (1996) ; Aggerholm et al (2011) ; Ewing et al. (2002); Hughes & Rog (2008); Martin et al. (2005)</p> <p>Ambler and Barrow (1996); Foster et al. (2010); Mosley (2007); Wilden et al. (2010)</p> <p>Backhaus and Tikoo (2004); Botha et al. (2011); Cable and Turban (2001); Gowan; (2004); Martin et al. (2011)</p> <p>Cable and Turban (2001); Celani and Singh (2011); Martin and Hetrick (2009)</p>

Employer-Branding Knowledge Dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational identity and corporate identity (internal views) as antecedents of employer branding Moderation through individual motivation and cultural differences <p>Employer knowledge Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various conceptualizations of (employer) brand equity dimensions Employer knowledge framework (Cable & Turban) as comprehensive, overarching structure adopted Employer knowledge: (a) employer familiarity, (b) employer reputation(c) employer image Consideration of external and internal approaches (potential and current employees) <p>Employer Familiarity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of (potential) employees' awareness of the organization Central node without which no information about a firm could be collected or stored Influenced by greater exposure to information (e.g. Personal experience, mass media) Direct and indirect (i.e., mediation through reputation and image) effects on e.g., organizational attractiveness or job pursuit intentions <p>Employer Reputation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Potential) employees' beliefs about public's evaluation of the organization Influenced by corporate reputation and familiarity Effect on evaluation of job attributes (i.e., employer image), expected pride from organizational membership, and job pursuit intentions 	<p>Cable and Turban (2001); Cable and Turban (2003);Gatewood et al. (1993);Lemmink et al. (2003);Lievens et al. (2005);Turban (2001)</p> <p>Cable and Turban (2001); Cable and Turban (2003); Cable and Turban (2001); Gatewood et al. (1993); Highhouse et al. (1999)</p> <p>Lemmink et al. (2003); Turban (2001); Yu & Cable (2012)</p>
	<p>Employer Image</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beliefs that (potential) employees have about an employer Different stakeholders hold different images about an organization Specifically, the corporate image as a place to work (i.e., company employment image) affects applicant attraction 	<p>Lieven & Highhouse (2003); Lievens (2007); Baum & Kabst (2013b)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image attributes (e.g., job and organizational characteristics) mediate the relationship between branding activities and organizational attractiveness 	
	Instrumental-symbolic (I/S) framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various (employer) image conceptualizations Marketing-based I/S framework (Lievens and Highhouse 2003) adopted as overarching structure to cluster image attributes 	Berthon et al. (2005); Lievens & Highhouse (2003); Schlager et al. (2011); Tumasjan et al. (2011)
	Instrumental attributes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional, utilitarian (job-related) attributes Evaluated in variety of contexts, e.g., different industries, cultures, over time Further classification by Berthon et al. 2005 into 5 dimensions: interest value, social value, economic value, development value, application value Similarly applicable in internal and external context (i.e., current, and potential employees) 	
	Talent management in HEI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of Branding in HEI Impact of branding on talent retention Process of HEI Branding 	Matongolo et al, 2018; Frandsen et al, 2018; Candrachud & Athavale, 2015; Gandy & Gold, 2018; Roodt & Schulte, 2014; Chapleo, 2010; Chapleo, Duran & Diaz, 2011; Syed & Kitchen, 2014; Pinar et al, 2014; Zinken, 2018; Hoppe, 2018
Employer Brand Architecture	Brand Portfolio <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand architecture strategy Impact on branding outcomes Applicability to organizational performance Brand architecture in Higher education 	Hsu, Fournier & Srinivasan, 2016, Bahadir et al, 2008; Bharadwig et al, 2011; Wiles et al, 2012; Hemsley-Brown et al, 2016; Melewar & Nguyen, 2014

