

LAPPEENRANTA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Management

Master's Degree in International Marketing Management

*Maria Kuutsa*

**THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY  
IN SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

1<sup>st</sup> Supervisor: Professor Liisa-Maija Sainio, LUT

2<sup>nd</sup> Supervisor: Associate Professor Hanna Salojärvi, LUT

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	
<b>Author</b>	Kuutsa, Maria Karoliina
<b>Title</b>	The interrelationship between employee advocacy in social media and employee engagement
<b>Faculty</b>	School of Business and Management
<b>Master's Program</b>	International Marketing Management
<b>Year</b>	2016
<b>Master's Thesis</b>	Lappeenranta University of Technology 109 pages, 11 figures, 9 tables, 4 appendices
<b>Examiners</b>	Professor Liisa-Maija Sainio Associate Professor Hanna Salojärvi
<b>Keywords</b>	Employee advocacy, employee engagement, relationship marketing, social media marketing
<p>The main goal of the thesis is to explore the interrelationship between employee engagement and employee advocacy in social media. This aim is further supported by the secondary goals that concentrate on studying the two concepts separately and in detail as they are quite novel in academic literature. The main study context is social media, while the theoretical aspects of the thesis derive from relationship marketing, organisational psychology and organisational behaviour. The empirical evidence for this qualitative single case study is collected from seven active employee advocates with marketing or communications backgrounds.</p> <p>Based on the existing literature, it is discovered that employee engagement is constructed from different elements that either together or separately can be connected to employee advocacy behaviour in social media. Also the empirical results imply that the proposed interrelationship between employee engagement and employee advocacy does exist and that there even are specific employee engagement elements that could possibly directly influence advocacy behaviour. In addition, a new definition of employee advocacy is proposed.</p> <p>Even though the study is conducted locally and on a small-scale, it does offer some new theoretical insights as well as interesting managerial implications. It appears that employee advocacy is more connected with HRM than previously perhaps has been discussed in the marketing industry.</p>	

## TIIVISTELMÄ

<b>Tekijä</b>	Kuutsa, Maria Karoliina
<b>Tutkielman nimi</b>	Työntekijälähettilyyden ja työntekijän osallistumisen välinen suhde
<b>Tiedekunta</b>	Kauppateieteellinen tiedekunta
<b>Maisteriohjelma</b>	Kansainvälinen markkinointi
<b>Vuosi</b>	2016
<b>Pro gradu - tutkielma</b>	Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto 109 sivua, 11 kuvaa, 9 taulukkoa, 4 liitettä
<b>Tarkastajat</b>	Professori Liisa-Maija Sainio Tutkijaopettaja Hanna Salojärvi
<b>Hakusanat</b>	Työntekijälähettilyys, työntekijän osallistuminen, suhdemarkkinointi, sosiaalisen median markkinointi

Tutkielman päätavoite on tarkastella työntekijän osallistumisen suhdetta työntekijälähettilyyteen. Tätä tukevat myös toissijaiset tutkimustavoitteet, jotka tähtäävät kummankin akateemisesti suhteellisen uuden konseptin avaamiseen yksityiskohtaisesti. Tutkielman kontekstina toimii sosiaalinen media ja sen teoreettiset lähtökohdat ovat suhdemarkkinoinnissa, organisaatiopsykologiassa sekä -käyttäytymisessä. Tämän kvalitatiivisen case-tutkimuksen empiirinen aineisto puolestaan perustuu seitsemään haastatteluun, jossa lähteinä ovat markkinointi- tai viestintätaustaiset, aktiiviset työntekijälähtiläät.

Olemassa olevan kirjallisuuden perusteella voidaan havaita, että työntekijän osallistuminen koostuu eri elementeistä, jotka joko yhdessä tai erikseen voivat olla yhteydessä työntekijälähettilyyteen. Myös empiiriset tulokset antavat ymmärtää, että työntekijän osallistuminen sekä työntekijälähettilyys ovat yhteydessä toisiinsa. Tämän lisäksi on myös mahdollista erottaa eri osallistumisen elementtejä, joilla saattaisi olla jopa suoria vaikutuksia työntekijälähettilyyteen. Empirian ja kirjallisuuden avulla muodostetaan myös uusi, ajankohtainen määritelmä työntekijälähettilyydestä.

Tutkimus kokonaisuudessaan tarjoaa joitakin uusia teoreettisia näkökulmia sekä mielenkiintoisia käytäntöön sovellettavia tuloksia. Työntekijälähettilyys näyttäisikin olevan vahvemmin sidoksissa ihmisten johtamiseen kuin aiemmin markkinointialalla mahdollisesti on ajateltu.

## **AKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I finally did it! And it was about time as the active student life has already been behind me for a couple of years now. However, the years at Lappeenranta University of Technology were unforgettable and I thank all my university friends for that.

Starting and actually getting onwards with the Thesis, or the Big T, proved much more difficult than I imagined with the working life whisking me away to the world of social media marketing. Studies that had been going ever so smoothly before that came to a sudden halt. Luckily after a few missteps and some motivational obstacles I found a topic that truly interests me, as this is something relatively novel even for us working with social media on daily basis.

After I truly started to work on progressing this Thesis that you are reading right now, I was able to keep my pre-set schedule of autumn 2016 and for this I would also like to thank my employer and my boss, because they awarded me with much needed extra time to make the empirical research and analysis. I also want to voice my deepest appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor, professor Liisa-Maija Sainio, who patiently guided me despite geographical differences and changing schedules.

Finally I would like to thank my family, friends and my boyfriend who continuously supported me and cheered me on with this project that took a lot longer to start than it did to actually finish.

Maria Kuutsa

11.11.2016

Helsinki, Finland

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1. Defining the Research Gap .....	1
1.2. Literature Review .....	2
1.3. Research Problem .....	6
1.4. Theoretical Framework .....	7
1.5. Definitions of Key Concepts .....	8
1.5.1. Relationship marketing .....	8
1.5.2. Social media marketing .....	10
1.5.3. Employee engagement .....	11
1.5.4. Employee advocacy .....	13
1.6. Delimitations of the Study .....	14
1.6.1 Theoretical delimitations .....	14
1.6.2. Empirical delimitations .....	15
1.7. Research Methodology .....	16
1.8. Structure of the Thesis .....	18
2. RELATIONSHIP FOCUS IN MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEXT .....	20
2.1. Relationship Marketing .....	20
2.1.1. Relationship marketing stakeholders .....	21
2.1.2 Internal marketing & the importance of the employee .....	23
2.1.3. Internal marketing benefits .....	24
2.2. Social Media Marketing .....	26
2.2.1. Social media marketing benefits .....	26
2.2.2. Social media marketing challenges .....	29
2.2.3. Content marketing .....	30
3. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT .....	32
3.1. Exploring Employee Engagement .....	32
3.2. Building Employee Engagement .....	34
3.3. The Elements of Employee Engagement .....	36
3.3.1. Trust .....	38
3.3.2. Commitment .....	39
3.3.3. Satisfaction .....	41
3.3.4 Job involvement .....	42

3.3.5. Empowerment .....	43
3.4. Employee Engagement Behaviour and Outcomes .....	43
4. EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY .....	46
4.1. The Theoretical Foundations of Employee Advocacy .....	46
4.2. Employee Voice .....	48
4.2.1. Employee voice types and purposes .....	49
4.2.2. Employee voice in social media and online word-of-mouth .....	50
4.2.3. Driving positive WOM and employee voice in social media .....	51
4.3. Connecting Employee Advocacy with Employee Engagement .....	52
4.3.1. Employee engagement elements and employee advocacy .....	54
4.3.2. Other important prerequisites .....	55
4.4. Employee Advocacy Benefits .....	56
4.4.1. Trust .....	57
4.4.2. Corporate and employer branding .....	58
4.4.3. Employee engagement .....	60
4.4.4. Employee support in turbulent situations .....	60
4.5. Employee Advocacy Risks And Barriers .....	61
4.5.1. Risks and barriers from the organisation point of view .....	61
4.5.2. Barriers and risks from the employee point of view .....	62
4.6. Developed Theoretical Framework .....	63
5. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH .....	65
5.1. Respondent Selection .....	65
5.2. Data Collection and Analysis .....	67
5.2.1. Employee engagement analysis .....	67
5.2.2. Employee advocacy analysis .....	68
5.3. Validity and Reliability .....	69
6. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS .....	71
6.1. Employee Engagement Findings .....	71
6.1.1. Trust .....	71
6.1.2. Commitment .....	72
6.1.3. Satisfaction .....	74
6.1.4. Job involvement .....	75
6.1.5. Empowerment .....	76
6.1.6. Value identification .....	78
6.2. Employee Advocacy Findings .....	79

6.2.1. Personal factors and benefits.....	79
6.2.2. Starting employee advocacy .....	81
6.2.3. Employee advocacy activities .....	82
6.2.4. Employee advocacy channels.....	84
6.2.5. Employee advocacy success .....	86
6.2.6. Employee advocacy at the organisation .....	87
6.2.7. Key employee advocacy improvement points.....	88
6.2.8. Employee advocacy barriers.....	89
7. DISCUSSION .....	91
7.1. Employee Engagement.....	91
7.1.1. Employee engagement: element by element.....	91
7.1.2. Connecting employee engagement elements and employee advocacy .....	94
7.2. Employee Advocacy .....	96
7.2.1. Defining employee advocacy .....	97
7.2.2. Organisation-level discussion .....	99
7.3 Complete Theoretical and Empirical Framework.....	101
8. CONCLUSIONS .....	103
8.1. Summary of the Main Findings .....	103
8.1. Theoretical Implications .....	106
8.2. Managerial Implications .....	106
8.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research .....	107
REFERENCES .....	110
APPENDICES .....	122

Appendix 1. Key words and phrases for employee engagement

Appendix 2. Employee advocacy activities

Appendix 3. Interview questions in English

Appendix 4. Interview questions in Finnish

## **LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES**

### **Figures**

Figure 1. Preliminary theoretical framework

Figure 2. The relational exchanges of relationship marketing

Figure 3. Which social media channels do you use weekly?

Figure 4. Employee engagement value chain

Figure 5. Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement

Figure 6. The network co-production model

Figure 7. Conceptual model of the impact of transformational leadership on symmetrical internal communication and employee outcomes, results version

Figure 8. Trust in information created by each author on social networking sites, content sharing sites and online-only information

Figure 9. Developed theoretical framework

Figure 10. Visual representation of employee advocacy in social media

Figure 11. Complete theoretical and empirical framework

### **Tables**

Table 1. Key literature of the study

Table 2. The meaning and articulation of employee voice

Table 3. Respondent information

Table 4. Respondents' social media usage in their personal life

Table 5. Employee advocacy duration

Table 6. Employee advocacy operation modes and activities

Table 7. Main employee advocacy activities per active channel

Table 8. Social media channel comparison

Table 9. Personal employee advocacy success measurements

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Social media is one of the most defining developments of our time and one of communications professionals' most important challenges (Dreher 2014, 344) because with it, consumers have much more power than before and the linear and one-direction approach to marketing has been replaced with interactivity and uncontrollability (Felix et al. 2016, 6; Henning-Thurau et al. 2013, 237-238).

The growth of social media has also enabled employees that traditionally have had limited choices in voicing their work-related experiences to have hundreds or even thousands of people to communicate with outside the organisational boundaries. (Miles & Mangold 2014, 410) In addition, employees' participation in social media is not only inevitable, but also impossible to eliminate (Dreher 2014, 345).

But rather than focusing on negative things like loss of control, social media disasters and how to best hinder employees' social media use, this study focuses on how attitudes and feelings in the workplace positively connect to how employees talk about their work and about their employer in social media. In short, this thesis studies how employee advocacy in social media is connected to personal employee engagement.

### **1.1. Defining the Research Gap**

The initial interest towards employee advocacy was brought up by the active discussion happening in the author's professional network. And there actually exists a clear research gap as employee advocacy had not really been studied as a pure focal concept in the existing academic literature (Men 2014, 262). This made the topic not only interesting to study, but also challenging as it meant the author also had to dig a bit deeper into marketing and management literature to find out where to start.

Because Men (2014) already had used quantitative methods to establish a positive linkage between successful employee-organisation relationships and employee advocacy amongst other related findings in her study, the starting point of this research became relationship marketing literature, specifically the kind that focuses on internal relationships and their success factors.

The next research gap came from the employee perspective of these successful relationships and employee advocacy activities. Rokka et al. (2013) had used qualitative methods to study the management perspective of employee advocacy and had suggested employee perspective as a next focal point for further research (Rokka et al. 2013, 824). In addition, Dreher (2014, 354) stated in her research that motivation behind employee's social media content about their employer would be one of the key questions in the field that has not been studied further. That is why the study broadened the view from relationship marketing towards organisational psychology and more detailed motivators or antecedents of employee advocacy. This is where the concept of employee engagement was discovered and the main focus of the study locked in to the interrelationship between employee advocacy and employee engagement.

## **1.2. Literature Review**

As stated previously, the start of the literature review was challenging. Firstly because employee advocacy is lacking in academic research all together (Men 2014, 262) and secondly because employee engagement can be defined in over 50 different ways and has no coherent theoretical background (McLead and Clarke 2009). In fact, both concepts are mostly studied by practice journals or commercial publications instead of having independent, academic research specifically conducted on them. However, the literature review will cover all major theories and publications relevant to this study context even though they had to be collected from a variety of literature fields.

The first key literature source of this study is Men's paper (2014), which focuses on leadership and employee-organisation relationships and where she also connects the quality of that relationship with employee advocacy. That is why the starting point of the literature review is relationship marketing as introduced by Berry in 1983. Relationship marketing focuses not only on acquiring customers, but also on building long-term relationships with them and acquiring customer satisfaction. (Christopher et al. 1991) This marked a paradigm shift in marketing in the 1980's (Berry 2001; Grönroos 1994).

In addition to customers, relationship marketing literature focuses on other stakeholders, such as suppliers and competitors (Morgan & Hunt 1994). This study is especially interested in the relationship between the organisation and the employees as well as the success factors of that relationship, such as commitment and trust (Ballantyne 2003; Men 2014; Morgan and Hunt 1994).

This expands the literature review from relationship marketing to organisational psychology as this study also explores literature on employee engagement. Because the focus is on the employee point of view, the main interest in employee engagement is the emotional or attitudinal aspect, which can be described as "energy, dedication and passion of employees who have to contribute their best to serve the customers to achieve the goals of their organisation" (Gupta & Sharma 2016, 48).

The most important literature that is reviewed to construct the attitudinal employee engagement elements is listed in the following table:

Table 1. Key literature of the study

	Trust	Commitment	Satisfaction	Involvement	Empowerment	Employee Engagement	Employee Advocacy
Gupta & Sharma (2016)		X	X	X		X	X
Lages (2012)		X	X				X
Macey & Schneider (2008)	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Macey et al. (2009)			X	X	X	X	
McLeod & Clarke (2009)		X	X	X	X	X	X
Men (2014)	X	X	X		X	X	X
Meyer et al. (2002)		X	X	X			
Miles & Mangold (2014)	X		X	X		X	X (employee voice in social media)
Schweizer & Lyons (2008)		X	X				X

As can be seen from this table, this study explores the organisational psychology constructs of trust, commitment, satisfaction, involvement and empowerment. Even though only Macey and Schneider (2008) connect all of these constructs to employee engagement, the literature review on each separate element does form a coherent and in-depth view of attitudinal employee engagement.

The table also shows that employee engagement and employee advocacy have been positively connected in the previous literature by Gupta & Sharma (2016), McLeod & Clarke (2009) and Miles & Mangold (2014). And even though Macey et al. (2009) nor Macey & Scheider (2008) do not explore employee advocacy in connection to employee engagement or its elements, they do recognize the effects employee engagement has on engagement behaviour and outcomes. And this study views employee advocacy as engagement or organisational citizenship behaviour.

Because employee advocacy has no real theoretical background yet, this study explores the related concepts of employee voice and online word-of-mouth as well as offers insights into the world of social media marketing.

The concept of employee voice is especially interesting when it is viewed as a form of mutuality (Dundon et al. 2004) that can be accomplished when employees feel that they are partners in the organisation and proud to be its promoters (Miles & Mangold 2014). And while the concept of online WOM mostly focuses on consumer behaviour, it offers interesting insights into employee advocacy as it can be assumed that once consumers are satisfied, loyal and engaged to a brand or organisation, they will communicate their opinions to other consumers via online channels (Hoffman & Fodor 2010; Price & Arnould 1999). This logic is very similar to how this study views employee engagement's connection with employee advocacy.

Employee advocacy today happens mostly in social media networks like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. This is why the context of social media is introduced and also why it is explained how marketing has changed because of it (Chung & Austia 2010; Kim & Ko 2012; Omilion-Hodges & Baker 2014; Smith & Zook 2011; Van Belleghem et al. 2011). Having employees become a natural part of social media marketing is an important next step for organisations and it has already been proven to have some interesting benefits, like increased perceived trustworthiness (Dreher 2014; Global Edelman Trust Barometer 2015; Men & Stacks, 2013), corporate and employer branding opportunities (Dreher 2014; Gotsi & Wilson 2001; Parry & Solidoro 2013) as well as employee support in turbulent situations (Kim & Rhee 2011; Men 2014)

### **1.3. Research Problem**

The first research question describes the main problem and final goal of the research, which is to explore how employee advocacy activity in social media is connected to employee engagement. This question is studied from the employee's point of view with the focus on an attitudinal or emotional perspective. The main research question is the following:

*How are employee advocacy in social media and employee engagement interrelated?*

Since both concepts are fairly new, the study also aims to explore them in detail and especially from the perspective of active and engaged employee advocates. The first sub question focuses on employee engagement from this perspective:

*What are the key employee engagement elements from the employee advocate's perspective?*

The second sub question aims to reveal what the concept of employee advocacy actually means when the existing literature is combined with the active advocates' insights.

*How can employee advocacy in social media be defined?*

Combined these three questions will form an in-depth look into two current marketing and management buzzwords that both are somewhat lacking in existing academic literature.

## 1.4. Theoretical Framework

The preliminary theoretical framework contains all the most important marketing theories and models related to this study and presented visually like this:

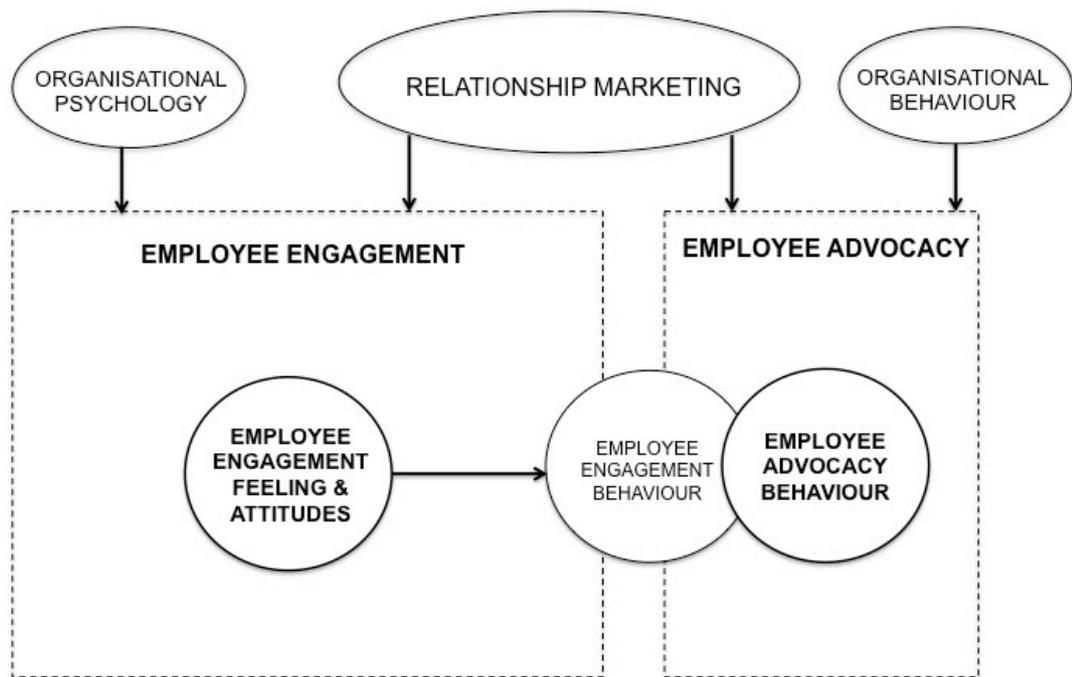


Figure 1. Preliminary theoretical framework

The very first layer reveals the main theoretical background of the study: relationship marketing, organisational psychology and organisational behaviour.

The second layer of the framework is focused on the connection between employee engagement and employee advocacy. On the engagement side, the focus is naturally on the personal employee feelings and attitudes as this study is conducted from their perspective. This layer of the framework also follows the logic of the value chain of employee engagement by Macey et al. (2009), where engagement attitudes result in engagement behaviours.

The particular engagement behaviour of interest is of course employee advocacy. As employee advocacy is a new concept in marketing literature, this study will also be explore and explain what the concept actually means and will use the more explored concepts of employee voice and word of mouth with special focus on the behavioural aspects of them to do this.

This study will also shortly describe the study context of social media, but as it does not represent new theories as much as it explains the context as well as the background on why employee advocacy has increased in importance, it is not included in the theoretical framework.

After the entire literature review, a developed theoretical framework will be introduced which offers more detailed insights into the two main focus concepts.

## **1.5. Definitions of Key Concepts**

In this chapter the most central concepts of the study are introduced, which are: relationship marketing, social media marketing, employee engagement and employee advocacy. Since the definition of relationship marketing forms the theoretical foundation and social media marketing forms the contextual foundation for the study, they are introduced first. However, employee engagement and employee advocacy are the two most important concepts of the study.

The definitions between different authors and research fields vary and that is why the chosen definitions incorporate both commonly accepted and cited elements as well as elements that are relevant for this particular study context.

### **1.5.1. Relationship marketing**

As a concept, *relationship marketing* is already a mature one. In fact, the idea of earning the customer's favour and loyalty by satisfying their wants and needs

was known even to the earliest merchants. The actual concept of relationship marketing was first introduced by Berry in 1983 and started to gain some real attention in the 1990s when the focus in the marketing research started to shift from acquiring customers towards building, managing and enhancing customer relationships. This could actually be called a paradigm shift, since the change in the perceptions of marketing fundamentals was so dramatic. This was the first time that the traditional marketing mix management and Four Ps model were actually truly challenged in marketing research. (Berry 2001, 236; Grönroos 1994, 4)

There is no one mutually agreed definition of the concept, but there are similarities in the definitions. After comparing the main relationship marketing researches to each other, Mattsson (1997, 449) found that all the relationship marketing definitions have a clear focus on the management of relationship life cycles from a focal organisation's point of view. Here are a few definitions that have been chosen from the earliest relationship marketing literature that describe the concept rather well.

*“Relationship marketing is to identify and establish, maintain and enhance relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties involved are met. This is done by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises”.* (Grönroos 1996, 11)

*“Relationship Marketing refers to all marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanged.”* (Morgan & Hunt 1994, 22)

As can be seen from the definitions, in relationship marketing there are also other important stakeholders besides customers. These stakeholders can also be categorized in different ways, like the six markets model by Christopher et al. (1991) or the relational exchanges model by Morgan & Hunt (1994) that included ten discrete forms of partnerships.

In this study, the focal point is the internal aspect of relationship marketing or more specifically: the relationship between the organisation and the employees as well as the success factors of that relationship, such as commitment and trust (Ballantyne 2003; Men 2014; Morgan and Hunt 1994).

The importance of relationship marketing has peaked again in recent years due to the raise of social media and novel needs of marketing in this new digital and social era. Already in 2001, Berry (2001, 242) listed forthright, frequent and two-way communications with customers as clearly important to relationship marketing and this requirement is further highlighted by the sharing culture that exists in social media.