B. Sample of Research Interview Guide

Areas of Expertise	Position	Institution/Department	Core Research Interview Questions
1. Employer Branding Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads of Business Schools • Deans of Colleges • Department Heads • Director of HR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Schools 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you define employer branding? Provide examples. 2. What is the role of branding within your organization? Provide examples. 3. What does EB success mean to you? Provide examples 4. What is the rate of turnover/retention among academic staff? 5. What are the facilitators and barriers to your EB strategy? 6. What suggestions do you have for improvement?
2. Brand Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Business Partners • HR Managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Schools • Marketing Department • Human Resource Department 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you define employer branding? Provide examples. 2. Identify mechanisms to develop EB in your organization (i.e., accreditations; league table; REF/TEF) 3. Whom do you want to attract? 4. What are your policies on WLB, Reward, Managing Loads, L&D 5. How do you differentiate yourself? 6. What suggestion do you have for improvement?
3. Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Marketing • Marketing Managers • Marketing Consultants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Schools • Marketing Department • Consultancies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you define employer branding? Provide examples. 2. What mechanisms do you have in place to promote your employer brand? 3. What is the role of social media in your brand promotion? 4. How do you evaluate employee voice? 5. What actions do you implement for EBP improvement?
4. Talent Attraction/Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professors • Readers • Senior Lecturers • Lecturers 	Business Schools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your experience of working in the university? 2. What aspects of your employer do you enjoy more? What needs improvement? 3. How would you define employer branding? Provide examples. 4. What attracts you to an organization? 5. Which factors will influence your tenure? Provide examples. 6. How do you contribute to your university's external visibility? Please give examples (EV, Steering groups etc.) 7. What suggestions do you have for attraction/retention improvement?

C. Conceptual Literature Review Table

Focus	Antecedent	Processes	Findings
Organizations Pandita & Ray, 2018; Budhwar et al, 2018; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017; Guerrero & Challiol-Jeanblanc, 2017; Backhaus, Ameila & Nasution, 2016; Biswas & Suar, 2016 Tanwar & Prasad, 2016; Russell & Brannan, 2016; Kavitha & Jublee, 2016	a. Employer attractiveness Tanwar & Kumar, (2019) Chunyan Xie, Richard P. Bagozzi, Kjersti V. Meland, (2015); Rampl and Kenning, 2014; Kashive, N., & Khanna, V. T. (2018). b. Attractiveness /Reputation Chunyan Xie, Richard P. Bagozzi, Kjersti V. Meland, (2015) c. Attraction of certain candidate category(Mičík, M., & Mičudová, K. (2018). d. Organizational reputation-Poujoal and Vognolles,2016; Baumstate, 2018; Sarah Banks & Jennifer Waterhouse (2019 e. Down-sizing(Campos-García & Zuniga Vicente, 2018	a. Use of social media as moderator. b. Network-co-creating brands (Rampl and Kenning, 2014)-3 rd party-bottom up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • . To position organization as an employer of choice • . Improve recruitment of best fit talents • Attract generation y candidates • The impact of age and gender on employer brand-attraction and retention • Positive value congruence and the effect on employer brand and organizational identification • Reputation management of the organization • Intentional reduction in workforce can influence employer branding; EB an mitigate the negative effect of post-down- sizing; improve quality of future recruitment • Retain and engender loyalty among current employees
Employees Mishra & Kumar, 2019; Ruchika, Prasad & Dabirian et al, 2019; Arasanmi et al, 2019; Lee et al, 2018; Babu et al, 2018; Kroell & Kumari, 2018; Saini & Sharma, 2018; Prasad & Biswas, 2018; Baumstate, 2018; Ahmad & Daud, 2016 Suar et al., 2018; Kucherov Zamulin, 2016 ; Ferandes-Lores et al, 2016 ;	a. CSR-Reputation Baumstate, 2018 b. Turnover intention (Ahmad & Daud, 2016 c. Perception and reputation management		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation, commitment, retention • To improve the challenge of high attrition within ICT employees • Manage perception of organization to influence employees and quality of products

Skandarpour et al, 2016 ; Ashok & Srinivasan, 2016 ; Usha, Kavitha Jublee,			
Future Employees Hsia, Ma, Auld, Ito & Brotheridge, 2014; McFarlasnd, Heilmann, Saarenketo & Likkanen, 2013; Gardner, Erhardt & Mrtin-Rios, 2011; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Love & Singh, 2011; Moroko & Uncles, 2009	a. Attraction of Potential Generation Y candidates Mičák, M., & Mičudová, K. (2018). Kashive, N., & Khanna, V. T. (2018).Subramanian and Jaiswal, 2016; b. CSR as factor for reputation management Baumstate, 2018 c. Downsizing- Campos-Garcia & Zuniga Vicente, 2018 d. Organizational identity; Sarah Bankins & Jennifer Waterhouse (2019)	a. Use of social media b. 3 rd party-external c. Inward-functional unit- Subramanian and Jaiswal, 2016 d. 3 rd party-Subramanian and Jaiswal, 2016 –social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract generation y candidates • Attraction and retention of specific talent by demographics • Recruitment • Minimize employment risk and promote quality talent pool; attractiveness; reputation; trust • Manage negative effect of downsizing; improve quality of future recruitment. • Attract large and high-quality job applicants; overall impression on potential employees

D. Sample Respondent Ethics Check

Employer Branding Process in Higher Education Institutions: Impact on Talent Management Outcomes.

Research Investigator: [Idorenyin Etokakpan](#)

Purpose

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. The consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign the accompanying consent form to certify that you approve the following:

1. **Research project title: Employer Branding Process in Higher Education Institutions: Impact on Talent Management Outcomes**
2. You have been requested to participate in an interview as part of the qualitative data collection for a doctoral research project
 - You have been chosen because you are an academic employee of a UK University, therefore your specialist insight is recognised as important for the completion of the project
 - *The research focuses on understanding the operative mechanisms that explain employer branding processes in UK higher education institutions with particular interest in Business Schools, and the implications on talent management outcomes such as employee attraction and retention.*
3. Your participation is a one-off activity. You may only be contacted again if you express an interest in being informed of the result of the project on completion.
4. Your participation will be through an interview session conducted by the research investigator and will last ca. 30-45mins. During the interview semi-structured questions will be asked in relation to the subject of research. The interview session will be audio recorded with data protection observed in line with the University of Kent's data protection policy guidelines.
5. Taking part in the study is entirely voluntary, and if you do not want to be involved, this will not affect you in any way. If you are interested in taking part, you will be asked to complete a consent form before participating, a copy of which you will keep. If you wish to withdraw your consent at any point, you are free to do so without giving a reason.
6. The research is organized by [Idorenyin Etokakpan](#) as part of a doctoral research in management at the **Kent Business School, University of Kent** with a team comprising of [Dr Maria Balta](#) and [Prof Joseph Amankwah-Amoah](#).
7. A statement giving details of which body has ethically approved the project: The Research is approved by the Kent Business School Research and Ethics Advisory Group (KBS REAG). Contact can be made via kbsethicsadmin@kent.ac.uk.

8. There are no known foreseeable risk or disadvantage to participant during or after participation in the interview.
9. Participant may be contacted to confirm that interpretation and understanding of interviews are correct and reflect participant's opinion and intention.
10. The results of this study may be summarised in published articles, reports and presentations. Quotes or key findings will always be made anonymous in any formal outputs unless we have your prior and explicit written permission to attribute them to you by name. Information may also be kept for future research.
11. Interviews will be stored in a detached and secure hard drive in line with the University of Kent data protection policy:

<https://research.kent.ac.uk/researchservices/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2018/12/GDPR-Privacy-Notice-Research-updated.pdf>
12. In the case of pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights and in the event of a complaint: please contact: [Dr Maria Balta](#) at Kent Business School, Canterbury-Kent.
13. As a participant, you reserve the right to ask questions and similarly withdraw at any time from the research without consequences.
14. At the end of the research period, data may be available for archive and re-use for further research. Where such is planned, we will ensure that ethical and legal obligations will be strictly adhered to. In this case: All information about your participation in this study will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). • Your interview will be audio-recorded and I will later type this up, with all identifying information removed. • Transcripts (typed copies of your interview) will be kept electronically on a password protected and encrypted computer. • Your anonymised transcript will be seen by members of the research team (as mentioned in the PIS) employed by The Kent Business School. • Once the research is completed (this is anticipated to be by September 2021), electronic copies of the transcript will be stored securely on the university network until the point of secure disposal.
15. All or part of the content of your interview may be used; • In academic papers, policy papers or news articles • On our website and in other media that we may produce such as spoken presentations • On other feedback events • In an archive of the project as noted above. Please provide your contact details if you would like a copy of the findings in due course.
16. Thank you for taking time to read this sheet and considering to take part in the project. Please sign the attached consent form and retain a copy for yourself.