### **1.5.2. Social media marketing**

Depending on the point of view, social media can either be considered just as an additional channel in the existing array of integrated marketing communication tools (Hoffman & Fodor 2010, 10) or as an interesting, new approach to marketing that requires a novel strategic approach to communicate with customers (Smith & Zook 2011, 9). Some fall somewhere in between viewing social media as a hybrid element in the promotion mix that consists of not only the traditional communication between the organisation and the customer, but also of the conversations amongst customers that are outside of the organisation's direct control (Mangold & Faulds 2009, 357).

Simply put the definition options are either "marketing in social media" which is the channel approach or "*social media marketing*" which is the strategic approach. In the context of this study, the definition of social media marketing has been chosen, because the author views that in order to engage in employee advocacy especially at the organisational level, understanding on social media marketing has to be deep enough to have reached a strategic level. Thus the definition of social media marketing that this study has chosen follow is the following:

*“Social media is not just another marketing tool, but a new way of running a business. It requires a new company culture, which in turn means that there is need for a company-wide support, systems and incentives. Also a new mind-set is required: more listening, less shouting.”* (Smith & Zook 2011, 9)

Social media may have started out as means of entertainment, but due to its notable advantages in the business field, it has become the most recent marketing strategy (Kirtis and Karahan 2011, 266). Viewing social media marketing just as a new channel for traditional marketing is in fact just a common misconception. The traditional marketing approaches may be familiar and thus popular to many marketers, but in the new terrain of social media, the view of marketing has to be adapted or in some areas changed completely. (Barker et al. 2013, 15) Organisations have to accept that other stakeholders have more power than ever and one-way communication and control have been replaced with interactivity and uncontrollability (Felix et al. 2016, 6; Henning-Thurau et al. 2013, 237-238)

### **1.5.3. Employee engagement**

Based on the literature review, *employee engagement* has been defined in many different ways and there is no one mutually accepted definition for it. When McLead and Clarke conducted their own review for the UK government in 2009, they came across more than 50 different definitions for the concept. Also, most of what is written about the employee engagement can be found from practitioner journals rather than in theory and empirical research (Saks 2006, 601). Here two of those definitions are introduced as they shine light on the novel concept and fit well with the study context:

*“Engagement is an individual’s sense of purpose and focused energy, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, adaptability, effort and persistence directed toward organizational goals.”* (Macey et al. 2009, 7)

*“Employee engagement can be personified by the energy, dedication and passion of employees who have to contribute their best to serve the customers to achieve the goals of their organization. It is all about the readiness, willingness and capability of employees to give discretionary effort in achieving organization success.” (Gupta & Sharma 2016, 48)*

Despite the differences in defining the concept, a commonality does exist. It is accepted that employee engagement is a “desirable condition” that has an organisational purpose and “connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort and energy “(Macey & Scheider 2008, 4). That is why it not surprising that McLead and Clarke (2009, 8) highly recommend organisations to work, develop and nurture employee engagement continuously. As this requires a mutually beneficial relationship between the employer and the employee (Men 2014), it connects the concept of employee engagement to the theories of relationship marketing, especially those concerned with internal organisational relationships.

The concept of employee engagement has different components as it can be considered either as an attitude, as a behaviour or as an outcome. And based on the previous definitions, it can also be considered as a combination of the attitudinal and behavioural components or even as a combination of all three. (Macey & Scheider 2008, 4; McLead and Clarke 2009) In the employee engagement value chain by Macey et al. (2009, 8), feelings or attitudes first affect employee engagement behaviours that in turn affect the employee engagement outcomes, such as enhanced productivity and brand value, ultimately affecting shareholder value.

Since the point of view of this study is the employee, the main area of interest here is the first or the attitudinal aspect of the concept. And following the logic of Macey and Schneider (2008) with additional support from the entire literature

review, the attitudinal employee engagement in this study is constructed of: trust, commitment, satisfaction, job involvement and empowerment.

#### **1.5.4. Employee advocacy**

In a traditional sense *advocacy* is a term that has been related to concepts like lobbying or public policy and it is the reason non-profit organisations are created: to change things. From this point of view, advocacy is about drawing attention to underlying issues, influencing public attitudes or changing policies and practices. (McConnell 2004, 25-26)

However, *employee advocacy*, the current buzzword in marketing, is somewhat different. It builds from such concepts as employee voice behaviour (as introduced by Dundon et al. 2004) and online word-of-mouth (as described by Hoffman & Fodor 2010) and has increased in importance especially due to the popularity and reach potential of social media (Miles & Mangold 2014).

It is still somewhat lacking in academic research, but simply put employee advocacy is:

*"A behavioural construct, that is, the voluntary promotion or defence of a company, its products, or its brands by an employee externally"* (Men 2014, 262).

While this definition takes into consideration the important organisational behaviour literature point of view as well as highlights the voluntary nature of the concept (also supported by Kim and Rhee 2014), this study connects employee advocacy also with organisational psychology and employee engagement. That is why in this study context, Men's definition lacks some depth.

In stead, this study includes employee advocacy as one of the employee engagement behaviours along with any other outcome whereby employees go beyond the formal requirements of the job. (Eldor & Harpaz 2016, 288; Fullerton 2003, 335-336). And these behaviours of course are a result of the employee engagement feelings and attitudes (Eldor & Harpaz 2016; Macey et al. 2009) that were covered in the previous key definition. In addition, this study, like almost any other current employee advocacy publication, concentrates on the context of social media marketing and personal online networks.

Because the concept has so little academic research behind it, this study will also propose its own detailed definition of employee advocacy. This will be a combination of the key findings in the literature review and the most important insights gained from the empirical research.

## **1.6. Delimitations of the Study**

The main focal point of the study is to understand a novel concept in marketing; employee advocacy in social media; as well as to explore its interrelationship with employee engagement in the organisation. In order to gain in-depth insights on this interrelationship, some delimitations had to be made both theoretically and empirically.

### **1.6.1 Theoretical delimitations**

Other factors besides organisational or employee engagement issues can have positive effects on employee advocacy activities. People might also have internal motivators, such as personal or self-branding. The conversation on personal branding started in the late 1990s from a book "The Brand Called You" by Tom Peters (Ward & Yates 2013, 101) From there on, the concept has been studied by various authors and in recent years, personal branding has been strongly connected to Internet and social media use. Labrecque et al. (2011) studied personal branding in the online context, while Ward and Yates (2013)

reflected on personal branding and e-professionalism. Chen (2013) was interested in personal brands specifically on YouTube. However, due to the chosen delimitations by the author, these other motivational factors are not included in this study.

And even though this study is interested in the relationship between the employee and the employer, any further examination of different management and leadership styles that might affect employee engagement and employee advocacy, are excluded. Internal communication and leadership style do have an affect on both concepts (Men 2014), but in this study all insights and perceptions are focused on the emotional responses of the employees.

### **1.6.2. Empirical delimitations**

There are also some empirical delimitations to the study. Since the aim is to understand the interrelationship between employee engagement and employee advocacy, the data is gathered from people who actually are active in employee advocacy. This means that the information gathered from people who don't engage in this activity are not included in the study. In addition, due to the novel nature of the concept, the chosen respondents have been selected with experience in marketing or communications. The author's professional experience with employee advocacy is that people who work in these fields generally are more likely to engage in the activity since they already understand the value of social media as well as the value of sharing useful content if not even employee advocacy itself.

As pointed out previously, the study is conducted from the point of view of the employee. Thus the insights from company owners, entrepreneurs or people with a leadership status are excluded from the empirical research.

Finally, the audience for employee-generated content, basically the followers and friends of employee advocates, are also excluded, which means that the

external outcomes of employee advocacy, such as increased perceived trustworthiness (Dreher 2014; Global Edelman Trust Barometer 2015; Men & Stacks, 2013), will not be analysed further in this study. However, the benefits of employee advocacy are covered in the literature review.

## **1.7. Research Methodology**

Both key concepts, employee advocacy and employee engagement, are relatively new in marketing and management literature with limited existing theoretical background and no conceptual frameworks or hypotheses of note, which means that this study can partly be categorized as an exploratory one that wishes to seek new insights and to gain understanding of the concepts (Saunders et al. 2009, 139). However, in addition to gaining insights of both concepts separately, the study aims build understanding on the interrelationship between them. Thus this study also has evident explanatory elements too, even though an actual causal relationship cannot be proven with the chosen research method and with the chosen delimitations (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 164; Saunders et al. 2009, 140).

From a methodological standpoint, the author chose qualitative methods firstly because she had access to people with knowledge and experience on employee advocacy and also because Men (2014, 275) stated in her delimitations that qualitative research methods should be used next to generate in-depth and contextual understanding on the possible mediators between the concepts in her advocacy model (i.e. employee-organisation relationships and employee advocacy).

Because the thesis is carried out as a qualitative study, it will not result in confirming a hypothesis or a theory, but rather it will explore the connection between employee advocacy and employee engagement extensively and in detail (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 164). The chosen qualitative research method is the case study method, because this study aims to explain how or why the real life

social phenomenon of employee advocacy behaviour works. Case studies are also interested in a particular case in relation to its context and so is this one. The contexts of this study are the employee advocacy activities in social media as well as the employee engagement perceptions and behaviours, because these two factors distinguish the people included in this study from the people that are excluded. (Yin 2009, 4,32)

This case study uses a single collective unit of analysis; the social phenomenon of the interrelationship between employee advocacy and employee engagement, but uses individual people as the data collection source (Yin 2009, 88). In addition, these individuals do represent different organisations rather than are employed by the same organisation. The reason behind this is that as is common for an exploratory study, the information will be gathered from so called expert interviews (Saunders et al. 2009, 140). In addition, the purposeful selection of interview participants also supports the chosen qualitative style of the study compared to a random sample (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 164). As stated in the delimitations of the study, the chosen participants represent people that are already very familiar with employee advocacy as well as marketing-oriented. In addition they also are active in the work community in a way that can be observed by others fitting the description of employee engagement.

Since the purpose of the empirical part of the study is to gain insights from active employee advocates and enter into their perspective, the use of in-depth interviews is chosen as the preliminary research method. The interviews are more constructed and directed rather than completely free-flowing, since the point of interest is not the perceptions of the respondents for themselves only, but for the picture they present of an external reality, here meaning employee advocacy (Carson et al. 2011). Semi-structured interviews with a predetermined, but an adaptable list of questions is used to build understanding on the relationships between the chosen two concepts (Saunders et al. 2009, 320).

## **1.8. Structure of the Thesis**

The reader is first introduced to relationship marketing and how these theories changed the game both inside and outside the organisation's boundaries. The most important insights of this chapter come from the internal aspect of relationship marketing and the increased perceived importance of employees. Also the social media context is shortly introduced in this chapter since it creates a unique playfield for marketing and thus also for employee advocacy.

The second chapter introduces the reader to employee engagement and covers the most important theories and insights of this. Since this study has chosen an employee focus, the chosen theories and insights about employee engagement focus especially on the attitudinal aspects, such as satisfaction and commitment, instead of purely focusing the aspects of employee engagement that are within a manager's control, e.g. leadership styles. This chapter also offers an introduction to the key employee engagement elements that were discovered from an extensive literature review on organisational psychology. All of these elements are introduced separately, because the existing literature on employee engagement itself is rather limited whilst these elements or psychological constructs have been studied more extensively. This constructed list (i.e. what the different elements are and how they are connected) is the most important theoretical input of this chapter because it offers interesting insights on what an engaged employee actually is and also because a review quite like this has not been done before.

The third chapter is all about employee advocacy and is arguably the most important chapter of the theoretical part. It starts with the theoretical foundations of the concept as well as covers two related concepts: employee voice and word-of-mouth. After that it is explained how employee engagement and employee advocacy are interrelated according to the existing literature, which makes this the most essential theoretical component of this thesis. Finally, the benefits and challenges of employee advocacy are introduced.

After these three theory chapters, the fifth main chapter covers both the execution of the empirical research and then the sixth offers an in-depth analysis of the actual empirical findings. The seventh chapter is the host of discussion, where the preliminary data is combined with the insights of the theory chapters and a definition for employee advocacy is proposed. The very final chapter provides answers to the research questions by summarising the previous discussion and concludes the thesis from theoretical and managerial perspectives. Also the study limitations and some suggestions for future research are introduced here.

## **2. RELATIONSHIP FOCUS IN MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEXT**

The relationship between the employee and the employer as well as the overall work environment (which is largely affected by management) has been proven to be an antecedent to employee engagement as well as to employee advocacy in existing literature (Eldor & Harpaz 2016; Maslach et al. 2001; Men 2014). That is why it is important to understand relationship marketing, more specifically in the internal context, as it is a clear foundation for both main study concepts and offers a starting point for theory building.

In addition, in order to understand employee advocacy even better, one must also understand the context of social media and the new opportunities and challenges it has brought to today's marketers. While employee advocacy is not necessarily tied to social media only, it is these online social networks that have given employees (in addition to customers) more reach for their voice and thus also more power than ever making it employee advocacy the current marketing buzzword that it is.

### **2.1. Relationship Marketing**

The actual term of relationship marketing was first introduced by Berry in a conference paper in 1983 and these new emerging marketing strategies were parallel with the changing market demands of the 1980s and 1990s. A clear relationship perspective in marketing was also happening in the Nordic School of thought and the highly management-oriented marketing mix approach with its traditional 4P's model started to lose its dominant position. (Grönroos 1996, 9; Grönroos 2004, 99) In relationship marketing value is considered an important constituent and the ability of a company to provide superior value to its customers became one of the most successful competitive strategies in the 1990s (Ravald & Grönroos 1996, 19).

Unlike more traditional marketing strategies, relationship marketing is not only focused on acquiring new customers, but also on keeping them. It brings together customer service, quality and marketing and the linkages of all three aspects must be exploited in order to achieve the desired goals: total customer satisfaction and long-term relationships. (Christopher et al. 1991, 4) And in these long-term company-customer relationships, the true benefit or value comes from safety, credibility, security and continuity that together increase the customer's trust and thereby support and encourage customer loyalty. (Ravald & Grönroos 1996, 24)

### **2.1.1. Relationship marketing stakeholders**

In the beginning of relationship marketing literature, the customer was the clear main focal point, but that is not the only relationship that matters to the organisation. As their response for the need for a broader view of marketing relationships, Christopher et al. (1991, 21) constructed a six markets model, which included customer markets, supplier markets, referral markets, employee markets, influencer markets and internal markets. Morgan and Hunt (1994, 21) went further than that and stated that all of the exchange participants should be considered as partners. The authors recognized all together ten different discrete forms of relationship marketing partnerships that were segmented into four different categories: internal, lateral, supplier and buyer partnerships (see Figure 2).

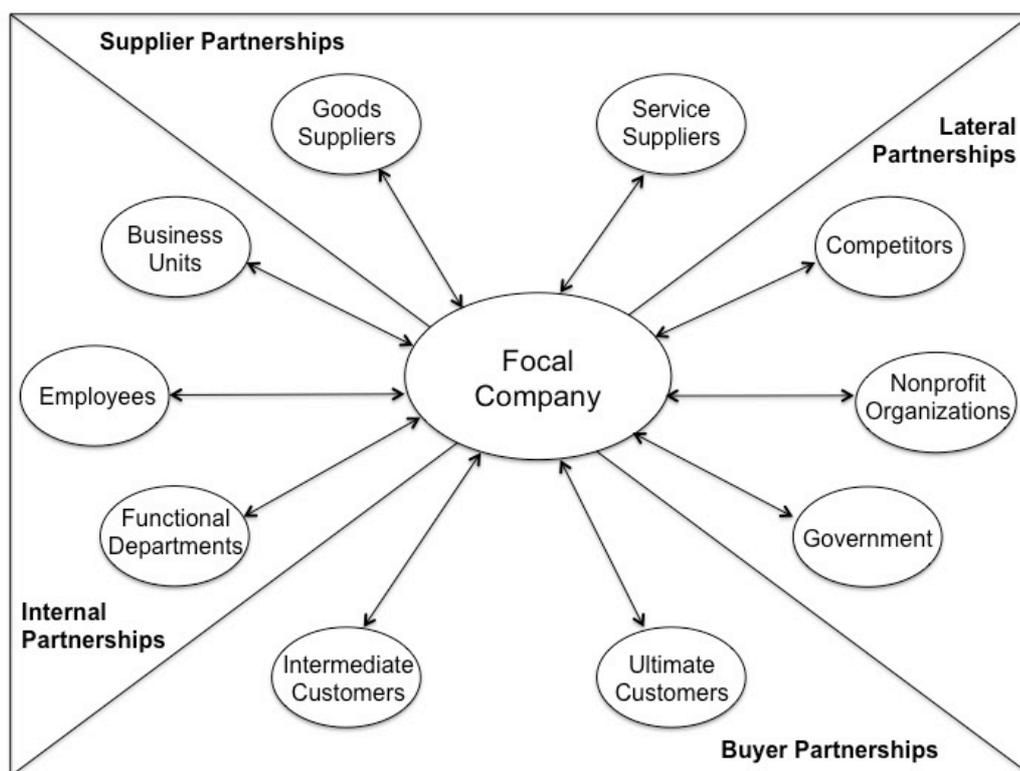


Figure 2. The relational exchanges of relationship marketing (modified from Morgan & Hunt 1994, 21)

Within the relationship marketing context, these different organisational relationships can be categorised on the basis of formal vs. informal relationships. The formal exchange relationship contract is the most classic form of an organisational relationship and most relationship strategies are focused on this. However, informal relationships matter too. While the personal social networks between stakeholders are not exactly a part of the marketing plan, they are crucial in understanding organisational relationships. (Hougaard & Bjerre 2003, 41-42) And with the rise of social media and the vast reach of personal social networks, these informal relationships could arguably be considered more important than ever even though an important change in perception happened already in the 1980s -1990s.

This change was symbolised by the conception of the part-time marketer: while organisations have centralised marketing and sales, they are not the only marketers and salespeople of the firm. In fact, many employees involved in the

making of the final offering actually have an impact on the total quality perception and satisfaction of customers. (Grönroos 1996, 10)

The focus in this study is the internal side of relationship marketing and employees more specifically. While Christopher et al. (1991, 8) recognized employees as key players in internal marketing, the main focus and end goal in their article was always the external benefit or the customer. Morgan & Hunt (1994, 21) also included employees as one of the ten key organisational partnerships, but at the same time they viewed the organisation as the intermediary between the internal and external partnerships, as is typical for a RM study. This study views the employees' role more important as they have possibilities to connect with the external stakeholders directly and personally especially with the aid of social media channels and connections.

### **2.1.2. Internal marketing & the importance of the employee**

Internal marketing is a term introduced by Berry that brings internal relationships and employees to the centre stage. It views employees as internal customers, jobs as internal products and then endeavours to offer internal products that satisfy the needs and want of these customers (Berry 1981, 34). Internal marketing can also be defined as follows:

*"Internal marketing works by establishing, developing and maintaining successful reciprocal exchange relationships within the organisation through: understanding and intimacy, trust, and commitment."* (Ahmed & Rafiq 2003, 1181)

Like external relationships, also internal exchange relationships can be formalised or informal. Formal hierarchical structures in the organisation are either supported by the informal groupings or the structures are torn apart by hampered information processes. (Hougaard & Bjerre 2003, 45)

These internal exchange relationships tend to be the source of the company's values, norms and corporate culture, which in turn affect the image that a company presents to its external parties. (Hougaard & Bjerre 2003, 45) And traditionally internal marketing has been very much concerned with making sure that all employees work together in a manner that is in line with the company's mission, strategy and goals. The main idea behind this is that all members of the staff will provide the external stakeholders with the best possible representation of the organisation and will successfully handle all interactions with them. (Christopher et al. 1991, 29) Thus the basic rationale for internal marketing is straightforward: by satisfying the needs and wants of their employees, organisations (especially in the service industries) can upgrade their ability to satisfy their external customers. (Berry 1981, 34)

### **2.1.3. Internal marketing benefits**

Even though internal marketing is very much focused on the management side of the organisational relationship, it does offer early insights to the increasing perceived value of employees. However, a truly successful relationship development requires mutual cooperation from both the employer and the employee sides with the key mediating factors here being trust and commitment between the organisation and the employee (Morgan and Hunt 1994, 31; Ballantyne 2003, 1255). In addition to these two, also interdependence between the parties is important (Hougaard and Bjerre 2003, 41).

Generally, in relationship marketing literature it is assumed that both parties of the relationship will seek additional value from the relationship over time and when it comes to the continuity and development of the internal organisational relationship, it will only happen to the mutual benefit of both the employer and the employee (Schweizer & Lyons 2008, 562). These dual benefits also need to be transparent to all parties and promises made must be kept (Ballantyne 2003, 1255).

Employee perspective to internal marketing has been quite limited in the academic literature, but Jou et al. (2008, 74-75) have constructed a six-item scale that can be used to measure internal marketing success from this perspective:

1. Empathy and consideration from direct supervisors (paying attention to employees' personal needs)
2. Benchmarks from competitors that affect internal expectations
3. Job quality and rewards that include both the financial and emotional benefits from the job
4. The opportunity to communicate dissatisfaction or suggestions upward to managers
5. Value and information sharing from management to employees
6. Promotional activities or internal advertising campaign that help align employees with organisation's purpose and goals

In turn, from the employer's perspective good organisation-employee relationships contribute to both organisational performance and to the achievement of organisational goals (Men 2014, 261). For example, when the relationship is good and employees are engaged, they are two times as productive as non-engaged employees and they are also responsible for 80 % of customer satisfaction (McLeod & Clarke 2009). In addition, employees are the vital link in building stakeholder relationships and they act as important brand ambassadors for the organisation (Raj & Jyothi 2011, 1).

Even though employees have been receiving much less consideration in literature than external stakeholders, organisational identity is actually created at the intersection between external and internal parties. And when it comes to strategically influencing the way employees talk about the organisation internally or externally, it is lasting relationships and internal communication that matter. (Omilion-Hodges & Baker 2014, 435) In fact, understanding the dynamics between the internal and external relationships is one the key areas of interest in relationship marketing (Hougaard & Bjerre 2003, 45). The same

can be said for this study, as the connection between employee engagement and employee advocacy is the focus here. And in addition to possible internal effects, the interrelationship is ultimately likely to have an affect on external organisational relationships too via the organisational image that employees spread through their social media networks.

## **2.2. Social Media Marketing**

Social media has fundamentally changed both people's private lives as well as their professional lives. It is one of the most defining developments of our time and has become communications professionals' most important challenge. (Dreher 2014, 344) Social media is not just another marketing communications tool, but a new way of running a business that requires a new kind of company culture (Smith & Zook 2011, 9). In fact, social media marketing, much like relationship marketing, marks a paradigm shift in marketing with far reaching implications to marketing managers, organisations and the marketing discipline itself (Henning & Thureau 2013, 240).

Social media is used by organisations because it has many advantages for time, audience, relations and cost issues. The economic crisis in 2009-2010 enabled social media to gain popularity due to its cost-efficiency as budgets for advertising and marketing were slashed. (Kirtis & Karahan 2011, 26; Barker et al. 2013, 1) Not only does social media enable organisations to perform integrated marketing activities with much lesser costs than before (Kim & Ko 2012, 1481), it also is one of the best ways that businesses can drive sales, build relationship and satisfy customers (Barker et al. 2013, 5).