E. Sample Respondent Consent Form

To be adapted as appropriate to the specific research project

Title of project: Employer Branding Process in Higher Education Institutions: Impact on Talent Management Outcomes

Name of investigator: [Idorenyin Etokakpan](#)

Participant Identification Number for this project:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm I have read and understand the information sheet dated 17/04/2020 (version ARW/DN 14/06/17) for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. (Insert contact number here of lead researcher/member of research team, as appropriate). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. (Also add here a statement about publication of anonymised direct quotes if this will be done). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to take part in the above research project. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree to have my interview recorded. (Delete if not applicable to the project) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature
Idorenyin Etokakpan		
_____	_____	_____
Name of person taking consent (if different from lead researcher)	Date	Signature
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant		
Idorenyin Etokakpan		
_____	_____	_____
Lead researcher	Date	Signature

F. Web Invitation Email for Respondent Recruitment

Dear «Name»,

I am [Idorenyin Etokakpan](#), a doctoral researcher at the **Kent Business School, University of Kent** and I am pursuing my PhD in Management under the supervision of [Dr Maria Balta](#) and [Prof Joseph Amankwah-Amoah](#).

I kindly request your audience for an interview as part of the qualitative data collection for my doctoral research. In light of the current situation, I am happy to arrange a virtual interview with you at your earliest convenience.

My research focuses on understanding the operative mechanisms that explain employer branding processes in UK higher education institutions with particular interest in Business Schools, and the implications on talent management outcomes such as employee attraction and retention.

As an academic, I am particularly interested in your view of employer branding with respect to talent attraction and retention. Your specialist insight will be very important for the completion of my project and the interview will last ca 30-45 minutes.

I look forward to your response for availability at a suitable time between April and May, 2020

Many thanks in advance for your positive response.

Kind regards,

Idorenyin Etokakpan | Ph.D. Researcher

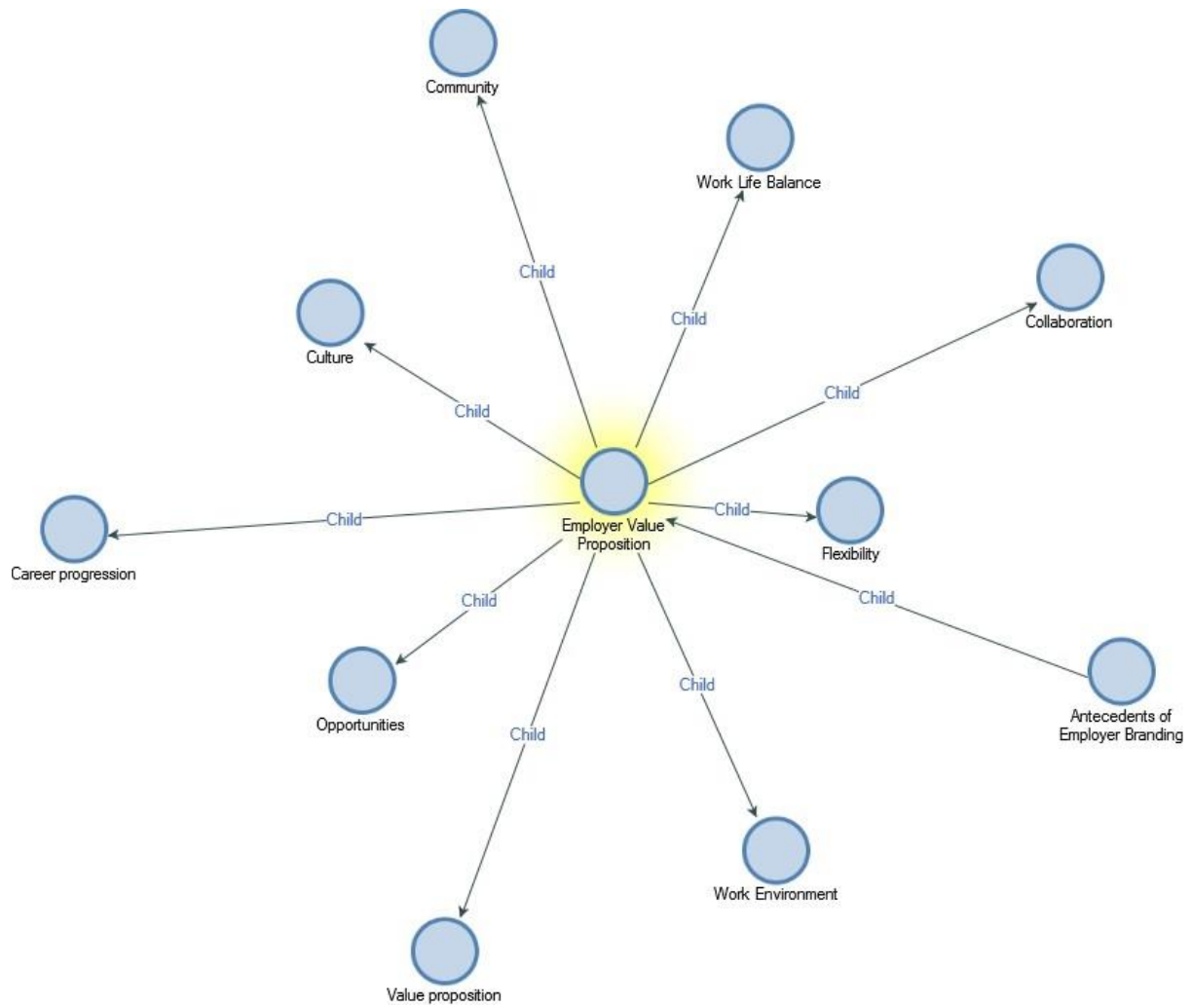
Kent Business School | University of Kent
Canterbury, Kent | CT2, 7FS