### **2.2.1. Social media marketing benefits**

Since social media marketing is such a new concept, there is not much academic literature around it. Currently research and insights come mostly from

practice journals or commercial publications. However, even in the academic world, the positive affects of social media have been noted. Chung and Austria (2010, 581) state in their study that social media provides marketers with an interactive communication environment that in turn offers opportunities for enhancing existing relationships with consumers. And based on study of luxury fashion brands on Facebook and Twitter, social media marketing activities are found to be influential to not only customer relationships but to two other customer equity drivers as well: value equity and brand equity. The social media marketing activities effectively enhance the value equity by providing novel value to customers that traditional media cannot provide. Social media also offers venues for customers to engage in communication both with other customers and with the brand itself, which has positive affects on the relationship and on the brand equity. (Kim & Ko 2012, 1484-1485)

Besides being able to connect with others, one of the key social media benefits is its sharing culture, which in other words means sharing information and being helpful. In fact, getting information about products and brands is one of the key driving forces behind the membership of social networks. More than 50 % of social media users in Europe follow brands on social media and in total they follow 12,2 brands on average. (Smith & Zook 2011, 9; Van Belleghem et al. 2011) These two motivators also have academic support, since according to Chung & Austria's study (2010) active interaction and useful information on social media are the drivers that create a positive perception toward social media marketing messages in people's minds. Social media also provides a very fast and easy way to be current with new products, promotions or conversation topics. Delivering real time information is one the clear advantages of using social media over traditional media. (Chung & Austria 2010, 585)

Because so many people already follow brands on social media networks and advertising budgets can be used to increase that figure further, the available audience for social media marketing is large. Out of the two billion Internet users in the world, more than one billion people use social networks and more than 600 million people use them at least once per day. And in addition to

reaching a vast audience on a regular basis, social media networks seem to have a solid existence since 93 % of current social network users have no intention of stopping their membership. (Van Belleghem et al. 2011)

The biggest social network globally is Facebook and its awareness level is at 96 %. If Facebook alone were a country, it would be the third largest after China and India. (Van Belleghem et al. 2011) However, people use more than just Facebook. Based on a study on 5 400 Finns ranging from 15 to 74 year-olds, the weekly social media network usage looks like this (Vizeum 2016):

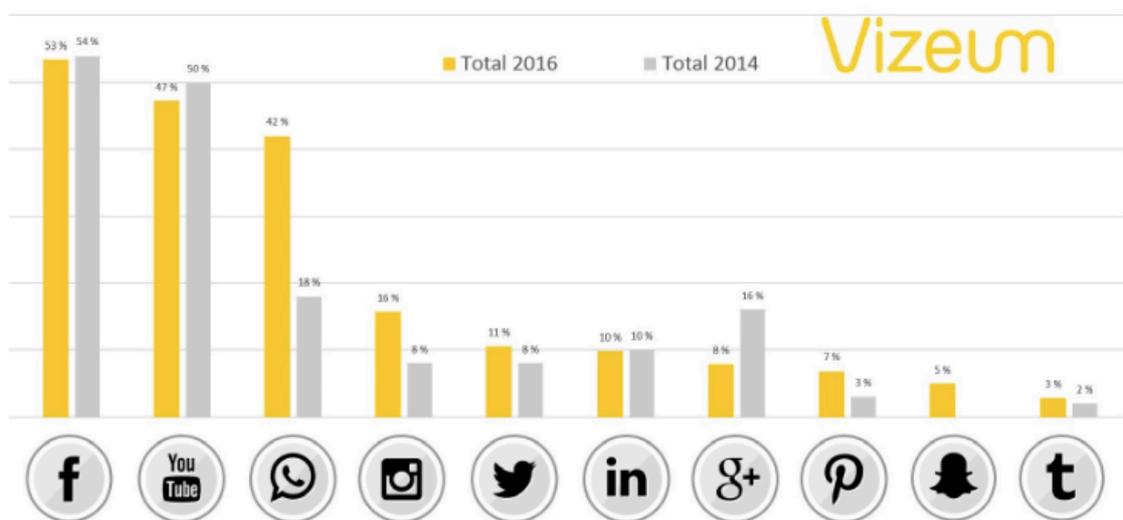


Figure 3. Which social media channels do you use weekly? (Source: Vizeum CCS study 2016)

Based on this data, the top 5 most popular social media networks on a weekly basis in Finland are: Facebook (53 %), YouTube (47 %), Instagram (16 %) Twitter (11 %) and LinkedIn (10%). WhatsApp is at 42 %, but the author does not view it as a social media network since it requires phone numbers and functions more like a developed version of the text message.

The reach and impact of social media marketing can be increased even further with the use of employees' as marketers or brand ambassadors. In the past it was public relations practitioners who were the only ones that formally

communicated with external parties while the other employees' sentiments reached a relatively small number of inter-personal contacts. But nowadays information can flow effortlessly between employees and a potentially vast external audience through different personal social media networks. (Omillion-Hodges & Baker 2014, 436) This is both a big possibility and a big challenge for organisations, because while it's possible to gain a bigger audience for brand messages this way, some control is lost in the process.

### **2.2.2. Social media marketing challenges**

Social media has quickly become a priority for many businesses (Baird & Parasnis 2011, 27). But the dramatic growth has been so fast that social media has impacted the processes and models in ways that managers and marketing scholars alike have only begun to understand. That is probably why academic research has not yet offered enough insights on success requirements in social media. (Henning-Thurau et al. 2013, 237)

Many organisations are having problems with the environment of social media because it is in deep contrast with the traditional way many organisations pursue marketing. Traditionally, organisations have had full control in their advertising strategies that build and sustain brand reputation. (Leeflang et al. 2013, 6) But control has been replaced with the one of the key challenges for current marketers: managing brand health, brand reputation and mitigating negative brand exposure while other stakeholders can take control in the social media environment and manipulate the content. (Baird & Parasnis 2011, 29; Henning-Thurau et al. 2013, 237).

The linear and one-direction approach to marketing has also been replaced with interactivity and uncontrollability. Also, customers in social media have much more power than before. They participate actively, are strongly networked and because of this, consumer behaviour has changed. (Felix et al. 2016, 6; Henning-Thurau et al. 2013, 237-238) For the same reasons employees' power has also increased creating one of the current key challenges for today's

organisations. Firstly, employees' social media use cannot be totally controlled and secondly, many organisations still lack in training and corporate guidelines for social media. This is in fact one of the biggest gaps in today's organisational social media programs. (Baird & Parasnis 2011,30)

All this means that organisations have to contemplate what is more important to them: the control of important brand constructs or peoples' desire to connect and engage. If organisations choose to take a defending stance towards social media and view it only as another communication channel to push information one-way, they will miss the opportunities for building real relationships with customers, employees and other stakeholders. (Felix et al. 2016, 6) If an organisation chooses to deploy social media marketing fully, it cannot be managed and executed by a single person or even by a single department. Changes in the company culture as well as company-wide support, systems, incentives and a new kind of mid-set are required. (Felix et al. 2016, 6; Smith & Zook 2011, 9).

Overall, the discourse on social media marketing is still at its infancy. And because social media as an environment is highly dynamic and rapidly evolving (Hoffman & Fodor 2010, 48), the already gained insights might become out-dated quite quickly. This means that both marketing managers and academic scholars are playing a constant game of catch-up.

### **2.2.3. Content marketing**

In order to be able to understand employee advocacy, it is essential to understand not just social media marketing, but also content marketing. And just like social media marketing, content marketing is also more than just another toy in a box of marketing communications tools. It is a social strategy and has in fact quickly become one of the most powerful marketing strategies that exist today for both B2B and B2C businesses alike. (Burgess & Burgess 2014, 213; Harad 2013, 18)

Organisations are engaging in content marketing when they are regularly sharing valuable information with their target audience that align and reinforce their brand. (Harad 2013, 18) The actual content can come in many forms: pictures, blog posts, videos, tweets etc. and different social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram can be used to spread the content to a potentially vast online audience. And following the logic of the part-time marketer by Grönroos (1996), content marketing is everyone's job and not exclusive to the marketing department. Employees can act as brand advocates and they in turn can activate the customers to take part. (Burgess & Burgess 2014, 213) Because posting branded content on social media allows the audience not only to see organisations messages, but to share them further in to their own networks, it widens the organisation's net even more. (Smith & Zook 2011, 10) This makes content marketing very much different from advertising that is a one-way monologue with the main focus on sales. In stead, the purpose of content marketing is to foster conversations, build communities and trust as well as attract prospects. (Burgess & Burgess 2014, 217; Harad 2013, 18)

### **3. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

Employee engagement has its roots in the previously discussed organisational relationships, but it goes much further into the employee side. It is a relatively novel concept in marketing and management literature that in short “represents the energy, effort and initiative employees bring to their jobs” (Nohria et al. 2008, 2). That is why it is not surprising that engaged employees are two times as productive as non-engaged employees and also responsible for 80 % of customer satisfaction (McLeod & Clarke 2009).

Unfortunately, only under a fifth of employees can be considered as highly engaged to their work and freely giving extra efforts on an on-going basis. An equal number of employees can be classified as disengaged, meaning they have most probably “checked out” from their work. The remaining part, roughly two thirds, fall somewhere in between and are moderately engaged to their work at best. (Towers Perrin, 2003, 2) And even though these results are bound to the US only, they do offer insights into the rarity of this important concept.

#### **3.1. Exploring Employee Engagement**

Organisational psychology has traditionally been focusing on negative states rather than positive ones, but more attention is being paid to study human strengths and optimal functioning. This so-called positive psychology is seen as an alternative to pathology and deficit focus, and employee engagement is seen as the positive antithesis to employee burnout. (Maslach et al 2001, 416) However, there is still surprisingly little academic literature on employee engagement, if you compare it to the overall popularity of the concept. In fact, most of what has been written about employee engagement can be found in practise journals rather than in academic empirical research. (Saks 2005, 601)

Employee engagement first started to gain recognition in academic literature in the 1990s with one of its key theories being published at the beginning of the decade. This was the study by Kahn (1990), where he focused on the psychological conditions at work in relation to employee engagement. While disengaged people withdraw and defend themselves during their work-related tasks and become automatic or robotic in their behaviour, engaged people are those who harness themselves to their work roles and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally. (Kahn 1990, 700-701) Employee engagement can be defined as an active, fulfilling and motivational state of mind that is the positive, direct opposite to burnout. While burnout is characterized by exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy, engagement is about energy, involvement and efficacy. (Eldor & Harpaz 2016, 214; Maslach et al. 2001, 403, 416, 417; Schaufeli et al. 2002, 74).

Depending on the researcher, the concept of employee engagement can be either considered as an attitude, as behaviour or as an outcome. It can also even be considered as a combination of all three. The psychological or attitudinal facet is about how employees feel: e.g. focused, proud and loyal. The behavioural facet is about what employees actually do: they are persistent, adaptable, proactive and make extra efforts to finish a piece of work. Finally, employee engagement may lead to positive outcomes that include lower accident rates, higher productivity, fewer conflicts, more innovation, fewer resignations and reduced sickness rates. (Macey & Schneider 2008, 6-7; McLeod and Clarke 2009, 9) Basically employee engagement can be considered as a value chain with different causal effects and it can visually presented like this:

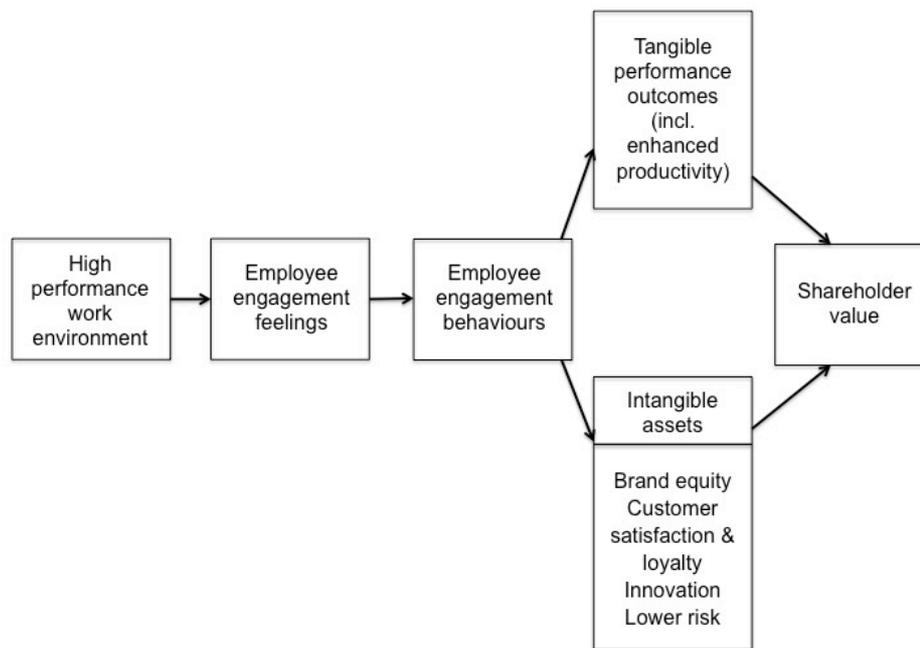


Figure 4. Employee engagement value chain (Macey et al. 2009, 8)

This study is especially interested in the feelings and attitudes part of the value chain. And from an operational standpoint, these have for the most part been composed of a combination of one or more of these four categories: job satisfaction, organisational commitment, psychological empowerment and job involvement. (Macey et al 2009, 9)

However, these attitudes and feelings are not born out of nothing. As the value chain presents, high performance work environment affects employee engagement feelings or attitudes that then in turn affect employee engagement behaviours that create different tangible or intangible outcomes ultimately affecting shareholder value.

### 3.2. Building Employee Engagement

While employee burnout is related to job demands like work overload or emotional demands, engagement is related to job resources such as job control, availability of feedback and learning opportunities. (Maslach et al. 2001, 417) This statement is supported by Eldor & Harpaz's study (2016) where it was

discovered that employee engagement is created when the organisation climate promotes a sense of challenge, meaningfulness and purpose to employees. This type of climate encourages employees to invest their full physical, emotional, and cognitive resources in different extra-role performance behaviours. (Eldor & Harpaz 2016, 228) Simply put, positive employee engagement attitudes and behaviours are created when the work environment facilitates, permits and allows employees to be engaged. (Macey et al. 2009, 9; Macey & Schneider 2008, 4)

This is where the management's role becomes crucial. In relationship marketing literature, when companies add value to their core product by bettering the product quality or adding supporting services, they try to improve customer satisfaction, so that the bonds are strengthened and customer loyalty is thereby achieved (Ravald & Grönroos 1996, 19). The same logic can be applied to employer-employee relationships: adding value to the employer-employee relationship is fuelled by the management's desire to create the same positive perceptions in employees as with loyal customers.

A successful employee–organisation relationship can be operationally defined by the degree to which there is mutual trust, agreement on the power dynamics, satisfaction with each other as well as mutual commitment. Bettering this relationship continuously is wise, because how employees feel about the organisation is largely affected by how they are treated by their direct managers. (Men 2014, 261, 271) Here such things like strong leadership, accountability, autonomy, opportunities for development and a sense of shared destiny matter. It is not about making people happy or paying them more money, even though pay and benefits are important in attracting and retaining workforce. Building employee engagement is a process that never ends. (Towers Perrin 2003, 4)

While this study does not focus on the management aspect of the employer-employee relationship, it is important to recognize that the relationship does play a key role in creating engagement feelings and attitudes. Thus the some of

theoretical foundations of employee engagement can be considered to be in relationship marketing literature. However, the concept does have major additional elements from the fields of organisational psychology that will be covered in the next chapter.

### **3.3. The Elements of Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is often compared or correlated with the following constructs:

1. Organisational commitment
2. Organisational citizenship behaviour
3. Job involvement and flow
4. Attitude and behaviour
5. Job satisfaction

Despite this, there is sufficient evidence to present that engagement is related to but distinct from these constructs. (Gupta & Sharma 2016, 50) According to McLeod and Clarke (2009, 9), employee engagement is actually more than organisational commitment, job involvement or job satisfaction. Engaged employees experience a blend of all three as well as feelings of empowerment, which makes employee engagement greater than the sum of its parts. Also Robertson-Smith and Markwick (2009, 50) conclude in their extensive literature review on employee engagement that the concept overlaps with satisfaction at work, job involvement and commitment, but is not a synonym for any one of them. Finally Gupta & Sharma (2016, 53) state that there is no theoretical background behind the phenomenon of employee engagement, but is more a fusion of different psychological constructs.

Based on these, it can be concluded that employee engagement is a complex concept with many elements affecting each other and one particular element does not necessarily directly alone lead to employee engagement. While the

literature review also uncovered one opposite view that considers job satisfaction and job involvement as totally separate concepts with little multicollinearity with employee engagement (Eldor & Harpaz 2016), this particular study has chosen to follow the view of Macey & Schneider (2008), Sharma & Gupta (2016), Robertson-Smith & Markwick (2009) and McLeod & Clarke (2009) in that it is the joint effects of different organisational psychology constructs that create the employee engagement entity from the attitudinal perspective.

Because engagement is expressed in the form of feelings, emotions and self-evaluations disposed in particular behaviour, there is no one direct measurement of them. (Sharma and Gupta 2016, 53) In order to help understand these various components, Macey & Schneider (2008) have constructed a framework of employee engagement that draws from Kahn's original engagement conceptual framework.

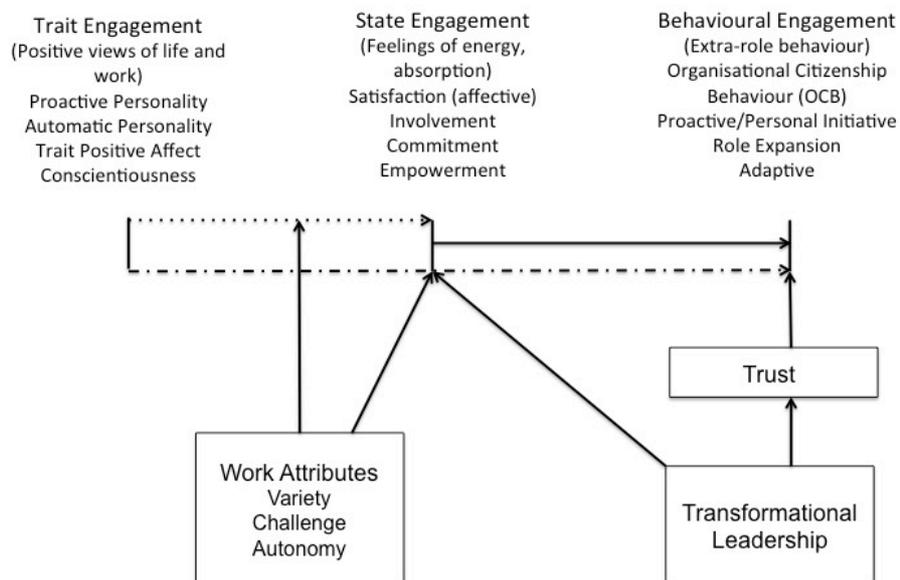


Figure 5. Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement. (Macey & Schneider 2008, 6)

This framework clearly demonstrates the employee's orientation to experience the world from a certain positive, vantage point that reflects his or her psychological state engagement, which in turn is an antecedent of behavioural engagement. The framework also includes the notion that different conditions in the workplace, such as work attributes and leadership, have direct and indirect effects of state and behavioural engagement. Also trust is important especially when it comes to displaying engagement behaviour. (Macey & Schneider 2008, 6)

Based on the literature review's reoccurring elements as well following the logic of Macey & Schneider's framework (2008), the key employee engagement elements in this study are constructed of trust, commitment, job involvement, satisfaction and empowerment.

### **3.3.1. Trust**

Trust is a part of a relationship between two people and involves the voluntary acceptance of risk based on the actions of the other party. (Thomas et al. 2009, 290) It is a key term in both marketing and management literature, and especially in relationship marketing trust can even be called a cornerstone, because relationships characterized by trust are so highly valued that parties will desire to commit themselves to these relationships (Morgan and Hunt 2004, 24). Trust also predicts organisational openness, which in turn has a direct effect on employees' involvement in organisational goals (Thomas et al. 2009)

In order to be engaged, employees need to perceive that they are a part of something significant with co-workers whom they trust (Harter et al. 2002, 269). Furthermore, there must also be mutual trust between the employee and the employer or the relationship will not be effective (Schweizer and Lyons 2008, 561). In fact, trust in management is the most significant predictor of employee commitment and more likely leads to organisational citizenship behaviour (Baptiste 2008, 301). Kahn (1990) originally defined trust in self-motivated engagement behaviour as the feeling of psychological safety and while trust

does increase the likelihood that engagement behaviour is displayed, engagement in turn becomes key in those organisational situations that are ambiguous, turbulent and require trust from both sides. (Macey et al. 2009, 6-7, Macey & Scheider 2008, 22) Thus it can be concluded that the concepts of engagement and trust are very much intertwined.

Trust itself is comprised of three components: effective two-way communication, perceived integrity and loyalty (Schweizer and Lyons 2008, 561). Firstly, open, honest and timely communication fosters trust among other positive aspects and it equally applies to both employers and employees. (Morgan and Hunt 1994) This means that organisations should communicate openly to their employees whilst also provide lines of communication from the bottom up. Secondly, trust is dependent on the presumption that both parties will not behave in an opportunistic or unethical manner that would put the employer-employee relationship at risk. Finally, trust is connected to the expectation that the employer-employee relationship is open-ended and will continue as long as it's mutually beneficial. A fear for losing one's job is not an effective motivator on a sustained basis. (Schweizer & Lyons 2008, 581-582)

### **3.3.2. Commitment**

Organisational commitment is amongst the oldest and most studied variables in organisational behaviour theory. It has also been well recognized that it is a multidimensional construct whose antecedents, correlates and consequences vary across the dimensions. Organisational commitment not only leads to important outcomes such as attendance, decreased lateness, decreased employee turnover, higher motivation and increased organisational citizenship behaviour, but it also results from things that can be organisationally influenced: recruiting and training practices, job equity and organisational support. (Meyer et al 2002 21; Morgan & Shelby 1994, 23; Mathieu & Zajac 1990, 184) In addition these, commitment can also be predicted by the employees' perception on organisational values and here it is especially important that the personal

values are perceived to match with the organisational ones (Chatman 1981; Finegan 2000). Finally, organisational commitment has been found to correlate strongly with other two elements of employee engagement: job satisfaction and job involvement (Mayer et al. 2002, 32).

Commitment has three distinct components: affective, continuance and normative. Affective commitment focuses on the employee's emotional attachment, identification and involvement, while continuance commitment focuses on the perceived costs associated with leaving the organisation and normative commitment includes the perceived obligation to remain in the organisation. (Meyer et al 2002, 21) It is especially the affective or emotional commitment that is a key facet in employee engagement (Macey and Schneider (2008, 8), because it is the employee's willingness and desire to stay with an organisation that is crucial here and also critical to the continuity of the organisation and its culture (Schweitzer & Lyons 2008, 562).

Organisational commitment also has positive effects on organisational citizenship behaviour (Meyer et al. 2002, 37). According to Nohria et al. (2008, 2), commitment can in fact be defined as the extent to which employees engage in corporate citizenship (which can be considered a synonym for organisational citizenship behaviour). This further verifies the research that has been conducted about the effects of employee engagement. That is; engaged employees are truly committed to the company's success and their passion for what they are doing is contagious. These employees are not just involved, they are committed to the company and it's vision and values. (Corace 2007, 171)

Organisational commitment becomes especially important in turbulent or crisis situations. If employees have had good-quality long-term relationships with their employer organisation, they are more likely to regard organisational problems as their own personal problems. However, if employees have experienced poor-quality relationships, they are less empathic to the organisation's situation and more likely to disassociate themselves. (Kim & Rhee 2011, 251) And this has

some major implications to employee advocacy, which will be explained further later with other benefits of employee advocacy.

### **3.3.3. Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction and its influence on employee's attitudes happen in connection with the social exchanges between employees and employers (Baptiste 2007, 292) thus being very connected to the relationship between them. Satisfaction reflects the extent to which employees feel that the organisation meets or exceeds their relational expectations at work and satisfies its implicit and explicit contracts with them (Nohria et al. 2008, 2; Schweizer & Lyons 2008, 563). If employees' basic needs are met fairly constantly, it not only has an effect on satisfaction, but also increases the feelings of proudness towards the employer organisation (Harter et al 2002, 269).