G. NVIVO Capture of Themes and Sub-themes

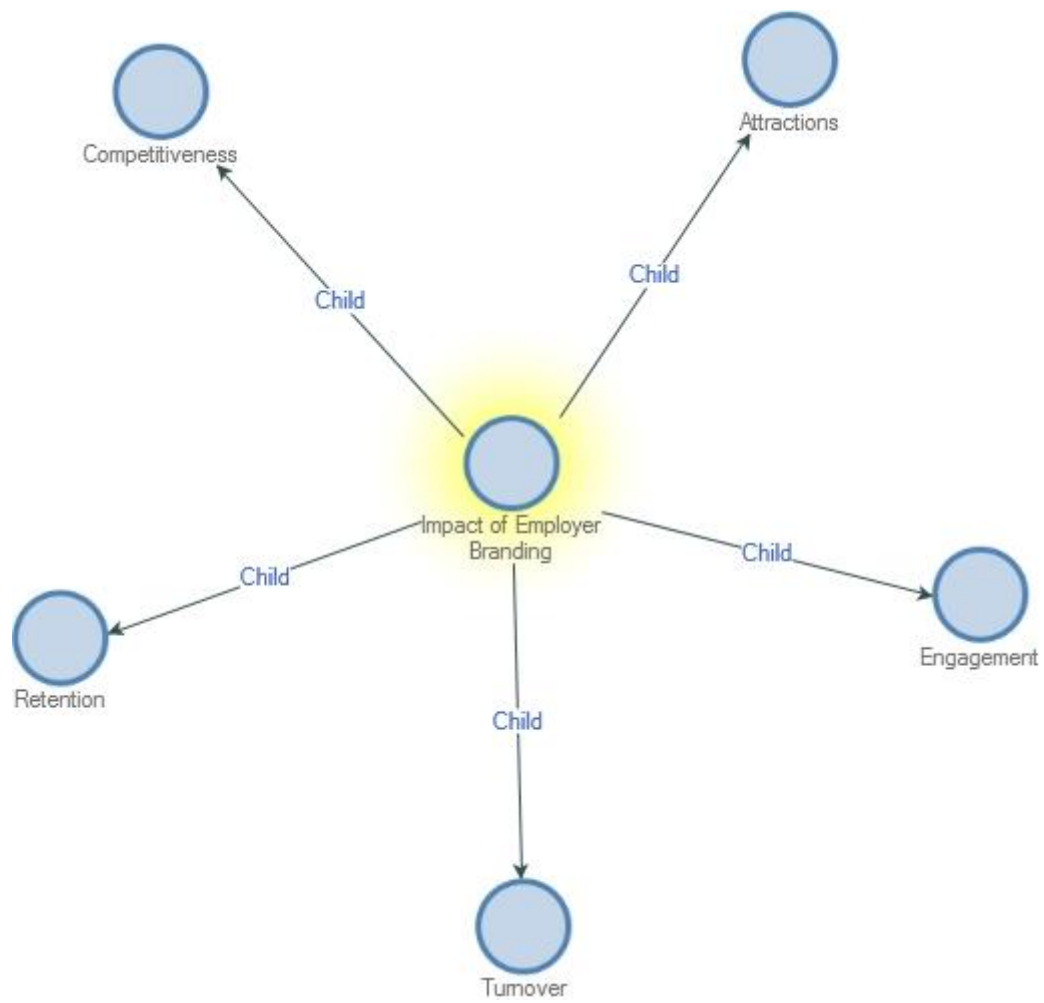
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Name	Files	References	Created On
Antecedents of Employer Branding		3	29/11/2020 17:47
Employer Value Proposition		1	01/12/2020 09:50
Career progression		16	25/11/2020 18:23
Collaboration		1	01/12/2020 11:47
Community		3	25/11/2020 17:43
Culture		8	29/11/2020 06:45
Flexibility		8	29/11/2020 17:16
Opportunities		20	25/11/2020 12:43
Value proposition		20	23/11/2020 15:02
Work Environment		4	04/12/2020 05:44
Work Life Balance		1	02/12/2020 23:18
Concepts in Employer Branding		53	23/11/2020 15:14
Brand Awareness		2	27/05/2021 16:59
Brand Identity		1	27/05/2021 17:03
Brand Positioning		2	27/05/2021 17:02
Brand Reputation		3	27/05/2021 16:55
Employer Branding Process		2	26/05/2021 17:20
Building the Brand		30	26/05/2021 18:21
Attachment to Brand		2	26/05/2021 18:21
Autonomy		2	26/05/2021 18:21
Define the brand image		4	26/05/2021 18:21
Employer Brand Architecture		2	26/05/2021 18:21
Communicating the Brand		2	05/12/2020 22:45
Explicit Brand Message		10	26/11/2020 21:50
Touchpoints		15	27/11/2020 04:35
Communication		24	24/11/2020 10:27
Contact points		4	24/11/2020 15:14
Word of mouth		1	26/05/2021 19:21
Delivering the Brand		10	06/12/2020 17:54
Affinity to the brand		1	27/05/2021 00:02
Barriers to employer brand deli		9	06/12/2020 18:08
Enforcement points		3	27/05/2021 00:01

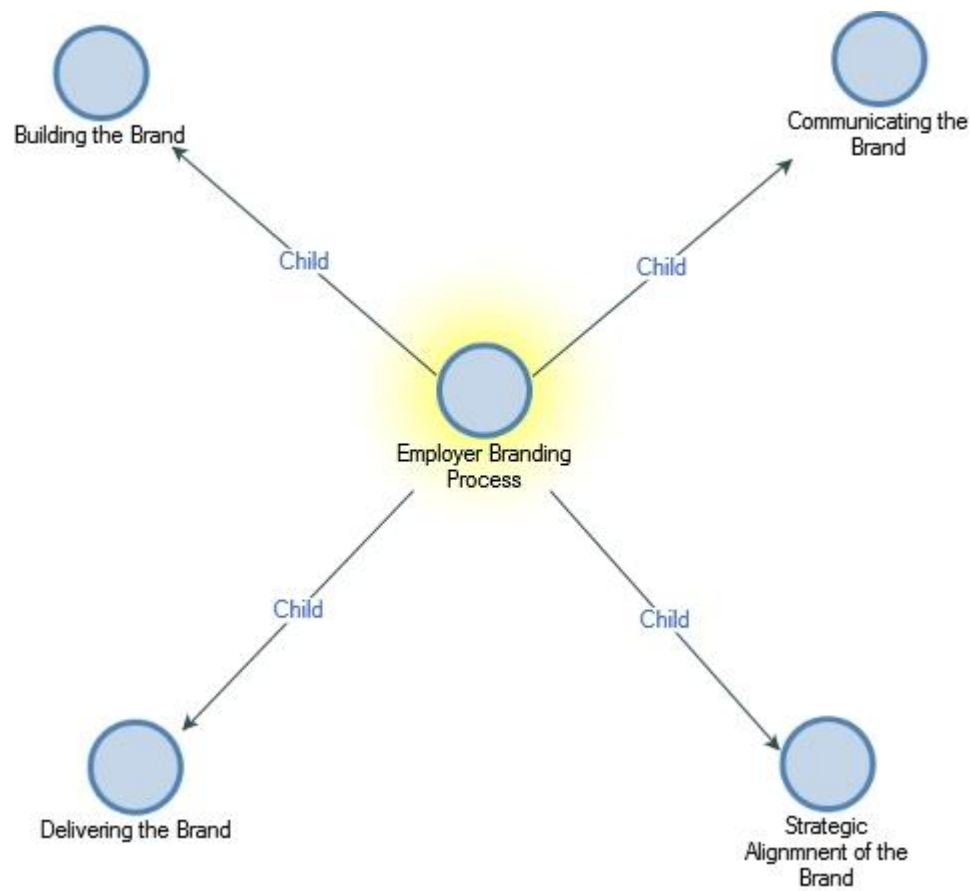
H. NVIVO Capture of Employer Brand Antecedents