Rather than being based on a singular event or a single thing, it is the employee's perceptions of their total job situations that ultimately determine job satisfaction. These situations include such things like the physical work environment, the terms and conditions of employment and the degree to which employees are given autonomy, responsibility, authority and empowerment. (Kersley et al. 2006) Also trust in management and management support play a key role in satisfaction. And because job satisfaction likely develops over time spent in the organisation alongside the amount of support received and trust built, also employee's age has a significant effect on job satisfaction (Baptiste 2008, 302). In addition to these, satisfaction also correlates strongly with emotional commitment to the employer organisation. (Mayer et al. 2002, 32)

However, employee satisfaction does not equal employee engagement and that is why managers should not rely on employee satisfaction alone to help retain the best possible people (Fernandez 2007, 524). And while satisfaction is not in the same conceptual space as engagement, it does become a facet of engagement when it is assessed as feelings of energy, enthusiasm, and similarly positive affective states (Macey & Schneider 2008, 8).

### **3.3.4 Job involvement**

Job involvement and personal connection to work are important to the psychological state of engagement (Fernandez 2007, 52; Macey & Scheinder 2008, 10) and the first conceptualization of the concept involving active participation was proposed by Allpost in 1943. There job involvement was defined in terms of the degree to which an employee is participating in his/her job and meeting such needs with prestige and autonomy. (Blau 1985, 19-20) Later in the 1970's and 1980's, involvement became defined as a cognitive belief state reflecting the degree of psychological identification with one's job (Brooke et al. 1988, 139).

Job involvement has close ties and correlations with both job satisfaction as well as organisational and occupational commitment. And just like job satisfaction, also job involvement is determined by the employee's perceptions of their total job situations. (Mayer et al. 2002; Kersely et al. 2006) However, there are also some distinctions. While job satisfaction is a positive emotional state "I like my job", job involvement is a cognitive belief state "I identify with my job". And the difference between organisational commitment and job involvement is that the first focuses on the organisation as whole while involvement is connected to a specific job. (Brooke et al. 1988, 139)

There are four different involvement factors that have been identified: decision influence, skill utilization, performance self-esteem and psychological identification. Decision influence refers to the perceived amount of influence that the employee has to the decisions of his/her employer about things that matter. Skill utilization refers to the employee feeling that he/she gets to the things he/she is best at. Performance self-esteem is the degree to which the employee connects job performance with positive or negative feelings or feelings about him/herself. And finally, psychological identification is the extent to which the employee feels that the job represents his or her identity and self-image. (Blau 1985, 29, 32)

### **3.3.5. Empowerment**

Feelings of empowerment, which include feelings of self-efficacy and control and impact from one's action, comprise another facet of state engagement (Macey & Schneider 2008, 10) and is a result of work environments, where relationships are characterized by helping, participation, trust and involvement (Corsun & Enx 1999, 2). Leadership and feeling valued by the organisation also impact the employee's engagement levels and when that becomes higher, employees stretch for that extra effort both mentally and physically to produce extraordinary outcomes. (Corace 2007, 172)

What empowerment fundamentally is a motivational process of an individual's experience of feeling enabled and there are three critical dimensions to this: personal influence, self-efficacy and meaningfulness. Personal influence is the degree to which individuals can influence or choose their own behaviour, and self-efficacy is feeling able to perform the work competently. (Corsun & Enx 1999, 207-208) Finally, people experience meaningfulness when they feel worthwhile, useful and valuable – as they have made a difference and that they have not been taken for granted. (Kahn 1990, 704) Engagement occurs when employees know what is expected of them, have what they need to work, have opportunities to feel an impact and fulfilment in their work and perceive that they are a part of something significant. (Harter et al. 2002)

### **3.4. Employee Engagement Behaviour and Outcomes**

In addition to feeling and perceiving, engaged employees also act and these are very much connected. Commitment (one of the key element of employee engagement) has strong correlations to attendance and job performance (Mayer et al. 2002). And in the organisational commitment literature it has been shown that affective commitment also has a positive effect on organisational

citizenship behaviour (Allen and Meyer 1990; Fullerton 1990; Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Mayer et al. 2002).

Furthermore, according to Eldor and Harpaz (2016, 288), it is employee engagement itself that fully mediates the relationship between a perceived learning climate and behaviours such as proactivity, knowledge sharing, creativity and adaptivity. Macey et al. (2009) go in to more detail when describing this behaviour. According to them, engaged employees think and work proactively; they both anticipate and take actions that are aligned with organisational goals. These employees are not tied to their job description only, but instead are more focused on personal goals that are also consistent with the success of the whole organization. They will also adapt when circumstances require them to do so as well as respond to the uncertainty of change, embrace change and sometimes proactively suggest change. (Macey et al. 2009, 6-7)

All this extra role or organisational citizenship behaviour of course has consequences. From the employee's perspective, engagement is beneficial in terms of personal flourishing and growth (Eldor & Harpaz 2016, 214), which is most probably due to the fact that engaged employees actively find ways to expand their own skills not only for organisational but also for their personal benefit. (Macey et al. 2009, 6) And from the organisation's perspective engagement is "related to meaningful business outcomes at a magnitude that is important to many organisations" (Harter et al. 2002, 276). In fact, there are several studies that have found positive relationships between employee engagement and organisational outcomes. Harter et al. (2002) found positive influences to customer satisfaction, productivity, turnover and safety; Schaufeli et al. (2002) found positive correlations between engagement and profit as well as engagement and productivity and Macey et al. (2009) showed that companies with an engaged workforce has superior return of assets, profitability and more than double shareholder value if the companies were in the top 25 per cent of company engagement compared to the bottom 25 per cent.

Employee advocacy is also listed as one of the key organisational outcomes of employee engagement (Gupta & Sharma 2016, 57) as well as one of the key outcomes of effective employer-employee relationships (Schweitzer and Lyons 2008, 563) that in turn can be considered as an antecedent of employee engagement. But in this study employee advocacy is viewed as engagement behaviour rather as an outcome. This follows Fullerton's (2003) view, where employee advocacy is listed as one example of organisational citizenship behaviour. Employee advocacy is studied further in the next chapter.

## **4. EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY**

The growth of the Internet and social media have enabled employees that traditionally have had limited choices in voicing their work-related experiences to having hundreds or even thousands of people to communicate with outside the organisational boundaries. (Miles & Mangold 2014, 410) Based on a global online survey of 2 300 employees, 50 % of employees post messages, pictures or videos about their employer in social media either often or from time to time and 33 % do this even without any encouragement from their employer. And for many of these socially sharing employees, the divide between their work and personal lives barely exists. (Weber Shandwick & KRC Research 2014)

This has made the management of these possibly far-reaching employee voices key to current organisational success, which can be accomplished by the establishment of a fitting organisational context, communication mechanisms, support, guidelines and engagement. Understanding and harnessing the power of employee advocacy is a clear current competitive advantage. (Miles & Mangold 2014, 410)

### **4.1. The Theoretical Foundations of Employee Advocacy**

Even though it has been this unprecedented increase in employees' power to communicate with the external public via social media that has made the concept of employee advocacy a current buzzword in professional literature (Men 2014, 261-262), the importance of employees as marketers is not a novel idea.

The first empirical study in which employees were proven to have a significant influence on ways external stakeholders perceive an organisation was conducted by Kennedy in 1977 (Gotsi & Wilson 2001, 99). And when Gummesson introduced the concept of part-time marketers in 1991, he argued

that customer perception as well as customer relations are influenced and most opportunities for marketing are generated when customer and company employees interact with each other. Thus the marketing department or full-time marketers influence customers' perception of the organisation only marginally. (Gummesson 1991b)

Granted, the concept of the part-time marketer focuses mostly on face-to-face interactions, but it can describe other contact types too. The qualitative study by Harker (2004) on part-time marketers from the customer perspective also covered such things as the telephone, letters and websites. These interactions too can be described as part-time marketing and have an effect on the customer relationship (Harker 2004, 670). Social media interactions could easily be added to this list and that is why employee advocacy can be considered having its roots even in the early relationship marketing theories.

To ensure that the employees are communicating a consistent to all the stakeholders, organisations are also increasingly recognising that the employees are an important audience in corporate reputation management and should be included in the corporate communication activities. (Gotsi & Wilson 2001, 102) This connects employee advocacy with internal marketing and at the centre of the dynamics between internal and external relationships.

In addition to relationship marketing, employees' influence as the informal spokespeople and brand advocates for organisations has been recognised for a long time also within the public relations literature. Dozier et al. wrote about the subject already in 1995 in their article "Manager's guide to excellence in public relations and communication management". But since employees are considered as only informal public relations actioners at least in this study field, they haven't had been considered as such an important and official source of information as they are in the employee advocacy concept. Perhaps this is the reason why employees' communication behaviour has not been so extensively researched and why at least in the academic arena employee advocacy is yet to be studied as a focal concept. (Men 2014, 262; Kim & Rhee 2011, 243)

However, a related concept called employee voice has been studied across a diverse range of disciplines resulting in an extensive body of literature on the topic (Mowbray et al. 2014, 383) and this offers some interesting insights also to employee advocacy.

## **4.2. Employee Voice**

The theoretical foundation of voice is largely based on the work of Albert Hirschman that started already in the 1970s. According to Hirschman (1970), there are two ways for individuals to react to unsatisfying situations in one's firm, organisation or country: voice or exit. Voice is all about speaking up and trying to change the situation whilst exist is leaving without efforts in correcting the situation.

Later the concept of voice was studied further with special focus shifting towards employees and retention creating the concept of employee voice. An early employee study by Spencer (1986, 498) suggests that "the more an organisation gives employees the opportunity to voice dissatisfaction over aspects of their work in order to change dissatisfying work situations, the greater the likelihood that its employees will remain with the organisation". From the management perspective employee voice is an aspect of high commitment human resource management that signals trust in employees (Baptiste 2008, 289) and is defined as providing employees with means of communicating with management (Freeman and Medoff 1984, 8). This view of employee voice fits with the fourth internal marketing benefit (listed in chapter 2.1.3): the opportunity to communicate dissatisfaction or suggestions upward to managers (Jou et al. 2008, 74).

However, employee voice can be viewed not only as activities by the management, but also as activities by the employees, and this study is more interested in the employees' voice behaviour rather than the different voice methods that the management offers. The second definition of employee voice

follows the views of organisational behaviour literature (Mowbray et al 2014, 383) and can be considered as: “promotive behaviour that emphasises expression of constructive challenge needed to improve rather than merely criticize. Voice is making innovative suggestions for change and recommending modifications to standard procedures even when others disagree” (Van Dyne & LePine 1998, 109).

#### 4.2.1. Employee voice types and purposes

Because employee voice has been studied from different research fields and perspectives, the actual voice activities also have been given different meanings and purposes. Dundon et al. (2004) subdivided these into the following four main categories:

Table 2. The meaning and articulation of employee voice (modified from Dundon et al. 2004, 1154)

<b>Voice as:</b>	<b>Purpose and articulation of voice</b>	<b>Range of outcomes</b>
Articulation of individual dissatisfaction	To rectify a problem with management or prevent deteriorations in relations	Exit — loyalty
Expression of collective organisation	To provide a countervailing source of power to management	Partnership –Derecognition
Contribution to management decision-making	To seek improvements in work organisation, quality and productivity	Identity and commitment – Disillusionment and apathy Improved performance
Demonstration of mutuality and co-operative relations	To achieve long-term viability for organisation and its employees	Significant influence over management decisions – Marginalisation and sweetheart deals

The first meaning fits with Hirschman’s original view of voice, but this study is more interested in the fourth meaning of employee voice where employee voice is a form of mutuality in which the purpose is to deliver long-term viability both for the organisation and for its employees. (Dundon et al. 2004, 1154)

This fourth type of employee voice can be accomplished when employees feel that they are partners in the organisation and proud to be its defenders and

promoters. And when employees feel this way, they can be considered to be engaged. Achieving these engagement feelings in employees becomes more likely when positive organisational contexts and brand images are widely known and understood among all members of the staff. (Miles & Mangold 2014, 408)

Following Dundon et al.'s categories (2004), this study views employee voice as more than just being vocal about negative issues, but as actual contributions to the organisation in a positive way.

#### **4.2.2. Employee voice in social media and online word-of-mouth**

When an organisation has engaged employees who perceive a partnership with the organisation, there are different internal and private as well as external and public voice mechanisms available that can then be used to demonstrate the partnership. (Miles & Mangold 2014, 408) Social media and online blogs obviously belong to the latter category of voice mechanisms.

Employee voice flows quite naturally to social media, because employees discuss their work experiences regularly within and outside their workplace and they frequently use social media for this potentially reaching a vast audience (Omillion-Hodges & Baker 2014, 435). In fact, the individual employee voice has never been so global in its reach as it is in social media today. (Burgess & Burgess 2014, 210)

Employee voice in social media is also closely tied to the concept of online word of mouth, which has been mostly studied in the context of consumers. However, it does offer interesting insights to the employee focus too.

As marketing literature has developed from transactions to relationships, increased importance has been placed on consumer networks, groups and communities (Kotzinets et al. 2010, 72). The concept of online WOM assumes that once consumers are aware and engaged to a brand or organisation, they will communicate their opinions to other consumers via these online channels. (Hoffman & Fodor 2010, 46) This positive WOM also has a unique aspect that

does not exist in traditional marketing. It is called the feedback mechanism and it basically implies that positive WOM will lead to product sales, which in turn create more positive WOM and then again more sales. Thus word-of-mouth has a dual role as a precursor and as an outcome of consumer actions and sales figures. (Duan et al. 2008, 233; Godes & Mayzlin 2004, 547)

Traditionally WOM has been seen as organic as it flows between consumer to consumer without direct prompting or influence from the organisation, but especially with online WOM, marketers now have new levels of management and measurement allowing them to utilize it to their advantage by directly targeting and influencing key consumers or opinion leaders in their target audience. These people are in fact viewed as co-producers of value, which makes online WOM a collaborative process. (Kotzinets et al. 2010, 72) This is illustrated visually in Figure 6.

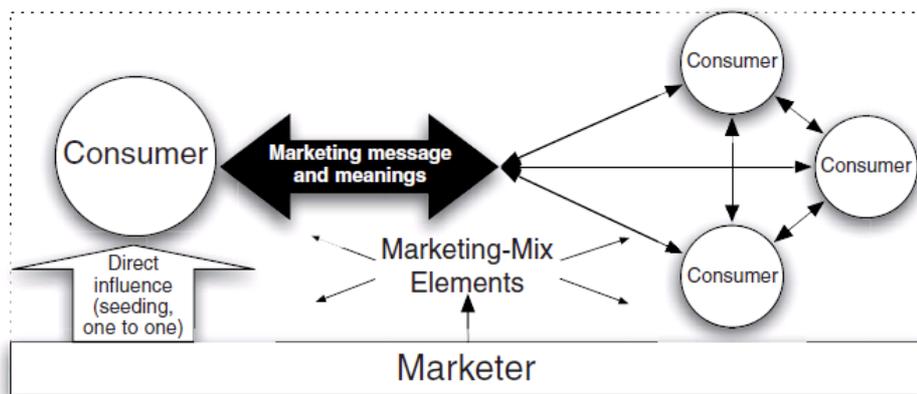


Figure 6. The Network Co-production Model (Kotzinets et al. 2010, 72)

This has implications for employee advocacy as an organisation-level employee advocacy initiative or program can be considered as a form of deliberate influence over the public in way that can reinforce the kind of image that the organisation wants to portray in social media or other online channels.

#### 4.2.3. Driving positive WOM and employee voice in social media

Customer satisfaction is one of the key mediators in WOM, since both very dissatisfied customers as well as very satisfied customers are most likely to

engage in it (Anderson 1998). As the desirable end result is the positive aspect of WOM or maybe even customer advocacy, organisations need to focus not only on customer satisfaction, but also on customer loyalty. (Hoffman & Fodor 2010, 46; Price & Arnould 1999, 49) Customers who perceive themselves as highly loyal are also significantly more likely to engage in WOM and having these so called brand evangelists is one of the biggest opportunities to gain positive tangible benefits of WOM (Bowman & Narayandas 2001, 293).

This same logic can be applied inside the organisation too. Even though current technology has enabled organisations to have unlimited opportunities of successfully harnessing and channelling employee voice to build relationships with organisational stakeholders (Miles & Mangold 2014, 402), social media can only be an effective voice or WOM mechanism if the existing company culture and leadership style already promote employee voice and participation (Perry & Solidoro 2013, 136). In fact, high employee voice and being informed of business issues correlate strongly with high job satisfaction, commitment and work-life balance satisfaction (Baptiste 2008, 296) connecting the concept of employee voice not only to employee advocacy in social media, but also to employee engagement. Because social media presence and ultimately corporate reputation can be affected by employee-wellbeing (Rokka et al. 2014, 824) amongst other things, the next chapter offers an extensive review to this important employee advocacy driver.

### **4.3. Connecting Employee Advocacy with Employee Engagement**

Employee advocacy is very much linked to employee engagement (Gupta & Sharma 2016; McLeod & Clarke 2009; Miles & Mangold 2014). In fact, 67 % of engaged employees advocate for their company or organization, compared to only 3 % of the disengaged employees. 78 % of these engaged employees would also recommend their company's products or services compared to the 14 % of the disengaged. (McLeod & Clarke 2009, 14)

Employee advocacy can also be linked to effective and strong employer-employee relationships. (Schweitzer and Lyons 2008; Kim & Rhee 2014; Men 2014) While it is not difficult to find employees who are willing to badmouth their organisation publicly, there are also employees who are willing to spread positive things about their organisation to the public. Kim and Rhee (2014, 246) have defined this as the megaphoning effect: “the likelihood of employees’ voluntary information forwarding or information sharing about organisational strengths (accomplishments) or weaknesses (problems)”. And in their study, Kim and Rhee (2014, 251) found a strong positive relationship between the quality of perceived organisation–employee relationships and the likelihood of a positive megaphoning effect. Men’s study (2014) also explored the same subject and her results can be represented visually in the following way:

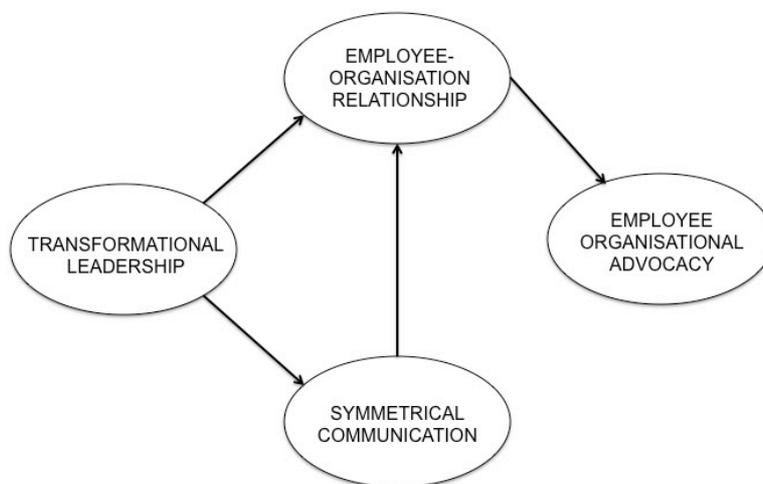


Figure 7. Conceptual model of the impact of transformational leadership on symmetrical internal communication and employee outcomes, results version (modified from Men 2014, 270)

Perhaps surprisingly leadership style and symmetrical communication have only indirect affects and the only direct significant effect on employee advocacy comes from a mutually beneficial employee-organisation relationship (Men 2014, 271).

### **4.3.1. Employee engagement elements and employee advocacy**

True employee advocacy does not exist without employee engagement (Sundberg 2016). And from a closer review of the existing literature, the individual key employee engagement elements that affect employee advocacy can be found. According to Men's study (2014, 271), employee-organisation relationships are mutually beneficial when they are characterised by trust, control mutuality, commitment and satisfaction. As explained earlier, this relationship is affected by leadership (Men 2014) and from the active employee advocates' point of view, the most crucial leadership elements are:

1. Employees have many opportunities to grow and learn
2. Employer values employee ideas and opinions
3. Leadership makes it a good place to work
4. Leadership is trustworthy (Weber Shandwick and KRC Research 2014, 9)

Interestingly, all these can be matched with some key elements of employee engagement. The first is concerned with empowerment and involvement, the second also with empowerment, the third with satisfaction and the fourth with trust. As control mutuality or balance of power (Men 2014, 272) can be viewed as a part of empowerment, then all of the five employee engagement elements; trust, commitment, satisfaction, involvement and empowerment; are present in existing literature.

Further evidence on some of the key elements are found from Schweitzer & Lyons's framework (2008, 563), which proposes that employee commitment and satisfaction are the factors that will affect the employee's willingness to act as a part-time marketer as well as their willingness to recommend the organisation to others through word-of-mouth interactions. And according to Lages (2012, 1270), organisational commitment, job satisfaction as well as reduced emotional exhaustion in the workplace are the three key emotional

responses that have an impact on promoting positive external representation or verbal employee advocacy of the workplace

Employee advocacy can even be connected to the behavioural level of engagement as it can be considered as an aspect of organisational citizenship behaviour. Because employee voice and thus also employee advocacy are viewed as demonstrations of mutuality between the employee and the organisation (Dundon et al. 2004), they can be included in the organisational citizenship behaviour concept along with any other outcome, such as proactivity or knowledge sharing, whereby employees go beyond the formal requirements of the job. (Eldor & Harpaz 2016, 288; Fullerton 2003, 335-336). That most probably also explains why it is mostly engaged employees who advocate for their organisation: 67 % compared to 3 % of disengaged. (McLeod & Clarke 2009, 14)

#### **4.3.2. Other important prerequisites**

In addition to the relationship and employee engagement elements listed before, also frequent communication and being well informed by leadership are important to employee advocates (Weber Shandwick & KRC Research 2014, 9). If the messages are inconsistent with what the organisation has promised their employees, they threaten or even nullify employees' positive psychological constructs and result in negative perceptions and attitudes that may cause negative word-of-mouth or even resignations. (Miles & Mangold 2004, 79, 82) But when the internal communication system is open, two-way, responsive and concerned with employees' welfare and voice, employees feel that they have a better relationship with the organisation and are more likely to advocate for it (Men 2014, 271). Smart organisations also encourage employees to be active on social media by providing them with opportunities and channels to become successfully engaged. (Omilion-Hogdes & Baker 2014, 443)

Because employee advocacy can be viewed as organisational citizenship behaviour that goes beyond formal role requirements, it is not easily enforced by the threat of sanctions (Smith et al. 1983, 654). In fact, in most jurisdictions it is illegal to force employees to use their personal social networks for employer's gain. (Terpening et al. 2016, 14) Instead, organisations should start engaging employees with interesting, useful news and content continuously, rather than just sending information they want employees to share in their personal networks (Sundberg 2016). Organisations could also create contests and challenges to create or share content on social media with monthly prizes to employees who capture, post or tag content that strengthens the preferred organisational brand (Omilion-Hogdes & Baker 2014, 443).

However, without truly engaging their employees, companies will never get the benefits of employee advocacy beyond a small group of people who are already actively sharing things on social media, which typically less than 5 % of all employee in large and mid-size companies. The other 90-95 % will not share. (Sundberg 2016)

#### **4.4. Employee Advocacy Benefits**

While the previous literature review has shown why employees engage in employee advocacy, there are also several positive organisational aspects, which probably have made it such a popular concept for today's marketers.

It is important to note that this part of the literature review will mostly cover the benefits from the organisation's perspective since the personal employee benefits or motivations, such as the development of a personal brand, have been excluded in the delimitations. Furthermore, most of what has been written so far on the actual benefits or challenges of employee advocacy is mostly covered in practice journals or commercial publications only. But they do offer interesting insights and justifications to the importance of the concept.

First of all, brand messages that are shared by employees reach 561 % further compared to the same message shared via official brand social channels only. Brand messages are also re-shared 24 times more frequently when employees share them compared to the brand page. (MSLGroup 2012) Thus this potential reach offers more opportunities for building and fostering of valuable and personal relationships with key target audiences like customers, future talent and investors (Dreher 2014, 345-346).

In addition, some major benefits come from the perceived source credibility of employee content, from the corporate or employer branding possibilities, from increased employee engagement as well as from public employee support and protection in turbulent situations.

#### **4.4.1 Trust**

Source credibility is one of the key determinants to how an audience receives organisation's message and there are three elements of this that can be identified: the level of the source's perceived expertise, the personal motives the source possesses and the degree of trust that can be placed on the source. (Fill 2009, 507) And because employees know their organisation's business and spirit well, the public views them as credible, neutral and authentic representatives of their organisation. (Dreher 2014, 345; Men & Stacks, 2013, 172) In fact, employee posts about work are largely seen as organic and natural, because while 55 % employees report posting about work, only 15 % of consumers have recognized posts about work in their network feeds. (Terpening et al. 2016, 9) Employees are also perceived more trustworthy in social media (52 %) than the company CEO (46 %) or companies that are not familiar to the message recipient (32 %) as can be seen from the scale by the Global Edelman Trust Barometer (2015):

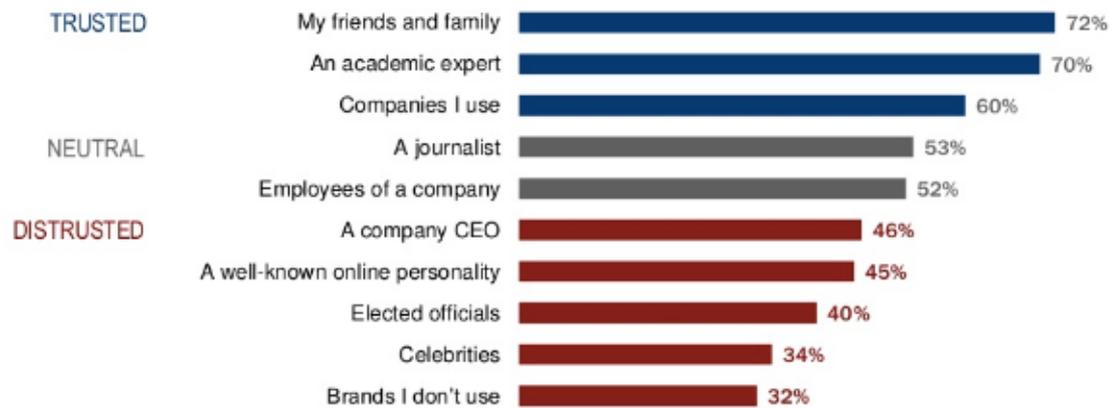


Figure 8. Trust in information created by each author on social networking sites, content sharing sites and online-only information sources (Edelman Trust Barometer 2015)

Even though companies that a person uses get good trust results too (60 %), when it comes to communicating to or with new prospects or potential customers, employees are more trusted and for that reason perhaps better than organisation-level content. In fact, employees are the most trusted source on many organisational issues, such as operational performance, business practices as well as treatment of employees and customers (Edelman Trust Barometer 2016).

#### 4.4.2. Corporate and employer branding

Employees' participation in social media is more important than ever since they embody and represent the reality of the organisation to customers and thus influence the organisation's external image and reputation by their behaviour (Dreher 2014, 345; Gotsi & Wilson 2001, 101; Lages 2012). Employee advocacy offers organisations a way of differentiating themselves from competition since "the public increasingly wants to know about the companies that stand behind the brands and products presented to them" (Gotsi and Wilson 2001, 101).

In social media, current employees can be ambassadors of the organisation and become a part of the branding outside the organisations, even if they are not even conscious about it. (Parry & Solidoro 2013, 135) That's why it is very important that employees' behaviour is consistent with the values of the organisation and in line with the desired organisational reputation. If it does not match with the expectations created through other external communication campaigns, the organisation's overall reputation will be damaged. (Gotsi & Wilson 2001, 101)

To ensure that employees portray a positive external image, organisations need to look at what is happening internally. Employees who feel that their psychological constructs, such as commitment and satisfaction, have been fulfilled by the organisation are also more likely to engage in favourable word-of-mouth communication and also create better relationships with customers. (Miles & Mangold 2004, 79, 81; Parry & Solidoro 2013, 135)

These messages of satisfied employees might reach out to not only current and future customers and affect the corporate, but also to current or prospective employees affecting the employer brand. (Miles & Mangold 2004, 81) And just like consumers, also potential and current employees have less faith in official corporate communications channels for honest signals about organisations. Instead they turn to the Internet and their personal social media networks for credible information about either prospective employers or even their own employers. (Martin & Groen-in't-Woud, 89, 2011) And if the employees express a negative view or their views does not match the organisation's advertising messages, the friends of the employee will believe the employee over advertising. (Gotsi & Wilson 2001, 101) This makes employee advocacy also important to human resources since new employees who are recruited through referrals by existing employees usually demonstrate greater levels of quality and satisfaction and lower levels of turnover. (Schweitzer & Lyons 2008, 563) Thus the aim of employer branding should be to distinguish the organisation from competition by creating the positive psychological constructs of

commitment, satisfaction and emotional attachment (Parry & Solidoro 2013, 135).

#### **4.4.3. Employee engagement**

Based on the literature review, employee engagement seems like a clear antecedent of employee advocacy activity in social media. But actually much like positive online WOM and consumer behaviour affect each other via the positive feedback mechanism (Duan et al. 2008, 288), also advocacy can affect engagement. This is because management can utilize social media to communicate and create an open, inclusive and collaborative environment that enhances positive workplace culture and even improves employee engagement and involvement. And social media is in fact becoming a common integrated part of employee engagement strategies. (Parry & Solidoro 2013 127, 135) This statement is supported by a global employee survey that included 185 companies with 250 or more employees. According to the results, employee advocacy activities support employee engagement objectives, because the employees' feelings after advocacy activities were first and foremost "I feel more connected and enthusiastic about the company I work for" followed by "I better understand my employer's business". (Terpening et al. 2016, 16)

#### **4.4.4. Employee support in turbulent situations**

In addition to having employees spread positive things about work-related issues, employee advocates will also voluntarily protect and defend the organisation (Men 2014, 273) Especially in turbulent or crisis situations, it is crucial that organisations have engaged employees, because they are the ones who are likely to forward and share supportive information rather than negative information for their organisation. If the employees are disengaged, they are more likely to emphasize with the external public's criticism and side with them. This will create problematic situations internally too and more challenges for management. (Kim & Rhee 2011, 251)

## **4.5. Employee Advocacy Risks And Barriers**

Employees' participation in social media is inevitable and also impossible to eliminate (Dreher 2014, 345) meaning that the risks of social media and employee advocacy can have wide-reaching effects on the reputation of the organisation or even an entire industry. In addition, if the employee advocate's own content is not in line with consumer interests or the feedback is not monitored on advocacy activity levels and blocking rates, organisations as well as employee advocates might lose some of their influence on social media. In fact, 20 % of consumers had already had to block, unfollow or unfriend someone for posting about work. (Terpening et al. 2016, 10)

### **4.5.1. Risks and barriers from the organisation point of view**

From the management's point of view, employee advocacy is a complex issue. Rokka et al.'s in-depth study (2014) found that there are management faces contradictions in organisation's social media presence, employee empowerment, responsibility and leadership, employee privacy, branding policy and marketing focus. These tensions are balanced and weighed off in an ongoing dialogue with the organisation's stakeholders by managers who try to accept the challenges and also at the same time manage corporate reputation effectively (Rokka et al. 2014, 823).

However, organisations should enable open, two-way communication instead of using social media tools for propaganda and promotional purposes or actively trying to suppress or control the online debate. (Parry & Solidoro 2013, 136) Achieving transparency makes a bigger impact on corporate reputation building than avoiding negative impressions or risks does. In fact, tolerating critical messages can be considered as a sign of openness and trustworthiness towards stakeholders. (Rokka et al. 2014, 824)

But empowering employees to become employee advocates is not simple as it may also require a shift in the entire company culture especially if the organisations is used to traditional, one-way and controlled communications. (Baird & Parasnis 2011, 30-31) And even when an organisation has achieved to gain active employee advocates, these advocates also need to learn where their personal brands ends and their employer's brand begins. (Burgess & Burgess 2014, 201) Aligning employee behaviour with organisational brand values and having them "living the brand" is a very difficult task and in order to achieve this, organisations need to be effective in their internal communication as well as align that communication with the desired external brand. (Gotsi & Wilson 2001, 102) Corporate guidelines, constant training and employee empowerment are in fact the best ways organisations could reduce the risks of employees' social media use and yet only 25 % of executives state their organisations have these established policies and 44 % state that they have only done this to some degree (Baird & Parasnis 2011, 30).

#### **4.5.2. Barriers and risks from the employee point of view**

There are also challenges on the employee level that hinder the progress in employee advocacy and overall, it is still a fairly unused marketing potential. In the 35 countries studied in 2011, two out of three employees were proud about their employer, but only 19 % shared stories on social media. (Van Belleghem et al. 2011). The primary barriers why employees don't act as employee advocates is firstly that they have not been asked or secondly that they wish to keep their professional and personal life separate. (Terpening et al. 2016, 24) In addition, employees are also voiding social media if they do not feel safe to speak up openly without retribution. (Parry & Solidoro 2013, 136)

## 4.6. Developed Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature review, the preliminary theoretical framework introduced in chapter 1.4. can be developed further as presented in Figure 9.

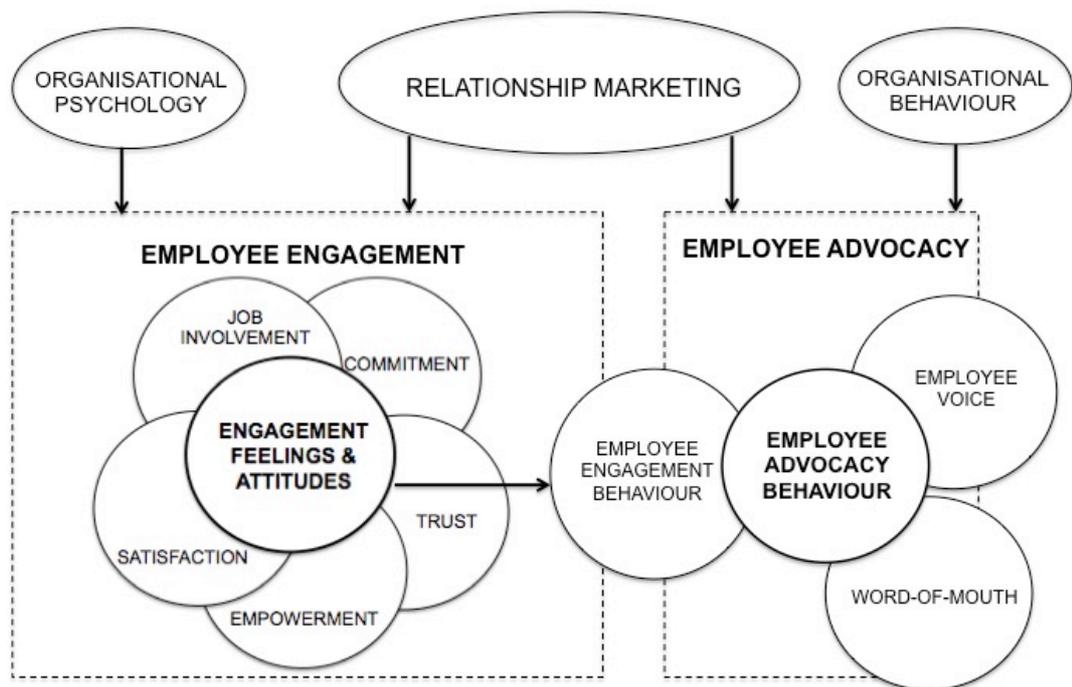


Figure 9. Developed theoretical framework

While the basic structure and logic of the framework has stayed the same, the concepts of employee engagement and employee advocacy have been more defined here. Based on the whole literature review on organisational psychology and relationship marketing and especially on the framework by Macey and Scheinder (2009), employee engagement feelings and attitudes can be defined as a combination of the following organisational psychology constructs: trust, commitment, satisfaction, involvement and empowerment.

The preliminary theoretical framework had already connected employee advocacy behaviour to engagement behaviour, but the literature review also found employee voice and word of mouth to be closely related to employee

advocacy and they both offered further theoretical insights to a concept that on its own has not been studied much.

Hereby the most important theories and models together with these additional concepts form a developed theoretical framework that offers a starting point for the empirical analysis. But considering the entirety of the study, this framework is not complete and that is why this study will also offer a third and final one later on. This will tie the literature review together with the insights of the empirical analysis and will be introduced in chapter 7.3.

## **5. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

This chapter explains the research execution and analysis processes, offers insights to the respondent selection criteria as well as gives necessary background information on them. Also the validity and reliability of this study are discussed.

### **5.1. Respondent Selection**

The potential respondents were selected with the aid of the author's professional network after a careful review of the respondents' public social media channels and online employee advocacy activity. The criteria for choosing respondents was as follows:

1. Employee advocacy activities in social media or other online channels
2. Employee engagement behaviour that is visible to others
3. Marketing or communications professionals
4. Not part of company management nor are company owners

Since employee engagement behaviour is visible to others (Macey et al. 2009, 7) and public online posts can verify their employee advocacy level, suitable candidates for the interviews could be picked out without a preliminary questionnaire search. The respondents all represent different companies and were chosen based on their employee engagement reputation and employee advocacy activity. To reach the research objectives it was paramount to interview people that have in-depth knowledge and experience in employee advocacy and possess the external characteristics of an engaged employee. Out of the people contacted, only one potential respondent did not reply to the interview request.

In order to be consistent with the type of employees interviewed as well as for the previously mentioned knowledge reasons, the chosen respondents all

represent people with marketing or communications background. Since the point of view of this study is the employee, individuals that have top-level management positions as well as company owners and self-employed entrepreneurs were excluded. The respondents – their role in the company, duration of employment, the industry of their employer, the date of the interviews and durations –are summarized in table 3. Because many respondents work in companies that have titles specific to that company only, the roles are defined by the main work tasks.

Table 3. Respondent information

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role in the company</b>	<b>Duration of employment</b>	<b>Company Industry</b>	<b>Date of the interview</b>	<b>Duration of the interview</b>
Respondent 1	Projects Accounts	app. 5,5 years	Marketing and Advertising	16.8.2016	26 min
Respondent 2	Social media marketing Digital marketing Communications	app. 1 year	Marketing and Communications	17.8.2016	25 min
Respondent 3	Sales Key accounts Sales department organisation	app. 1,5 years	Sales, Finance and HR	23.8.2016	17 min
Respondent 4	Community management Content planning and production Social media monitoring Customer service training	app. 15 years	Travel	24.8.2016	30 min
Respondent 5	Social media strategy planning & implementation Social media training Coaching & consulting	app. 4,5 years	Finance and Services	24.8.2016	30 min
Respondent 6	Business development	1 year 2 months	Technology	25.8.2016	32 min
Respondent 7	Internal & external communications Marketing Communications	app. 3 years	Media	26.8.2016	24 min

## **5.2. Data Collection and Analysis**

The qualitative data was collected from interviews that were conducted one on one and mostly face-to-face according to a schedule that best suited the respondents. Two of the interviews were conducted via Skype or telephone: one for geographical reasons and one because of time constraints. In case the respondent asked for it, the questionnaire was sent beforehand by e-mail but this was done only once.

The interviews were conducted mostly in Finnish, with one exception being in English. The list of questions is provided in both languages in the Appendices of the study (see Appendix 3 and 4). The first part of the interview focused on employee advocacy issues, since the author viewed those questions as easier to answer. After the respondent had been warmed up, the second part dove into the employee perceptions and feelings of the interviewee thus requiring deeper levels of introspection.

The interviews were recorded simultaneously with a smartphone and a laptop to make sure that there would be no technical problems in the transcription process. Because the interviews were transcribed in detail, it was possible to conduct the needed content analysis in an in-depth manner. Instead of analysing the data question-by-question, the data was first split into two parts by following the logic of the literature review and these parts were then analysed using the categorisation method either deductively or inductively.

### **5.2.1. Employee engagement analysis**

As explained by Yin (2009, 130), because the literature review offered a detailed theoretical framework for employee engagement and there were precise theoretical propositions to rely on, the first part of the data analysis can be defined as deductive and was based on the first and third research questions: the interrelationship between the two main study concepts and the key employee engagement elements to employee advocates.

The employee engagement data was analysed with the qualitative method of categorisation that involves two activities: developing categories and attaching meaningful data to them (Saunders et al. 2009, 492). The first set of categories was deductively chosen to be the five employee engagement elements because they were derived from the developed theoretical framework and literature review. Then all relevant data was attached into these categories by certain key words and phrases (see Appendix 1). After the data had been unitised accordingly, the entire employee engagement data was analysed thoroughly and this revealed one additional category of employee engagement resulting in all together six different engagement categories.

### **5.2.2. Employee advocacy analysis**

Because the literature review did not offer much theory on the actual nature and activities of employee advocacy, the author had to rely more on an inductive approach, which meant collecting the data and then exploring it to see what kind of important themes and issues emerge (Saunders et al. 2009, 490). Even though there was some literature on the topic as well a research proposition to follow (How can employee advocacy in social media defined?), they did not offer a suitable mode for the analysis. The categorisation method was utilised here too, but this time it was the data itself that was used to create the suitable categories.

The advocacy data was analysed first at the personal level, so the very first step included collecting and attaching all data to the categories of personal employee advocacy activities, channel choices and operation modes (see Appendix 2). And from that analysis, the data from differentiating personal factors as well as from the very beginning of employee advocacy activities were easy to separate and attach to their own categories. The last personal level analysis category was the perceived individual success of employee advocacy activities.

Finally, the current organisation level issues (from the employee advocate point of view) as well as key development points and possible barriers were categorised and unitised. Thus the employee advocacy analysis resulted in all together eight different categories to analyse.

### **5.3. Validity and Reliability**

Based on the definition of validity by Gummesson (1991a, 80); “the extent to which researchers are able to use their method to study what they had sought out to study rather than something else”; this study does have good validity. Even though the original study focus shifted a bit more towards management from a pure marketing point of view as the true importance of employee engagement and employee wellbeing to employee advocacy activity became evident, the theoretical shift was taken into consideration in the entire empirical part of the study. Thus the entire study is coherent and there were no negative effects when finding answers to the research questions.

As the findings of this study support the causal relationships between employee engagement and employee advocacy found from the existing literature, the internal validity of this research is at least partially very good. But because this study also contains exploratory elements in regards to the individual study concepts, there are some challenges to the internal validity as it is inapplicable to exploratory studies. (Yin 2009, 40) Furthermore, because this is a case study, the results cannot directly be generalised beyond the immediate context creating a barrier for external and statistical validity (Gummesson 1991a, 77; Yin 2009, 40). What this research offers in stead is a conversation starter on what employee engagement and employee advocacy actually are and how the latter could be achieved or encouraged with the first. Thus this study offers interesting prospects for future studies as well as even some direct advice for management.

From the reliability point of view, this study has succeeded because future researches can replicate the exact same study with different respondents by using the same questionnaire and following the detailed analysis method description offered in this chapter (Yin 2009, 45). And even though the exact same results cannot be promised to appear in future studies as the data of this study was very much connected to the respondents' own personal experiences and opinions, the similarity of the responses at least on this scale was apparent, which is promising for future research.

For reliability reasons, the questionnaire has been added as an attachment to this study in both Finnish and English (Appendices 3 and 4) and the study can be replicated either domestically or abroad. While this study focused on marketing professionals due to their somewhat pioneer status in employee advocacy, this research could easily be adapted to other departments or for whole organisations when more organisations start to embrace the possibilities of employee advocacy.

Regarding the questionnaire itself, the respondents found the interview questions comprehensive and it was possible to gain useful insights from all of the interviewees. However, the question about feelings towards the company as an employee were harder for the male interviewees and many answered solely with the word "good" and one even stated that he does not really have any actual feelings towards his company. In future research, this question could be somehow modified to be more comprehensive.

## **6. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

The findings from the empirical analysis are divided into two main parts: employee engagement and employee advocacy. Even though the first set of questions during the interviews was related to employee advocacy, the actual findings related to employee engagement will be introduced first. This follows the logic of the literature review and supports the causal nature between the two concepts that was introduced there.

### **6.1. Employee Engagement Findings**

To form a coherent view of employee engagement, the empirical analysis is structured with the help of the individual employee engagement elements that based on the literature review together form the concept. And as the following chapters will reveal, there is empirical evidence on the existence of all five individual elements as well on the interrelationship between employee engagement and employee advocacy.

In order to be consistent, the findings on the employee engagement elements are introduced in the exact same order as they were in the literature review: starting with trust and ending with empowerment. For the detailed respondent-by-respondent data, please see Appendix 1.

#### **6.1.1. Trust**

All, but respondent 2, used the actual word trust in their answers. And even respondent 2 described the relationship and communication with management as respectful, warm, always available when needed and the relationships amongst colleagues as close.

Trust appeared especially in answers that were related to the reasons for working at a particular organisation, feelings towards the organisation,

relationships between management and relationships between colleagues. So trust amongst co-workers, management as well as trust in the organisation as a whole all seem to be important to employee advocates. In addition, trust has to be mutual, because management 's trust towards the employees also mattered. Respondent 3 and 6 stated that the trust they perceive from management is in fact one of the key reasons they feel valued by their employer and management. Management's trust was also mentioned in relation to many other empowerment-related issues such as autonomy, lack of monitoring, personal responsibility and freedom, which were important to the respondents.

It became apparent that the human factor is important as trust is formed in the relationships between colleagues and management. For example respondent 7 stated that: *"Even though I trust the organisation's way of doing business and the way they handle things, the trust is not blind. It's very dependent on who people work with"*. Here such things as open two-way communication, giving and receiving feedback, mutual sharing and for some even personal relationships outside of work mattered. And the most important role as trust builders belonged to the immediate contacts at work. Even though information may not flow or the relationships are not personal from unit to unit, if the immediate relationships are trustworthy, that seemed to be enough for the respondents.

### **6.1.2. Commitment**

*"First of all employee advocacy in a way shows how much you're committed to your company. If you stop talking about it, it's normally a bad sign."* – Respondent 6

Three out of seven respondents actually used the words commitment, committed or loyal to describe themselves. As for the rest, respondent 1 stated to personally care about organisational issues, respondent 3 used the words love, family and home to describe her feelings and respondent 2 called her employment a dream come true. Interestingly, while respondent 4 described his

relationship with the organisation to be complicated and that he had no actual feelings towards it, he in a later stage described himself as loyal and understanding towards the organisation as well as feeling positive towards management and his co-workers.

According to the empirical data, the relationships between colleagues seem important to organisational commitment as most respondents described the relationships in the organisation to be personally close and highlighted the importance of that. Noteworthy was also respondent 7's insights to the middle management's role in creating commitment since she specifically stated their importance to be much higher than organisation-level issues. These two insights support the perhaps even contradicting feelings of respondent 4.

In addition to relationships, also the fact that the work itself is perceived interesting, dynamic and challenging was connected to commitment and also to employee duration by the respondents, which connects commitment to job involvement (further analysed in chapter 6.1.4.). Respondents 1 and 6 also considered the dynamic and changing nature of the organisation itself as a reason that they had stayed there as long as they had.

Regarding the actual future employment duration, respondent 4 was the only one who saw himself leaving quite soon. But as he explained, he had been working for the organisation already for 15 years and in the same position for 4 years. While respondent 7 said she does not consider or plan such things, all the rest stated they see themselves working for their current employers for a long time, had no reason to leave or a considerably much better offer or an external change in life situations would have to happen in order for them to leave. Here a quote from respondent 1 is quite fitting: *"You would have to offer me an interesting industry, a better office, a bigger position and more salary... quite a lot more in order for me to leave."*

In addition to the positive effects on the advocate's employment duration, commitment also seemed to have an affect on employee advocacy or the lack of it to be more precise. Respondents 3, 4, 6 and 7 stated that they would stop

engaging in employee advocacy when they felt that they didn't want to be a part of their current organisation anymore and would be contemplating resignation.