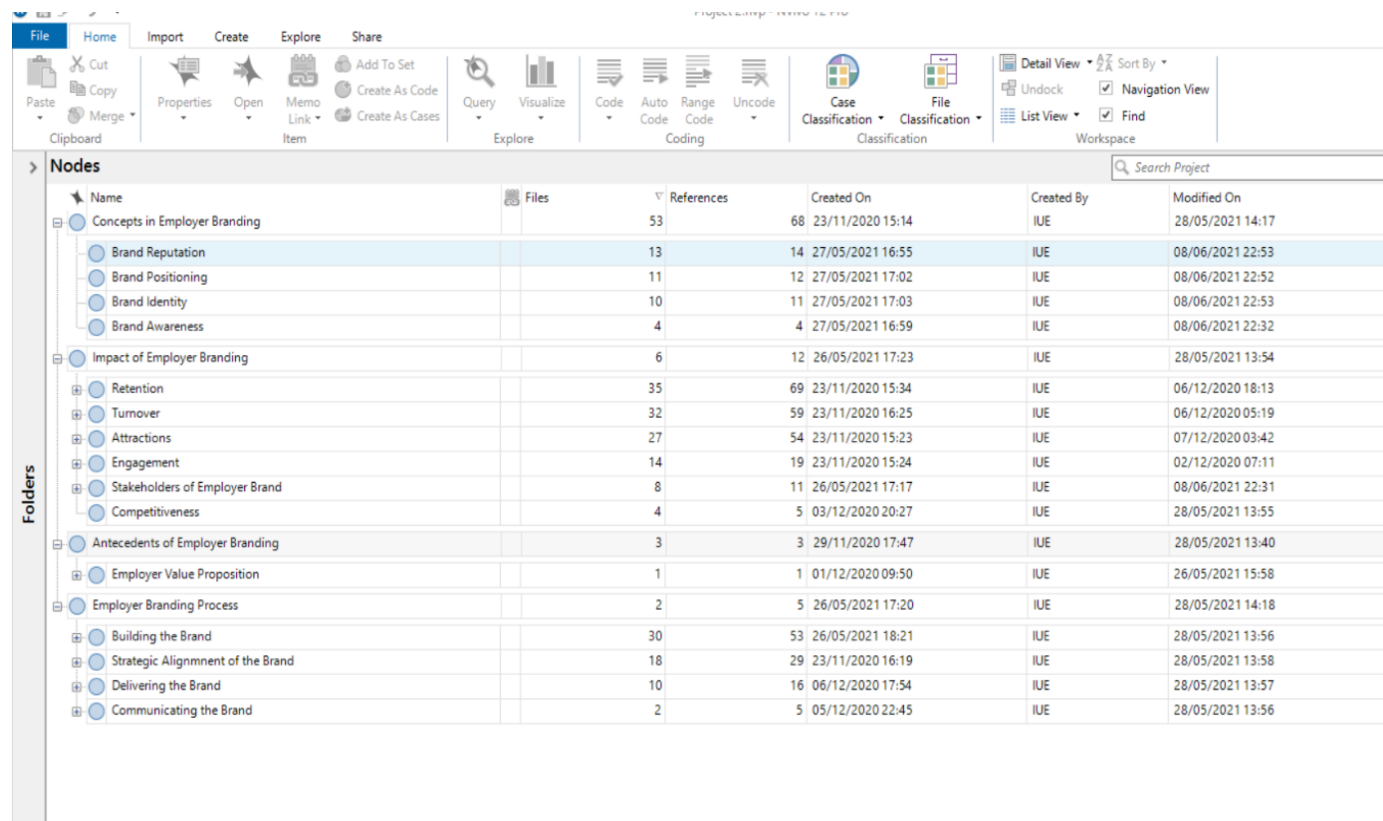
I. NVIVO Capture of Employer Brand Impact



J. NVIVO Capture of Employer Brand Process



K. Thematic Capture Based on NVIVO Coding



Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On
Concepts in Employer Branding	53	68	23/11/2020 15:14	IUE	28/05/2021 14:17
Brand Reputation	13	14	27/05/2021 16:55	IUE	08/06/2021 22:53
Brand Positioning	11	12	27/05/2021 17:02	IUE	08/06/2021 22:52
Brand Identity	10	11	27/05/2021 17:03	IUE	08/06/2021 22:53
Brand Awareness	4	4	27/05/2021 16:59	IUE	08/06/2021 22:32
Impact of Employer Branding	6	12	26/05/2021 17:23	IUE	28/05/2021 13:54
Retention	35	69	23/11/2020 15:34	IUE	06/12/2020 18:13
Turnover	32	59	23/11/2020 16:25	IUE	06/12/2020 05:19
Attractions	27	54	23/11/2020 15:23	IUE	07/12/2020 03:42
Engagement	14	19	23/11/2020 15:24	IUE	02/12/2020 07:11
Stakeholders of Employer Brand	8	11	26/05/2021 17:17	IUE	08/06/2021 22:31
Competitiveness	4	5	03/12/2020 20:27	IUE	28/05/2021 13:55
Antecedents of Employer Branding	3	3	29/11/2020 17:47	IUE	28/05/2021 13:40
Employer Value Proposition	1	1	01/12/2020 09:50	IUE	26/05/2021 15:58
Employer Branding Process	2	5	26/05/2021 17:20	IUE	28/05/2021 14:18
Building the Brand	30	53	26/05/2021 18:21	IUE	28/05/2021 13:56
Strategic Alignment of the Brand	18	29	23/11/2020 16:19	IUE	28/05/2021 13:58
Delivering the Brand	10	16	06/12/2020 17:54	IUE	28/05/2021 13:57
Communicating the Brand	2	5	05/12/2020 22:45	IUE	28/05/2021 13:56