### **6.1.3. Satisfaction**

Analysing the entire interview data revealed that issues related to satisfaction were the least discussed out of all of the employee engagement elements. However, satisfaction-related issues were found from all but one respondent.

Respondent 2 focused on satisfaction the most in her entire interview. In fact, her initial thought about employee advocacy was this: *"I think employee advocacy begins with that you actually enjoy yourself at the work place and the organisation invests in that. I've worked at many places so I know what it can be like and honestly, this is the best place that I've ever worked at"*. Also respondent 6 mentioned that the reason he shares and posts work related issues on social media, is because he likes working at his current organisation and would stop it if he stopped enjoying working there.

In addition to possibly directly affecting employee advocacy, satisfaction also seems to have an affect on commitment or at least on employment duration. Respondent 6 and respondent 3 included their enjoyment of company culture and good relationships with people as the reason they have stayed at their current organisation. Also respondent 4 and 1 had similar answers with respondent 4 listing "a nice place to work" and liking his colleagues as the reasons for staying and respondent 1 said that because he feels good at the current organisation and has been treated well, he has stayed for five years and has no reason to leave. And finally regarding overall feelings towards the organisation respondent 5 said he feels a certain proudness to be able to work at such an organisation and also described the employees there as excited and enthusiastic.

Respondent 2 was the only one who dug deeper into employee satisfaction by stating that rewarding employees will come back to the employer many times over, because employees will work that much harder when they feel not only

happy but valued. And with this statement she connected the dots between satisfaction and empowerment.

#### **6.1.4. Job involvement**

The employee advocates described their own jobs as either challenging, versatile, personally interesting or dynamic and the importance of work was evident in all of the responses. Also the need to be constantly learning and professionally growing was important to them and many held their current positions not only due to personal skills but also due to personal interests. Respondent 1 described himself as personally interested towards his work as well as towards the industry; respondent 2 mentioned the type of work she does as especially important to her and respondent 5 found his work to be very natural to him. Respondent 3 went further than that as in addition to enjoying her work she also said to be involved in many extra activities in the workplace like event organising and interior design for the office.

In addition to these, the data showed consistent findings on high decision influence that is one of the determining factors of job involvement. But as the insights appeared to be more important for empowerment-related issues, they will be analysed in the next chapter.

Regarding the possible effects, job involvement seems to be connected to employee duration as respondent 4 mentioned that it was his work that has played a part on his long employment and respondents 6 and 7 both said that learning, challenges and versatility are required to keep them interested or satisfied in their current positions at their current organisations. Respondent 6's answer to how he sees himself working at the current organisation was: *"As long as I'm learning something new everyday. If I would stop learning... money, it would not keep me here. Never kept me anywhere. I need to be challenged, I need to grow"*.

Finally, job involvement could potentially also affect employee advocacy directly as respondent 5 mentioned that the issues he shares or talks about on social media need to match with his personal interest towards work-related topics. Only employer benefit would not make him share. Also respondent 1 said that the best way to start employee advocacy would be think of ones personal interests first as well as one's own unique angle to approach it. All in all, the respondents mentioned conversations with peers and overall opinion influencing in social media as few of their key employee advocacy tasks, which is why a connection between employee advocacy to personal professional interest and therefore also to job involvement could exist.

#### **6.1.5. Empowerment**

All of the respondents felt personally secure in their professional abilities and this was either due to actual results, gained professional experience or feedback from others. A few respondents also confessed some minor professional insecurities, but mostly the answers were very firm and secure. In addition to feeling professionally secure, all of the respondents also felt safe in their current position and were not afraid to loose their jobs. Only respondent 6 stated that he doesn't think of such things as security, but did not fear for his job either. The reasons behind the feeling of safety were again either good results, professional security or feedback.

All of the respondents also felt valued by their management and five out seven respondents felt valued by their employer as well as by their management. Appreciation from the employer level might depend on the size of the company or on the communication structure as respondents 5 and 4 both said that they do feel valued by the manager or by the colleagues, but appreciation from the employer itself was either tricky or almost non-existent. Also respondent 7 said that while she feels valued generally speaking, she sometimes also feels unvalued in certain situations. These three were the ones who work in larger

organisations and especially respondent 5 and 4 recognised also higher hierarchies and barriers in communication.

For the possible reasons behind the lack of appreciation, respondents 4 and 7 both concluded that it was their expert positions or lack of management understanding about their work that could lead it. From the smaller organisations also respondent 1 felt that while it is positive that everyone is treated equally and there is no singling out, the management might not always know what has been done to achieve certain results. He also criticised himself here and mentioned that he should perhaps communicate more what he has done upwards instead of waiting for feedback downwards.

The reasons for feeling valued were mostly related to feedback or autonomy. According to the data, the feedback could come from colleagues or external parties too, but management's role here was clearly the most important. In fact, five of the respondents mentioned positive feedback or encouragement from management in their answers here. In addition, respondent 6 also felt that he's valued not only from the feedback towards him, but also because his own feedback towards the organisation is well received and he is changing things. In turn, freedom, authority, autonomy or personal responsibility were mentioned in all but one interview and even in the missing one, respondent 1 mentioned mutual flexibility.

Finally, respondent 3 also connected empowerment as well as the lack of excessive control directly to employee advocacy by stating: *"if you want employee advocates, you can't force people and you also need to give freedom to do it. There are so many organisations, where you can't tell this and you can't post that. It needs to be open. It's better to empower people to try, than to make limitations that will make people not get involved"*. Also respondent 4 stated that micromanagement and control over his actions would be the factors that would stop his employee advocacy if not the entire employment relationship.

### **6.1.6. Value identification**

In addition to the five engagement elements found from the literature review, there was one final key factor more that rose from the data: the perceived match between personal and organisational values. Respondents 1, 2, 5 and 7 said head on that it was either organisational values or investments to the right things that were the main reasons for either initially choosing or for staying with their current employer. Also respondents 3 and 6 mentioned overall company culture as reasons for staying and organisational values can be considered as an important part of company culture.

And when it came to the possible reasons for leaving the organisation, respondents 7 and 4 stated that would happen if they could no longer personally support the organisational values or the organisation did something against their personal values. Also respondent 3 said that her reason for leaving her current employer would be injustice.

Based on this data alone, value identification could be considered merely as an antecedent to commitment, but because the data showed that values also seem to have quite a direct affect on employee advocacy, the author decided to raise it to the same level with the current elements. In fact, contradictions between personal and organisational values proved to be the most important reason for stopping employee advocacy alongside ending one's employment as respondents 2, 4, 6 and 7 directly stated that going against their personal values would make them stop their advocacy activities.

Furthermore, values had carried the advocacy even beyond the employment duration on one occasion as respondent 7 said that she had continued advocating for her previous employers, but only if the employment had ended for other reasons and she still could support their values and operations.

## **6.2. Employee Advocacy Findings**

The empirical findings on employee advocacy are especially interesting, as the author had not found such an in-depth research on what the activities actually are. These findings are first introduced from the start of the employee advocacy, moving forward to the current personal activities, channels choices and success evaluations. Finally the organisational level issues (from the employee advocate perspective) are analysed.

But before employee advocacy can be analysed any further, the personal factors of the interviewed employee advocates are introduced as they affect the data analysis.

### **6.2.1. Personal factors and benefits**

In order to be able to thoroughly analyse the respondents' employee advocacy activity later on, the respondents were asked about their overall social media activity level and social media channel usage in their personal life (excluding work-related issues) before the actual interview started. The activity level was chosen as a personal estimate between very active, active, moderately active, inactive and avoiding. The active channels were asked to be listed without a guideline (see table 4 for detailed results).

Only one of the respondents considered herself as moderately active in social media with no personal social media presence completely outside of work-related issues. She is active only on Twitter and has an account on LinkedIn, but she has no social media accounts for personal use only. For everyone else, social media was actively or very actively used and a natural part of his or her everyday life also outside of work. This most probably has had an affect on how easy the transition has been towards work-related or employee advocacy content in social media.

Table 4. Respondents' social media usage in their personal life

	<b>Activity level in social media</b>	<b>Active personal social media channels</b>
Respondent 1	Active	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat
Respondent 2	Very active	Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat
Respondent 3	Moderately active	Twitter
Respondent 4	Active	Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn
Respondent 5	Very active	Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook. Snapchat, Instagram
Respondent 6	Very active	Instagram. Snapchat, Facebook, LinkedIn
Respondent 7	Active	Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn

While all of the respondents identified themselves as advocates for their employer organisation or its offering, at the same time their internal or personal motivations for advocacy activities varied. Two respondents actually considered employee advocacy as a part of their job. Even though they were not forced to share anything on their personal channels from the organisational level and had the option not to, they personally felt that not being an employee advocate would mean that they would not be doing their job well.

All seven respondents also admitted that they have considered the personal benefits of employee advocacy, such as their own personal brand and professional image, with some perceiving them more important than the others. Some were merely aware or appreciative of the personal benefits, but especially for respondents 1 and 5 their personal brand or benefit was much more important than employer brand or benefit. However, at the same time they too also recognised the importance of being content at the organisation and appreciated the positive affects employee advocacy can offer for both parties. Respondents 5 and 6 actually described employee advocacy as kind of a win-win with both them and the organisation benefitting from the advocacy.

Because the personal factors and motivators like personal branding are excluded in the delimitations to ensure in-depth analysis on organisational factors, these issues will not be analysed further.

### **6.2.2. Starting employee advocacy**

Three out of the seven employee advocates had started advocacy activities for their current employer as soon as they had started working for them and for all three of them, sharing work-related content had already been a very natural part of their social media behaviour. Respondents 2 and 7 also stated that they had consciously understood the importance of employee advocacy for a long time, which eased the beginning. In addition, respondent 2 had a very publicly communicated start at her current organisation, which made future employee advocacy a natural continuum.

Employee advocacy was also natural for respondents 4 and 5 who both had longer careers in their organisations and had been doing activities that could be considered as employee advocacy for years even before there was any public or internal discussion on the topic. They also stated that it was not a conscious decision to start, but it happened gradually and naturally and that is why it was harder for them to pinpoint a certain start. However, both were able to articulate a point in time when they had significantly increased their activity level.

Contradicting these, respondents 1 and 3 made a conscious decision to start employee advocacy. While respondent 1 was already active in social media, respondent 3 had no previous personal social media presence at all. For both of them it was external influence that made a big impact at the beginning. Respondent 3 was firmly, but positively pressured by the management to start employee advocacy during a brand reinvention in their organisation in 2015. Respondent 1 in turn had been encouraged by not just the organisation but also by one close co-worker and then at a performance appraisal 1,5 years ago he set himself a goal to become an active employee advocate.

The personal estimations of employee advocacy durations for each respondent can be seen from the following table:

Table 5. Employee advocacy duration

	<b>Duration</b>
Respondent 1	Actively for 1,5 years
Respondent 2	Approximately 1 year Since the beginning of the employment
Respondent 3	Approximately 1 year
Respondent 4	Actively for 4-5 years
Respondent 5	Actively for 4 years
Respondent 6	Approximately 1 year Since the beginning of the employment
Respondent 7	App. 3 years Since the beginning of the employment

### **6.2.3. Employee advocacy activities**

According to the data, the key employee advocacy activity that the respondents personally engage in is not merely sharing employer or company content forward in their personal networks (which was often mentioned too), but actually actively conversing with their peers on current industry topics in social media. Such things as sharing and influencing opinions, promoting company values and bringing forth the employer in this context were apparent in the answers (see Appendix 2 for detailed respondent by respondent answers). Also building professional networks, writing company blog posts and recruitment of new talents were mentioned.

On top of these, respondent 2, 5 and 6 also considered sharing everyday work situations on social media as part of their employee advocacy behaviour. For respondent 6 especially, employee advocacy content was always very visual with pictures and videos from the office or from business trips.

For most respondents, employee advocacy activities were continuous on a weekly or even on a daily level. Respondent 3 even mentioned using time every day twice a day to look for possible industry discussions or advocacy opportunities and then activating herself.

The employee advocacy activities were also mostly unplanned and personal interest towards specific employer content or current industry discussion were mentioned as the key activators to them. Respondent 2 even stated that her own activity was so dependent on her personal interest that it was very varied and respondent 1 and 3 recognised industry events positively affecting their activity. A few respondents also mentioned that they know people who share absolutely everything work-related on social media, but they wished to be different and share and discuss only those issues related to their work that they are personally interested in.

The usual operation modes and main employee advocacy activities are listed in the following table (for respondent by respondent division: see Appendix 2)

Table 6. Employee advocacy modes and activities

Usual modes	Main activities
Continuous on a weekly or daily level Relatively unplanned Content related to personal interest Possible peaks in activity during interesting discussions, campaigns or events	Discussions on current topics Sharing own and influencing others' opinions Sharing company content (e.g. blog posts, campaigns) Building professional networks Sharing everyday situations from the workplace Recruitment

Finally, it is important to recognize that employee advocacy activities can also happen outside of social media. As respondent 4 stated: *“online is the clearest and most visible part (of employee advocacy). But everyone is an employee advocate both in good and bad and perhaps even unconsciously outside their workplace”*. In addition to such clear situations as speaking at seminars or

offering training sessions to clients and other external parties, the employee advocates also recognised that unofficial conversations with these external parties or even with ones friends have an affect on the organisations' image and can be considered as a part of their employee advocacy. However, these instances are perhaps not so influential as social media interactions. As respondent 1 put it: *"it's difficult to talk to 2000 people at the same time at a convention, but that is possible on Twitter"*.

#### 6.2.4. Employee advocacy channels

Within the world of social media, there are different channels that can be used for employee advocacy activities. For these employee advocates, the clear winner was Twitter with six of them mentioning or even highlighting it in their answers. This is not surprising as they also considered industry discussions with peers as the most important employee advocacy activity and discussions even without a personal connection are easily done in Twitter. Also LinkedIn was mentioned often, but it was considered mostly as a secondary channel to Twitter and mainly used for building professional networks and sharing employer content. All the main employee advocacy activities covered in the previous chapter that the data allowed to be connected to specific channels are offered in the following table:

Table 7. Main employee advocacy activities per active channel

Main channels	Main activities per channel
Twitter	Discussions on current topics Sharing own and influencing others' opinions Sharing company content (e.g. blog posts, campaigns) Building a network
LinkedIn	Sharing company content (e.g. blog posts, campaigns) Building a network
Facebook	Sharing company or work-related content (e.g. blog posts, articles, campaigns)

The data also allowed analysing the reasons why certain channels are chosen over others. Reasons for using Twitter especially were mainly personal network size, convenience, familiarity and also it's perceived fit with professional content. The last reason was also given for LinkedIn usage whereas Facebook and Instagram were considered more personal channels with limited or no professional content sharing. Here the only exceptions were respondent 6 who used both of these channels actively for his employee advocacy and respondent 7 who said that the type of content they have at the current organisation allows her to share also on Facebook. Also respondent 5 considered Facebook as a news channel, but did not specify any personal advocacy activities there.

The following table compares all the active social media channels to the active employee advocacy channels. The same channels for both usage options are bolded.

Table 8. Social media channel comparison

	<b>Active personal channels</b>	<b>Active employee advocacy channels</b>
Respondent 1	Facebook, <b>Twitter</b> , Instagram, Snapchat	<b>Twitter</b> , LinkedIn
Respondent 2	<b>Twitter</b> , Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat	No specific division between usage offered, but <b>Twitter</b> especially important
Respondent 3	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Twitter</b> , LinkedIn
Respondent 4	<b>Twitter</b> , Instagram, Facebook, <b>LinkedIn</b>	<b>Twitter</b> , <b>LinkedIn</b>
Respondent 5	<b>Twitter</b> , <b>LinkedIn</b> , <b>Facebook</b> , <b>Snapchat</b> , Instagram	<b>Twitter</b> , <b>LinkedIn</b> , <b>Facebook</b> , <b>Snapchat</b>
Respondent 6	<b>Instagram</b> , Snapchat, <b>Facebook</b> , <b>LinkedIn</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b> , <b>Facebook</b> , <b>Instagram</b>
Respondent 7	<b>Facebook</b> , Instagram, Pinterest, <b>LinkedIn</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b> , <b>Twitter</b> , <b>Facebook</b>

As can be seen from the table, the channels often overlap with personal usage and employee advocacy happening side by side. Only on few occasions either Twitter or LinkedIn were separated for professional usage and employee advocacy only.

Two respondents also mentioned that they occasionally write to their company blogs, but because it is not a social media channel per se, it was excluded from this table.

### 6.2.5. Employee advocacy success

The perceived success of ones personal employee advocacy proved to be a difficult subject. Many either stated that it was hard to evaluate or that the question itself was “interesting”. The personal success measurements gained from the data are also offered in the following table:

Table 9. Personal employee advocacy success measurements

	<b>Measurement of success</b>
Respondent 1	Fast growth of the professional network No negative feedback Found no reasons to stop
Respondent 2	External positive feedback
Respondent 3	No negative effects Positive effects to sales, customer relationships and professional networks
Respondent 4	Internal and external feedback Comparisons to others inside the organisation
Respondent 5	Mostly positive images than negative Positive feedback
Respondent 6	Personal impact within the organisation Viral success on an international level Internal measurement tools
Respondent 7	Internal measurement tools Comparisons to others inside the organisation

Respondent 1 was proud that he had multiplied his network on Twitter (from 200 to over 1200) during the first year, while respondent 2 was a little worried that her activity level might already be considered as spam by her network even though she had only received positive feedback. In fact, feedback from others was an important source of reassurance for three of the respondents. Two

respondents compared themselves to others within the organisation and two respondents mentioned the lack of negative effects or feedback as a possible evaluation for success. One key finding was that only two respondents reported having or at least personally using internal tools to follow actual numbers on their employee advocacy activities that further proved their success. Respondent 6 had also had gained viral success on an international level as well as had impacted the employee advocacy activities on an organisational level.

#### **6.2.6. Employee advocacy at the organisation**

In addition to the personal motivations and benefits discussed earlier, all the respondents recognise the importance of employee advocacy at the organisational level. However, on a general level they felt that organisations as well as individuals are not yet realising the possibilities or embracing the importance of employee advocacy. Respondent 1 summarised this rather well: *“Organisations should realise the importance of employee advocacy and likewise employees should realise what it means to the organisation and how it can improve the organisational image. Personas are so much more interesting than corporations.”*

But when it came to how the employee advocates perceived their organisation’s attitudes regarding employee advocacy, the responses were mainly positive. While the larger and more established organisations of respondents 4, 5 and 7 had during the last years taken important steps towards employee advocacy, respondent 1 actually felt that the organisational encouragement had lessened as of late even though the general organisational perception was positive. The rest felt that employee advocacy was perceived well in their organisation and also considered important on an organisational level.

In addition to providing mental encouragement, enabling freedom and generating good corporate content to share, some of the organisations also offered concrete support to their employees regarding advocacy itself.

According to the data, one organisation actually offered ready campaign materials including tools, pictures and texts for willing employee advocates and two other organisations deployed personal employee advocacy tools to measure advocacy activity and success. One of these two organisations also offered gift cards to active employee advocates, while the other one had just given up on these instant rewards. Only two organisations, the largest ones, had actually developed their own employee advocacy training programs where voluntary employees are guided, motivated and encouraged to act as employee advocates.

However, the respondents agreed that in order to truly gain the benefits on an organisational level, employee advocacy has to be born from the personal desire to do it. Organisations have a key role here since as the empirical data has previously shown, in addition to personal factors and benefits, also employee engagement elements were important to these active employee advocates. As discussed in detail in the first empirical analysis chapter, such things as trust, freedom, commitment, wellbeing and personal interest towards ones work matter here and these can be influenced on an organisational and management level.

### **6.2.7. Key employee advocacy improvement points**

When it comes to directly affecting employee advocacy activity at the organisational level, the respondents thought that encouragement and empowerment are the key factors that organisations could offer more to their employees. Respondent 4 even offered a ready model to this: *“(employee advocacy) starts from empowerment and permission. That is then followed by the request to do it and finally tools need to be offered.”*

Interestingly, only respondent 2 had no improvement requests for her employer or management and she even mentioned that advocacy at their organisation is “true” because everything is done right. The concrete things that the other respondents were wishing more of were for the management to lead by

example more actively as well as for regular internal meetings dedicated to employee advocacy on a monthly or even on a weekly basis. Also more internal communication, employee training, simpler advocacy tools and good-quality organisational or industry content, like professional photos from the workplace and interesting blog posts, were on the wish list. Finally, some of the respondents also wished for more time to do employee advocacy activities, but at the same time it was noted that offering more interesting content would make a bigger impact to their activity level than time, because time could be used to other things too. Many respondents also concluded that they have no need to use more time, because they feel they are already active enough.

Fast rewards like gift cards, movie tickets or small monetary benefits were seen as a small opportunity, but mostly as a threat. Three respondents mentioned these quick rewards, but quickly dismissed them as misleading. As stated before, these employee advocates think that the motivation to become an employee advocate has to come from within and stem from personal interest. *“Offering movie tickets would be the wrong to develop it (employee advocacy)”*, stated respondent 5. However, respondent 7 saw that internal campaigns or competitions could be used to excite people occasionally.

#### **6.2.8. Employee advocacy barriers**

In addition to the key barriers of employee advocacy mentioned in the employee engagement chapters, like the lack of empowerment and commitment, there are also other individual factors that can have negative effects on it.

Mirroring the previous chapter, lack of time and interesting content were seen as factors that would hinder employee advocacy. On a personal level, only respondent 2 was worried that she is sharing too much and she would do it less if it became spam to her audience. Respondent 1 also recognised that if he was a public figure he would perhaps have more to lose in social media and that would have a negative effect. In turn, respondents 4 and 5 both agreed that too much control over their advocacy would make them personally stop it, while

respondent 3 considered the many prohibitions related to employees' social media as the a key barrier on a more general level.

Finally, respondent 5 was also worried that because nowadays there is so much talk about employee advocacy that people will start to consider them as employee advocates only and the interest towards it will fade away faster. Interesting was also respondent 4's notion that employee advocacy's main problem is that is not yet well recognised what it actually is. According to him, advocacy could be considered as employees sharing corporate content on a superficial level, but when you want to go deeper into it, the concept becomes less clear. The goal of the next final chapters is partly to tackle this particular problem.

## **7. DISCUSSION**

Because all five elements of employee engagement could be found from each advocate's data (excl. satisfaction with six out of seven matches), all of the interviewed advocates can be proven to be engaged employees as described by Macey & Schneider's employee engagement framework (2008). So not only were the advocates recognised as engaged by external observations before the interviews, but their state engagement is further proven by the empirical analysis.

The next chapters offer detailed insights and discussion into employee engagement and employee advocacy both from the theoretical as well as empirical points of view.

### **7.1. Employee Engagement**

According to the literature as well as the empirical data, employee engagement elements seem to be highly interrelated. And even though evidence from all five elements can be discovered from the data, some of them seem more important to the advocates than others. Especially issues related to trust, commitment and empowerment are apparent and repetitive throughout all seven interviews. Also some individual differences between the responses could be found as respondent 2 placed a lot of importance to employee well-being and satisfaction, respondent 3 was concentrated more on job involvement and respondent 7 focused on commitment.

#### **7.1.1. Employee engagement: element by element**

Firstly, trust needs to exist mutually between the employee advocate and his/her co-workers, managers as well the organisation (Baptiste 2008; Harter et al. 2002; Morgan and Hunt 1994; Schweizer and Lyons 2008) and this

statement is supported by the empirical data. Following Men's employee advocacy model (2014), the key trust fostering factors for the interviewed advocates are open, two-way communication as well as relationships with management. Trust also affects engagement through other engagement elements. The empirical data offers some indication that trust could be connected to commitment by being a reason for working for a particular organisation. But unlike in Baptiste's study (2008), trust does not seem to be the most significant predictor of commitment for the advocates. In stead, they are more influenced by their job involvement, job satisfaction as well as organisational relationships and trust is more related to empowerment following the logic of Corsun & Enx (1999).

Since only one person (with already 15-year-long career at the organisation) is contemplating leaving their current employer quite soon and because many advocates actually use words like commitment, loyal, love and a dream come true, they can be considered committed to their organisation. To be more specific, the advocates seem emotionally committed as they possess the willingness and desire to stay and this is crucial for the continuity of the organisational culture (Schweizer & Lyons 2008). Interestingly, two advocates also mention the culture as a reason for staying, so there seems to be dual effect here.

As discussed earlier, the advocates' commitment seems to be especially affected by the state of their job involvement, which also according to Mayer et al. (2002) are strongly correlated. And because such things as positive challenges, versatility, personal interest and the opportunity to learn are evident in the responses, the advocates clearly have a personal connection and participation with their work, which is the very definition of job involvement (Blau 1985; Ferdandez 2007; Macey & Scheider 2008).

In addition to organisational commitment, job involvement seems to have close ties with empowerment too, because decision influence and performance self-esteem are a part of both elements (Blau 1985) and evident across the data. All

in all, the respondents seem not only personally connected and actively participating to their work, but they also seem to like their jobs, which is the main element of job satisfaction (Brooke et al. 1988).

Perhaps surprisingly, satisfaction is the least discussed engagement element in the entire empirical data and one advocate does not seem to discuss any satisfaction related issues. That is why the data seems to support Fernandez's (2007, 524) notion that managers should not be relying too much on employee satisfaction alone. However, satisfaction does play an important part in commitment as proven by both theory (Baptise 2008) as well as the empirical data. In fact, the author views that because all of the advocates seem content at their current jobs and organisations (i.e. the necessary level of satisfaction has possibly been achieved), satisfaction itself is might not be a key factor anymore. But if the respondents would be strongly dissatisfied, it might lead to different results. That is why satisfaction cannot be dismissed from the employee engagement entity.

In contrast, empowerment seems to be an important element of employee engagement. In fact, all Corsun & Enx's (1999) three empowerment dimensions; self-efficacy, personal influence and meaningfulness, are evident across the empirical data. The advocates feel secure in their professional abilities, are able to have influence over their work which they find interesting, challenging or meaningful. They also feel externally valued by their co-workers, management or even by their employer. Even though there are personal differences especially when it comes to perceived external valuation, it seems that if one's professional self-esteem is high, there is enough autonomy and freedom and the immediate management shows appreciation, they are enough to make one feel empowered in ones work. As a fear for losing one's job is not an effective motivator on a sustained basis (Schweizer & Lyons 2008, 581-582) it is also a good sign that none of the advocates are afraid of their job. On the contrary, most of them feel not only secure in their professional ability but also very safe in their current position.

### **7.1.2. Connecting employee engagement elements and employee advocacy**

Because all five elements of employee engagement can be found from each advocate's data (excl. satisfaction with six out of seven matches), all of the interviewed advocates can be considered to be engaged employees as described by Macey & Schneider in their employee engagement framework (2008). And in addition to proving the respondents to be engaged employees, the empirical analysis also discovers some possible direct engagement affects to employee advocacy. These findings are key as they support the main theoretical claim that employee engagement and employee advocacy are very much connected (Gupta & Sharma 2016; McLeod & Clarke 2009; Miles & Mangold 2014; Sundberg 2016).

While the existing literature most often offers commitment and satisfaction as the factors affecting employee advocacy (Men 2014; Lages 2012; Schweizer & Lyons 2012), the empirical analysis in stead suggests that the most important out of the five established engagement elements seem to be not only satisfaction and commitment, but job involvement and empowerment as well. Also one new element, value identification, is offered.

Commitment can be connected to advocacy clearly even though the data is more focused on the negatives in that a lack of commitment will most likely lead to lack of advocacy too. Four of the seven advocates would stop their advocacy if they would be considering or actively leaving their current employer. And as stated before, while satisfaction is the least discussed element of employee engagement in the empirical data, in some instances it can directly affect employee advocacy because two of the employee advocates state that satisfaction is the key reason they act as employee advocates.

In addition to the two elements that already have theoretical background, the advocates connect empowerment and encouragement very strongly with

employee advocacy, much like Corace (2007) connects leadership and feeling valued with any employee engagement behaviour where employees stretch for extra efforts. The importance of job involvement is no surprise either, as the advocates view overall work related discussions in social media as important advocacy activities. Such discussions would very unlikely happen, if there was no personal interest towards one's work.

While job involvement could perhaps be considered more of a personally perceptive issue, organisations could affect it positively especially by hiring internally motivated people for fitting jobs. In contrast, both satisfaction and empowerment are issues that have managerial importance as managers can significantly influence these by displaying trust and appreciation as well as by offering freedom and interesting opportunities (Corsun & Enz 1999; Kahn 1990; Nohria et al. 2008; Schweizer & Lyons 2008; Kersley et al. 2006). It also must be noted that the empirical insights are very much based on the opinions of marketing professionals who have high personal interest towards their work (i.e. high job involvement). It could be possible that other, perhaps more manageable, employee engagement elements could be considered even more important for employees whose potential personal motivators and benefits are lesser or at least less important.

Interestingly, the empirical data also brings forth a brand new engagement element: value identification. While the previous literature views the perceived match between personal and organisational values mainly as an antecedent to commitment (Chatman 1981; Finegan 2000), the empirical data shows there is more to value identification than that. The data does connect values with commitment and employee duration too, but the interviewed employee advocates also consider their personal values to be so important that contradicting them would directly make them stop engaging in advocacy activities. However, it is important to note that this finding might be dependant on the level of job involvement. As the advocates' job involvement level seems

to be quite high, i.e. they might also feel that their job represents their identity and self-image (Blau 1985), the importance of the perceived value identification could also be higher. Even so, this finding could be key, as it has not been discussed in previous literature.

Finally, while trust can be considered directly effecting employee engagement in literature (Men 2014; Macey & Scheinder 2008) and in the empirical analysis, it perhaps has more of an indirect effect on employee advocacy via the other elements such as empowerment and job involvement, where the element trust is often discussed by the advocates.

## **7.2. Employee Advocacy**

As the previous chapter proves, employee advocacy is an activity that is affected by employee engagement elements in various direct and indirect ways. In addition, the empirical data also suggests that good organisational relationships in combination with good two-way communication matter to advocates. Thus the main theoretical models of the study, the employee advocacy model by Men (2014) and the framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement by Macey & Scheinder (2008), are supported by the empirical data.

However, the actual detail of what employee advocacy is, is not yet really discussed at least in existing academic literature (Men 2014). The author has concluded in the literature review that it is a close relative to both employee voice and online WOM, but not a synonym for either one. That is why this study has the opportunity not only study but also to define a novel concept in the academic world.

### 7.2.1. Defining employee advocacy

Based on the literature review and the empirical data can be concluded that employee advocacy is much more than an additional tool to marketing and advertising, but it has deep roots in organisational psychology and overall employee wellbeing. And taking into consideration all these issues, there really is no comprehensive definition in the academic literature to match.

However, during the literature review, the author came across a definition that was created by one of the first American digital agencies, Ciceron. According to them, employee advocacy is: “the result of engaged employees being empowered to speak on behalf of the brands for which they work” (Ciceron 2015). And based on the discussions with active advocates and the thorough analysis of their insights, the author has come to the conclusion that this perhaps is the best existing way to shortly define the concept. But it is not complete either, as Ciceron does not include any actual activities to their definition and also overlooks the importance of personal motivation and personal benefits. Even though the personal motivators are excluded in the study delimitations from further analysis in this particular study, the importance of them is apparent and consistent in the empirical data and cannot be excluded from any comprehensive definition. That is why after the careful empirical analysis this study will define and visualise employee advocacy in the following way:

*“Employee advocates are engaged and personally motivated employees who are empowered by their management to not only share company content, but to discuss current professional issues in social media. Successful employee advocacy can create a win-win situation by potentially influencing both the personal and the corporate brand advocacy as well as even strengthen the bond between the person and the organisation.” - Kuutsa 2016*

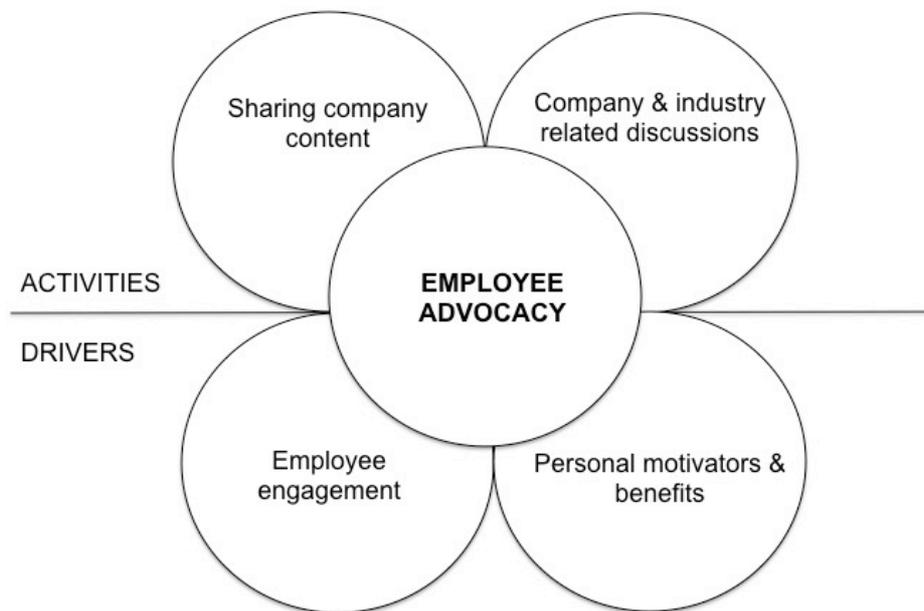


Figure 10. Visual representation of employee advocacy in social media

Based on the empirical data, the main advocacy activities in social media can be categorised into two main sections: content sharing and current discussions. Sharing company content includes such things like sharing blog posts, articles, campaigns or job openings. Company and industry related discussions extend employee advocacy from a pure organisational context towards a broader industry context and is mostly connected to Twitter usage.

Regarding the most used employee advocacy channels in general, most of the respondents describe themselves to be active about work-related issues mostly on Twitter and LinkedIn whereas Facebook and Instagram are more private channels. If you compare that to a global employee survey from 2016, it is Facebook that is the most popular channel to share employer's content (with 86 %) with the other most popular channels being Twitter (with 52 %), LinkedIn (with 43 %) and Instagram with (with 34 %) (Terpening et al. 2016, 17).

Here the difference might exist because all the respondents of this study are marketing professionals and for them, Twitter is already a popular channel to use for private and professional discussions. This is also where employee advocates can show their own expertise and create a professional image of themselves and the organisation they work for and perhaps here it is job involvement combined with the personal motivators that matter more than the other employee engagement issues. However, as this qualitative data does not offer comparative insights into the different possible drivers of employee advocacy and is not able to prove actual causal relationships, this cannot be stated for sure. But based on the empirical analysis it is clear that employee engagement or organisation-related reasons and personal motivators are not only two separate issues, but the advocates are also able to tell them apart as well as recognise the benefits of advocacy for both parties involved.

Finally, even though the proposed outcomes of employee advocacy offered in the definition are not empirically researched in this study either, they do have existing foundations from previous literature (Dreher 2014; Gotsi & Wilson 2001; Lages 2012; Terpening et al. 2016) and are important for the entity of the concept. Thus this definition is a combination of old and new and even more importantly, a conversation starter for future academic research.

### **7.2.2. Organisation-level discussion**

What should happen alongside employee engagement on an organisational level is the direct support and encouragement on employee advocacy. In fact, the primary barrier why employees don't act as employee advocates is that they have not been asked (Terpening et al. 2016). This can also be supported by the empirical data, as the advocates emphasise the importance of organisational support and appreciation. As the second most popular reason for not engaging in employee advocacy is that employees wish to keep their professional and personal life separate. (Terpening et al. 2016), the importance of organisational support and positive example can become even bigger. Even a study of this

scale can find empirical evidence that employee advocacy can happen even if a person is otherwise private in social media, but management positively influences the beginning.

However, it is very important to note that employee advocacy is a part of organisational citizenship behaviour (Eldor & Harpaz 2016; Fullerton 2003) and cannot be enforced by sanctions (Smith et al. 1983). There can be a fine line between encouragement and compulsion. Most of the interviewed advocates also emphasise the importance of the voluntary and personal nature of advocacy. Some of them even state that they would stop engaging in advocacy if there was much too much organisational or management control. In stead, what could be offered is enough good-quality content to share and the freedom to do it.

When done right, empowerment can even have continued effects as most of active advocates listed positive feedback as a key method for evaluating their personal advocacy success. That is why it's very unfortunate that one of the main employee advocacy contradictions that management struggles with is in fact employee empowerment (Rokka et al. 2014). So it seems that the issue the advocates most require is the very same issue that management is having difficulties with.

Even though there are difficulties and barriers, there is no denying that employee advocacy is important. Not activating employee advocacy means missing a large marketing opportunity for reach reasons alone as brand messages shared by employees can actually reach 561 % further compared to them being shared by the organisation alone (MSLGroup 2012). That is why employee advocacy also has effects on the organisation's external image and reputation (Dreher 2014; Gotsi & Wilson 2001; Lages 2012; Rokka et al. 2014). In addition, employee advocacy is important to human resources, because employees recruited via referrals from current employees usually demonstrate greater levels of quality and satisfaction (Scweitzer & Lyons 2008, 563) And

luckily some of the active advocates do associate sharing interesting job postings as one of their employee advocacy activities.

However, established employee advocacy policies are still quite rare (Baird & Parasnis 2011) and actual employee advocacy programs most likely are even more so. Still, this is something especially larger organisations should consider and two advocates' organisations actually have these programs already in place. And while Omilion-Hodges & Baker (2014) suggest things as contests and challenges as a way to get people sharing corporate content more actively, the interviewed advocates mostly shoot this suggestion down as it might lead the motivation towards the wrong direction. In order to truly gain the benefits on an organisational level, employee advocacy has to be born from the personal desire to do it.

### **7.3 Complete Theoretical and Empirical Framework**

Because the main focus of this study, the assumed interrelationship between employee engagement and employee advocacy, is supported by both the literature review and empirical data, there is no need to radically change the previously introduced developed theoretical frameworks. Also all the five engagement elements can be found from the empirical data, so there is no need to make changes to them either. Even though trust could be considered more of an indirect affect to employee advocacy, it is still considered a direct element of engagement.

In stead, there is only one main addition that needs to take place after the empirical analysis: the value identification element. Because value identification is apparent in the empirical data and seems to have effects on not only employer choice and commitment but also on employee advocacy itself, the concept is raised to a parallel level alongside other employee engagement

elements. That is why the theoretical framework is completed with the empirical analysis in the following way:

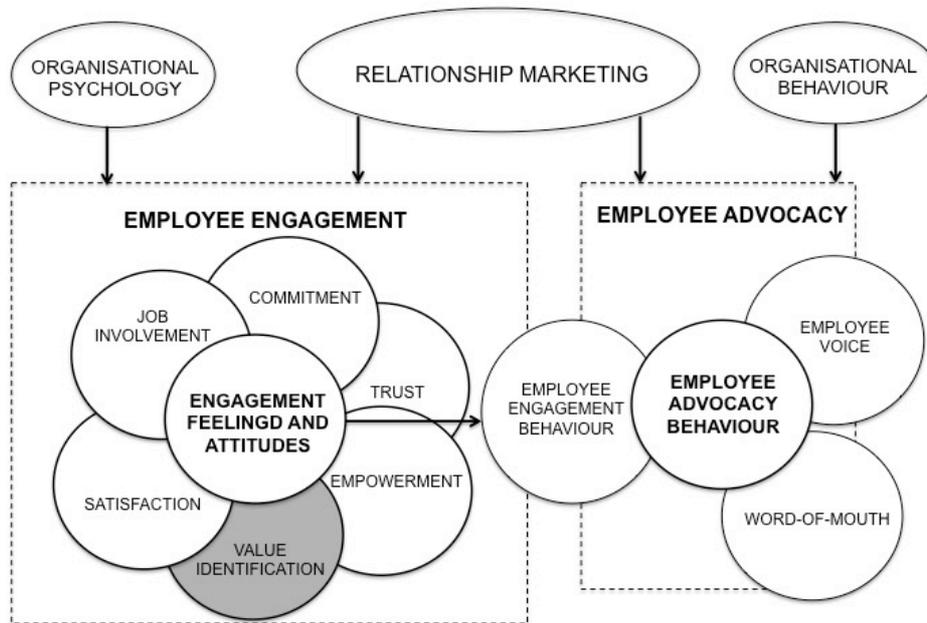


Figure 11. Complete theoretical and empirical framework

In this framework there are no additions made to the employee advocacy behaviour as the concept of employee voice includes not only the possibility for employees to advocate, but the voluntary and co-operative nature of it too (Dundon et al. 2004; Freeman and Medoff 1984). In addition, the concept of WOM already offers insights into the online context and further connects advocacy with engagement (Bowman & Narayandas 2001; Hoffman & Fodor 2010).

Furthermore, this study's findings regarding the details of employee advocacy have mostly been based on the empirical analysis and the insights of the active advocates, as there is a lack of previous academic literature on it. That is also why employee advocacy is not detailed further in this framework, but instead a separate visual representation was offered in chapter 7.2.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

The main goal of this research was to explore the interrelationship between employee advocacy in social media and employee engagement. In addition, the secondary goals of the research were to explore the relatively new concepts of employee engagement and employee advocacy on their own.

The study was formed from two main sections: literature review and empirical research. The literature review was conducted using as much academic literature as possible with further support added from practitioner journals and commercial publications. It offered a comprehensive view of what is current understanding on both employee engagement and employee advocacy and came to the conclusion that there is much to be studied further on both accounts. In turn, the empirical analysis was conducted using a single case study method with both deductive and inductive elements. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain insights from active employee advocates who worked in marketing or communications. Because the respondents had extensive knowledge of employee advocacy, their insights proved useful to the yet academically unfamiliar concept.

### **8.1. Summary of the Main Findings**

Here the main findings of the study are summarised one research question at a time starting with the main research objective:

*How are employee advocacy in social media and employee engagement interrelated?*

The main study goal was achieved as the empirical analysis successfully aligned with the literature review and placed employee engagement as one potential antecedent to employee advocacy. While the actual causal relationships cannot be proven with qualitative methods nor are the different

antecedent options (e.g. personal brand vs. employee engagement) compared with each other, the existing literature combined with the new empirical insights can be used to suggest that the proposed interrelationship does exist as introduced in the theoretical framework with engagement feelings and attitudes affecting advocacy behaviour.

In addition to this one-way relationship, some existing literature even suggests a dual effect between the two concepts, in that employee advocacy would again positively influence employee engagement, but this is not further discussed in this study.

Finally, this study is not only able to recognise the overall interrelationship between engagement and advocacy, but also to identify some specific individual engagement elements that possibly could even directly influence advocacy behaviour.

*What are the key employee engagement elements from the employee advocate's perspective?*

According to the literature review, employee engagement is constructed of five separate but interrelated elements: trust, commitment, satisfaction, job involvement and empowerment. And based on the preliminary data it was possible to categorise and unite each of these. However, the empirical data was somewhat different from the previous literature in regards to the importance of each element to the employee advocates.

While in previous literature satisfaction and commitment were the most discussed elements regarding employee advocacy and their importance was further supported by the empirical data, also empowerment, job involvement and value identification were found to be key to the interviewed advocates. Furthermore, value identification was somewhat of a novel finding as it had been previously studied more as an antecedent to commitment. But in this

study it was discovered that value identification could have very important and possibly even direct effects to employee advocacy too.

According to this study, trust was the only previously established employee engagement element that seemed to have more indirect effects to employee advocacy via the others. Even though trust was key for employee engagement, it was excluded from this list of key elements as the employee advocates discussed it more as an incorporative element of either job involvement or empowerment.

*How can employee advocacy in social media be defined?*

Because the previous literature alone did not offer an extensive image of what employee advocacy actually is, the detailed questionnaire directed to the active advocates became crucial in defining the concept.

A detailed but concise definition is already offered in chapter 7.2.1., but in short it was concluded that employee advocates are engaged and personally motivated employees who are empowered by their management to not only share company content, but to discuss current professional issues in social media. The previous literature also suggested that when done right, employee advocacy could possibly lead to mutually beneficial outcomes both at the employee and at the organisational level.

Based on this summary of the main findings, it can be concluded that all three proposed research questions were answered in this study.

## **8.1. Theoretical Implications**

Not only did the study support the previous literature by successfully connecting employee engagement to employee advocacy, it also offered new insights to both concepts separately.

The entity of employee engagement used in this study was only offered in one previous literature source and this source was actually discovered after the engagement elements had already been discovered from an extensive review on organisational psychology literature. The engagement elements had also previously been studied mostly either separately or in smaller combinations, so this study can be used to further build on more comprehensive view of employee engagement. Furthermore, the empirical analysis discovered a potential sixth element of employee engagement, value identification, that can have effects not only to commitment and job involvement but also to employee advocacy.

As employee advocacy was not studied in academic literature, there was not much existing theoretical background. That is why this study connected two related concepts, employee voice and WOM, that together offered potential new insights into the novel concept. In addition, the insights gain from the active advocates enabled the author to propose a detailed definition of employee advocacy, which based on the review had not happened in academic literature previously.

## **8.2. Managerial Implications**

As this study is a qualitative one and conducted on a small scale, it can mostly offer managerial implications and suggestions. First of all, this study clearly connects employee advocacy with issues that have implications for human resource management. The external effects of employee advocacy, such as

increased reach and corporate branding benefits, are very much linked to marketing (social media marketing to be more specific). But in order to be able to achieve them, management should dig deeper into employee advocacy than they perhaps did before.

Gaining employee advocates starts with recruiting internally motivated employees and continues with constant internal HR strategies that aim towards the improvement of employee engagement and employee wellbeing. If the existing structure is not there and the employees are unhappy and unmotivated, putting employee advocacy programs in place alone most likely will not work. Also, while quick rewards such as movie tickets and gift cards might increase advocacy activity level on a short term, they are not a continuous basis for it. Instead, advocacy has to be voluntary and personally motivated and the organisation can positively affect here by encouragement, training, tools, content and freedom. Also open and two-way communication is highly recommendable.

### **8.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Since employee engagement and employee advocacy are relatively new topics in marketing research, there is not much existing academic literature about them. This perhaps is the most important limitation since the lack of independent academic literature means there can also be a lack of source transparency, reliability, validity and objectivity. Some studies and texts are conducted by commercial enterprises such as advertising agencies or technology start-ups and this can create concerns of their motivations and consequently concerns of their result quality. However, since there unfortunately is not an abundance of independent research in this field, these articles and insights can provide general guidance to a relatively new topic. Despite this, the goal of the study has been to use as much of academic research as possible and thus the foundation of the literature review is derived

from relationship marketing, organisational psychology and organisational behaviour.

Time is unfortunately a limitation for both theoretical and empirical issues. Since social media and its effects on marketing change and develop rapidly, the core findings of the study should be considered as a snapshot of the current understanding of the topic. This is also the case of the literature review conducted in this study: for example a study made in 2011 might have very limited or at least different views of the importance, possibilities or risks of employee advocacy in social media.

The first empirical limitation is that the data only represents the opinion of the interviewees due to the study's qualitative nature. The data is also gathered only in Finland from a small and carefully selected sample of marketing or communications professionals that can also be recognized as engaged. For all these reasons, any actual causal relationships between the two main concepts cannot be revealed, any hypothesis proved and therefore generalisations or very extensive conclusions should not be made. In stead, the literature review combined with the preliminary data can offer important and interesting new insights on both concepts as well as suggest the existence of their interrelationship. Especially as the respondents represent people with knowledge and experience of employee advocacy, it makes the data more valuable especially for managerial implications.

In addition, this study does offer important insights and perspectives to a current conversation and there are several different directions that possible future research could focus on from here on. Even from a methodological standpoint there is plenty to research regarding employee engagement or employee advocacy with any chosen study method, because both concepts are fresh in marketing literature.

As this study included only the employees' point of view, management perspective of employee advocacy or contrasting that with the employee view would be relevant research challenges. Also studying active employee advocates with little or no focus on their personal brand (i.e. no marketing-oriented people) would be interesting as the respondents of this study all at least recognized the importance of employee advocacy to their online personal brand. This perhaps could offer new insights on the motivators, since they would be almost purely external. A comparative study on the advocacy motivators could also be conducted or the study focus could be shifted entirely to the personal motivators.

The outcomes of employee advocacy also offer an option for future research: especially the impact employee advocacy has on corporate or employer branding came up in the study interviews. Finally, a case study on companies with successful employee advocacy programs and their effects could be conducted.

## REFERENCES

Ahmed, P. & Raqif, M. (2003) Internal marketing issues and challenges, *European Journal of Marketing*, 37, 9, 1177-1186

Anderson, E. (1998) Customer satisfaction and word of mouth, *Journal of Service Research*, 1,1, 5-17.

Baird, C. & Parasnis, G. (2011) From social media to Social CRM: reinventing the customer relationship, *Strategy & Leadership*, 39, 6, 27 – 34

Ballantyne, D. (2003) A relationship-mediated theory of internal marketing, *European Journal of Marketing*, 37, 9, 1241-1260

Baptiste, N. (2008) Tightening the link between employee wellbeing at work and performance: A new dimension for HRM, *Management Decision*, 46, 2, 284-309

Barker, M., Barker, D., Bormann, N. & Neher, K. (2013) Social Media Marketing: A Strategic Approach, South-Western Cengage Learning, Mason, OH.

Berry, L. (1981) The Employee as Customer, *Journal of Retail Banking*, 111, 1, 33-40

Berry, L. (2001) Relationship Marketing of Services – Growing Interest, Emerging Perspectives, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23,4, 236-245.

Bowman, D. & Narayandas, D. (2001) Managing Customer-Initiated Contacts with Manufacturers: The Impact on Share of Category Requirements and Word-Of-Mouth Behavior, *Journal of Marketing*, 38, 3, 281-297

Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C. & Gronhaug, K. (2001) Qualitative Marketing Research, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.

Chatman, J. (1991) Improving interactional organizational research: a model of person-organization fit. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 333-349

Chen, C. (2013) Exploring Personal Branding on YouTube, *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 12, 4, 332-347

Christopher, M., Payne, A. & Ballantyne, D. (1991) Relationship Marketing: Bringing Quality Customer Service And Marketing Together, Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann.

Chung, C. & Austria, K. (2010) Social Media Gratification and Attitude toward Social Media Marketing, Messages: A Study of the Effect of Social Media Marketing Messages on Online Shopping Value, *Northeast Business & Economics Association*, 581-586

Ciceron Inc. (2015) The Business Case For Employee Advocacy [online document]. Cited 30.8.2016. Available: <http://www.ciceron.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/The-Business-Case-for-Employee-Advocacy-Final.pdf>

Corace, C. (2007) Engagement – Enrolling the Quiet Majority. *Organization Development Journal*, 25, 2, 171-175.

Corsun, D. & Enx, C. (1999) Predicting Psychological Empowerment Among Service Workers: The Effect of Support-Based Relationships, *Human Relations*, 52, 2, 205-224

Dreher, S. (2014) Social media and the world of work. *Corporate Communication: An International Journal*, 19, 4, 344-356

Duan, W., Gu, B. & Whinston, A. (2008) The dynamics of online word-of-mouth and product sales – An empirical investigation of the movie industry, *Journal of Retailing*, 84, 2, 233-242

Dundon, T., Wilkinson, A., Marchington, M. & Ackers, P. (2004) The meanings and purpose of employee voice, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15, 6, 1150-1171

Edelman (2015) The 2015 Edelman Trust Barometer: Global Results [online document]. [Cited 8.4.2016] Available:  
<http://www.edelman.com/insights/intellectual-property/2015-edelman-trust-barometer/global-results/>

Edelman (2016) The 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer: Global Results [online document]. [Cited 21.5.2016] Available:  
<http://www.edelman.com/insights/intellectual-property/2016-edelman-trust-barometer/global-results/>

Eldor, L. & Harpaz, I. (2016) A process model of employee engagement: The learning climate and its relationship with extra-role performance behaviors, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37, 213-235

Felix, R., Rauschnabel, P. & Hinsch, C. (2016) Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic framework, *Journal of Business Research*, 1-9

Fernandez, C. (2007) Employee Engagement, *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, 13, 5, 524-526

Fill, C. (2009) *Marketing Communications: Interactivity, Communities and Content*. Pearson Education Limited, Essex.

Finegan, J. (2000) The impact of person and organizational values on organizational commitment, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 73, 149-169

Freeman, R.B. and Medoff, J.L. (1984). *What Do Unions Do?*, Basic Books, New York.

Fullerton, G. (2003) When Does Commitment Lead To Loyalty?, *Journal of Service Research*, 5, 333-344

Godes, D. & Mayzlin, D. (2004) Using Online Conversations to Study Word-of-Mouth Communication, *Marketing Science*, 23, 4, 545-560

Gotsi, M. & Wilson, A. (2001) Corporate reputation management: "living the brand", *Management Decision*, 39, 2, 00-104

Grönroos, C. (1994) From Marketing Mix to Relationship Marketing: Towards a Paradigm Shift in Marketing, *Management Decision*, 32, 2, 4-20.

Grönroos, C. (1996) Relationship Marketing Logic, *Asia-Australia Marketing Journal*, 4,1, 7-18

Grönroos, C. (2004) The relationship marketing process: communication, interaction, dialogue, value, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 19,2, 99-113

Gummesson, E. (1991a) *Qualitative Methods in Management Research*, SAGE Publications, Newbury Park, CA, revised edition.

Gummesson, E. (1991b) Marketing-orientation Revisited: The Crucial Role of the Part-time Marketer, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 25, 2, 60 - 75

Gummesson, E. (2002) *Total Relationship Marketing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford.

Gupta, N. & Sharma, V. (2016) Exploring Employee Engagement – A Way to Better Business Performance, *Global Business Review*, 17, 3, 45-63

Harad, K. (2013) Content Marketing Strategies to Educate and Entertain, *Journal of Financial Planning*, 26,3, 18-20

Harker, M. (2004) "Lenses and mirrors: the customer perspective on part-time marketers", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 22, 6, 663 - 672

Harter, J., Hayes, T. & Schmidt, F. (2002) Business-Unit-Level Relationship Between Employee Satisfaction, Employee Engagement, and Business Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 2, 268-279

Henning-Thurau, T., Hofacker, C. & Bloching, B. (2013) Marketing the Pinball Way: Understanding How Social Media Change The Generation Value For Consumers and Companies, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27, 237-241

Hirschman, A. (1970) *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts

Hirsjärvi, S. Remes, P. & Sajavaara, P. (2009) *Tutki ja kirjoita*, 15<sup>th</sup> edition, Tammi, Helsinki

Hoffman, D. & Fodor, M. (2010) Can You Measure the ROI of Your Social Media Marketing?, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 52, 1, 41-49

Hougaard, S: & Bjerre, M. (2003) *Strategic Relationship Marketing*, Samfundslitteratur Press, Gylling.

Jou, J., Chou, C. & Fu, F (2008) Development of an instrument to measure internal marketing concept, *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 13, 3, 66-79

Kahn, W. (1990) Psychological Conditions Of Personal Engagement and Disengagement At Work, *Academy of Marketing Journal*, 33,4, 692-724

Kersley, B., Alpin, C., Forth, J., Bryson, A., Bewley, H., Dix, G., Oxenbridge, S. (2006) *Inside the Workplace: Findings from the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London.

Kim, A. & Ko, E. (2012) Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand, *Journal of Business Research*,, 65, 1480-1486

Kim, J. & Rhee, Y. (2011) Strategic Thinking about Employee Communication Behavior (ECB) in Public Relations: Testing the Models of Megaphoning and Scouting Effects in Korea, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 23, 3, 243-268

Kirtis, A. & Karahan, F. (2011) To Be or Not to Be in Social Media Arena as the Most Cost-Efficient Marketing Strategy after the Global Recession, *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 24, 260-268

Kozinets, R., de Valck, K., Wojnicki, A. & Wilner S. (2010) Networked Narratives: Understanding Word-of-Mouth Marketing in Online Communities, *Journal of Marketing*, 74, 2, 71-89

Lages, C. (2012) Employees' external representation of their workplace: Key antecedents, *Journal of Business Research*, 65, 1264-1272

Labrecque, L., Markos, E. Milne, G. (2011) Online Personal Branding: Processes, Challenges, and Implications, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 25, 2, 37-50

Leeflang, S., Verhoef, P., Dahlström, P. & Freundt, T. (2013) Challenges and solutions for marketing in a digital era, *European Management Journal*, 32, 1-12

Macey, W. & Schneider, B. (2008), The meaning of employee engagement, *Industrial and Organisational Psychology*, 1, 3–30

Mangold, G. & Faulds, D. (2009) Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix, *Business Horizons*, 52, 4, 357-365

Macey, W., Scheinder, B., Barbera, K. & Young S. (2009) Employee Engagement: Tools for Analysis, Practice, and Competitive Advantage. Wiley-Blackwell, West Sussex.

Martin, G. & Groen-in't-Woud, S. (2011) Employer branding and corporate reputations management in global companies: a signalling model and case illustration, *Global Talent Management*, Routledge, New York.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W., Leiter, M. (2001) Job burnout, *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397-422

Mathieu, J. & Zajac, D. (1990), A review of meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates and consequences of organizational commitment', *Psychological Bulletin*, 108 , 2, 171-94

Mattsson, L. (1997) "Relationship marketing" and the "markets-as-networks approach" – a comparative analysis of two evolving streams of research, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15,5, 447-461

McConnell, S. (2004) Advocacy in organizations; The elements of success, *Generations*, 28, 1, 25-30

McLeod, D. & Clarke, N. (2009) Engaging for Success: enhancing performance through employee engagement. A report to Government. [Cited 21.5.2016]  
Available: <http://engageforsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/file52215.pdf>

Men, L. (2014) Why Leadership Matters to Internal Communication: Linking Transformational Leadership, Symmetrical Communication, and Employee Outcomes, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26, 3, 256-279.

Men, L. & Stacks, D. (2013), "The impact of leadership style and employee empowerment on perceived organizational reputation", *Journal of Communication Management*, Vol. 17 Iss 2 pp. 171 – 192.

Meyer, J., Stanley, D., Herscovith, L., Topolnytsky, L. (2002) Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment to the Organization: A Meta-analysis of Antecedents, Correlates, and Consequenses, *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 62, 25-51

Miles, S. & Mangold, G. (2014) Employee voice: Untapped resource or social media time bomb? *Business Horizons*, 57, 3, 401-411

Morgan, R. & Hunt, S. (1994) The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing, *Journal of Marketing*, 58, 20-38

Mowbray, P., Wilkinson, A. & Herman, H.M. (2014) An integrative review of employee voice: identifying a common conceptualization and research agenda, *International Journal of Management Reviews* 17, 3, 382-400

Nohria, N., Gryosberg, B. & Lee, L. (2008) Employee Motivation: A Powerful New Model, *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1-8

Omillion-Hogdes, L. & Baker, C. Everyday talk and convincing conversations: Utilizing strategic internal communication, *Business Horizons*, 2014, 57, 435-445

Parry, E. & Solidoro, A. (2013) Social Media as a Mechanism for Engagement?, *Advanced Series in Management* 12, 121-141

Ravald, A. & Grönroos, C. (1996) The value concept and relationship marketing, *European Journal of Marketing*, 30,2, 19-30

Price, L. & Arnould, E. (1999) Commercial Friendships: Service Provider-Client Relationships in Context. *Journal of Marketing*. 63, 4, 38-56

Raj, A. & Jyothi, P. (2011) Internal Branding: Exploring the Employee Perspective, *Journal of Economic Development, Management, IT, Finance and Marketing*, 3, 2, 1-27

Robertson-Smith, G. & Markwick, C. (2009) Employee Engagement: a review of current thinking, Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton

Rokka, J., Karlsson, K. & Tienari, J. (2014) Balancing acts: Managing employees and reputation in social media, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 30, 7-8, 802-827

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2009) Research methods for business students, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Pearson Education Limited, Essex.

Schaufeli, W.B., Salanova, M., Gonzalez-Roma, V. & Bakker, A.B. (2002) The measurement of engagement and burnout: a two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach, *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3, 71-92.

Schweitzer, L. & Lyons, S. (2008) The market within: A marketing approach to creating and developing high-value employment relationships. *Business Horizons*, 51, 555-565.

Smith, C., Organ, D. & Near, J. (1983) Organizational citizenship behaviour: Its nature and antecedents, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 68, 4, 653-663

Smith, P. & Zook Z. (2011) Marketing Communications: Integrating offline and online with social media, Kogan Page Limited, London.

Spencer, D. (1986) Employee voice and employee retention, *Academy of Management Journal*, 29, 3, 488-502

Sundberg, J. (2016) How Employee Engagement Drives Employee Advocacy, with David Hawley of SocialChorus. [Cited 21.5.2016]. Available: <http://linkhumans.com/podcast/employee-engagement-dave-hawley>

Terpening, E., Li, C. & Littleton, A. (2016) Social Media Employee Advocacy: Tapping into the power of an engaged social workforce, Altimeter a Prophet Company, 1-35

Thomas, G., Ziolin, R. & Hartman, J. (2009) The Central Role Of Communication In Developing Trust And Its Effect On Employee Involvement, *Journal of Business Communication*, 46,3, 287-310

Towers Perrin (2003) Working Today: Understanding What Drives Employee Engagement: The 2003 Towers Perrin Talent Report. Stamford.

Van Belleghem, S., Eenhuizen, M. & Veris, E. (2011) Social Media Around the World 2011. InSites Consulting. [Cited 7.5.2016] Available: <http://www.slideshare.net/stevenvanbelleghem/social-media-aroundthe-world-2011/download?lead=394fd930572c9b62fb082021af5a6d0922046ec4>

Van Dyne, L. & LePine, J.A. (1998). Helping and voice extra-role behaviors: evidence of construct and predictive validity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 41, pp. 108– 119.

Vizeum (2016) Suomalaiset sosiaalisessa mediassa [online document]. [Cited 29.9.2016]. Available: <http://vizeum.fi/p/news-item/suomalaiset-somessa-keskimaarin-45-tuntia-viikossa/>

Ward, C. & Yates, D. (2013) Personal Branding and e-Professionalism, *Journal of Service Science*, 6, 1, 101-104

Weber Shandwick & KRC Research (2014) Employees Rising: Seizing the Opportunity in Employee Activism. [Cited 1.8.2016] Available: <https://www.webershandwick.com/uploads/news/files/employees-rising-seizing-the-opportunity-in-employee-activism.pdf>

Yin, R. (2009) Case Study Research: Design and Methods, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, SAGE Publications Inc, California.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Key words and phrases for employee engagement

	<b>Trust</b>	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Satisfaction</b>	<b>Involvement</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>
<b>1</b>	Trust between colleagues	Organisational issues matter to me personally  Much needs to be offered for me to leave	Feel good to be here  Caring towards the organisation  Been treated well	My work is interesting to me  I'm interested in the industry	I feel valued  Secure in my expertise  I feel safe in my position
<b>2</b>	Warm and open relationship with management	Dream job  I plan to be here for a long time	Enjoy myself at the work place  Best place I've ever worked at  Can't wait to get back to work after a holiday	My work is important to me  My work is one key reason to be here	I feel secure  I feel valued  Responsibility and freedom equally  I feel safe in my current position
<b>3</b>	Trust from management  Close relationships with team  Honesty and openness	Love  Family  A second home  I see myself working here a really long time	People and culture the reason to stay	Extra tasks at the workplace  Involvement	I feel safe in my position  I know exactly where I stand  I feel secure in my professional ability  No monitoring
<b>4</b>	Trust from management	Commitment  Loyal  Understanding  Long employment behind	Nice place to work  I like my colleagues	Reason to stay is partly my job  My job is interesting  Excited to explore and try new things	I know I'm good  I'm not the first one to go  My manager and co-workers value me  Independent development  Encouragement
<b>5</b>	Trust towards the organisation  Trusting management relationship	Feels like being part of a team  Could work for 5-10 more years	Enthusiastic  Proud to be a part of this  Excited	Job is very natural to me  Personal interest  My work is extremely interesting	No fear for one's job  Valued by my manager  Little control, freedom  Very secure professionally
<b>6</b>	Trust in management  Management trusts me	Commitment  Part of a team	I like working here	A lot of learning and growth -> reason to stay	Feel valued by employer  Responsibility, freedom, influence
<b>7</b>	Trust towards the organisation	Commitment  Loyal		My job is versatile, challenging and keeps re-inventing -> I need this  Motivated	Secure professionally  Employer values me  Authority to act  I feel safe in my position

## Appendix 2. Employee advocacy activities

	<b>Channels</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Main activities</b>
<b>1</b>	Twitter LinkedIn Company blog (Facebook)	Actively for 1,5 years	Continuous on a weekly level  High peaks during events  I like the things I share  Goal oriented  Relatively planned	Discussions  Influencing and sharing opinions  Writing company blog posts  Sharing company blog posts  Building a network
<b>2</b>	No specific division for personal & work use  Twitter (especially)	App. 1 year  As soon as employment started	Personal interest first  Periodical or continuous depending on what is going on  Shared content close to personal way of thinking	Sharing and talking about colleagues' outputs  Promoting corporate values  Sharing corporate and employer image externally  Sharing company blog posts  Sharing everyday activities from the office
<b>3</b>	Twitter LinkedIn	App. 1 year	Continuous on a daily level  Usually twice a day	Reading and commenting tweets  Discussions  Bringing forth the company name  Sharing company blog posts  Sharing not only our but also others' articles related to work issues  Building a network
<b>4</b>	Twitter LinkedIn (Instagram)	Actively for 4 or 5 years	Continuous on a daily level  Mostly unplanned	Bringing forth the employer and the industry  Discussions  Sharing opinions  Sharing corporate content
<b>5</b>	Twitter LinkedIn Facebook Snapchat	Actively for 4 years	Continuous on a weekly level  Relatively unplanned  Dependant on how content relates to personal interest	Work and employer related discussions  Sharing interesting employer content  Sharing job openings  Sharing everyday work situations from the office
<b>6</b>	LinkedIn Facebook Instagram (Company blog)	App. 1 year  Since the start of the employment	Continuous on a weekly level  Both planned and unplanned	Sharing pictures of everyday work business trips and lifestyle of working at the company  Sharing employer content  Recruitment of interesting talent
<b>7</b>	LinkedIn  Twitter  Facebook	App. 3 years  Since the start of the employment	Continuous  Mostly unplanned  Sharing things close to me	Sharing company content  Current industry discussions

### Appendix 3. Interview questions in English

1. Would you say that you support and/or advocate your organisation or their offering online?
2. Could you describe how you have done this? Describe the processes and activities, please. Can you give specific examples?
3. How often do you do this? Is it consistent or periodical? Is it planned or unplanned?
4. When did you start advocating for your organisation and/or its offering online and why?
5. Which channels you use to publicly advocate for your organisation online and do they differ from your other personal online channel usage? Why?
6. Do you perceive that you do employee advocacy also elsewhere besides (for example social media or company websites)? Where and how?
7. Why do you continue engaging in employee advocacy tasks?
8. Do you find your employee advocacy work important and why/why not?
9. (If not apparent from previous answers) Do you consider on the personal benefits of employee advocacy, for example your personal brand, and how important are they to you?
10. How do you feel that you have succeeded as an employee advocate for your organisation?
11. How is employee advocacy perceived in your organisation?
12. Does your organisation encourage your employee advocacy and how?
13. In your opinion, how should your organisation encourage your employee advocacy?

14. What would make you want to become more active in employee advocacy and why?
15. What would make you stop engaging in employee advocacy and why?
16. Why did you initially choose to work at this particular job?
17. Why do you continue to stay to work at this particular job at this particular organisation?
18. How secure do you feel in your professional ability at your current job and why?
19. How would you describe your feelings and attitudes for your organisation being an employee there?
20. How would you describe your relationship with your employer and with your manager(s)?
21. How would you describe the relationships between colleagues in the work community?
22. How would you describe the communication atmosphere in your organisation overall?
23. What kind of feedback do you generally get from your superiors?
24. Do you feel valued by your employer at your current job and why/why not?
25. How secure do you feel at your current position in your organisation? Why is that?
26. How long do you see yourself working for this particular organisation?
27. What would make you leave?
28. Are there any other questions or topics that you wished we discussed?

#### Appendix 4. Interview questions in Finnish

1. Sanoisitko, että sinä toimit yrityksesi tai heidän tarjontansa työntekijälähettiläänä verkossa?
2. Voisitko kuvailla, kuinka sinä olet tehnyt tätä? Kuvaisitko prosesseja ja aktiviteetteja, kiitos. Voisitko antaa tarkkoja esimerkkejä?
3. Kuinka usein teet tätä? Onko se jatkuvaa vai kausittaista? Onko suunnitelmallista vai suunnittelematonta?
4. Milloin sinä aloitit yrityksesi tai sen tarjonnan lähettiläänä verkossa ja miksi?
5. Mitä kanavia sinä käytät verkossa tähän toimintaan ja poikkeako se jotenkin muusta henkilökohtaisesta käytöstäsi? Miksi?
6. Koetko, että toimit työntekijälähettiläänä muuallakin kuin (esim. sosiaalisessa mediassa tai verkkosivuilla tai verkossa)? Missä ja miten?
7. Miksi sinä jatkat yrityksesi työntekijälähettiläänä toimimista?
8. Pidätkö työtäsi työntekijälähettiläänä tärkeänä ja miksi/miksi ei?
9. (Jos ei mainita aiemmissa vastauksissa) Otatko huomioon työntekijälähettilyyden henkilökohtaisia etuja, esimerkiksi henkilökohtaisen brändin rakentamisen kannalta, ja kuinka tärkeitä ne ovat sinulle?
10. Kuinka koet onnistuneesi yrityksesi työntekijälähettiläänä?
11. Kuinka työntekijälähettilyyteen suhtaudutaan yrityksessäsi?
12. Rohkaiseeko yrityksesi työntekijälähettilyyteen ja miten se tapahtuu?
13. Miten sinun mielestäsi yrityksesi tulisi rohkaista työntekijälähettilyyttäsi?
14. Mikä saisi sinut aktiivisemmaksi yrityksesi työntekijälähettilääksi ja miksi?
15. Mikä saisi sinut lopettamaan yrityksesi työntekijälähettilyyden ja miksi?

16. Miksi sinä alun perin valitsit juuri tämän työtehtävän/position?
17. Miksi sinä pysyt juuri tässä työtehtävässä ja tässä yrityksessä?
18. Kuinka varmaksi sinä koet ammattitaitosi nykyisissä työtehtävissäsi ja miksi?
19. Kuinka kuvaisit tunteitasi yritystäsi kohtaan työntekijänä?
20. Kuinka kuvaisit suhdettasi työnantajaasi ja esimiestäsi/esimiehiäsi kohtaan?
21. Kuinka kuvaisit suhteita kollegoittesi välillä työyhteisössä?
22. Kuinka kuvaisit yleistä kommunikaatiota yrityksessäsi?
23. Millaista palautetta sinä yleensä saat esimiehiltäsi ja kuinka usein?
24. Tunnetko työnantajan arvostavan sinua nykyisissä työtehtävissäsi ja miksi/miksi ei?
25. Kuinka turvalliseksi ja varmaksi tunnet olosi nykyisessä asemassasi ja työssäsi yrityksessäsi? Miksi näin?
26. Kuinka pitkään näet itsesi työskentelevän nykyisessä yrityksessäsi?
27. Mikä sai sinut lähtemään nykyisestä yrityksestäsi?
28. Onko sinulla mielessä aiheita, joista haluaisit että vielä keskustelisimme näiden teemojen ympäriltä?