



LUND UNIVERSITY  
School of Economics and Management

# Case Events as an Employer Branding Initiative

by

Meri Nordström & Rueisen Huang

May 2018

Master's Programme in International Marketing  
& Brand Management

Supervisor: Mats Urde  
Examiner: Veronika Tarnovskaya

# Abstract

<b>Title</b>	Case Events as an Employer Branding Initiative
<b>Submission date</b>	28th of May 2018
<b>Course</b>	BUSN39 Degree Project in Global Marketing
<b>Authors</b>	Meri Nordström & Rueisen Huang
<b>Supervisor</b>	Mats Urde
<b>Purpose</b>	To obtain an understanding of the phenomenon of case events in employer branding context. The emphasis is two-sided: to comprehend why companies organize and why students attend these events.
<b>Methodology</b>	We executed a qualitative single case study with an abductive approach. The case company in focus was KPMG Sweden, and the scope was delineated to the firm's case events Ace the Case and KPMG International Case Competition.
<b>Theoretical Perspective</b>	The literature used has foundations in branding theory – more specifically within the fields of employer and corporate branding. These literature streams provide the basis for the empirical research and the new theoretical framework the paper introduces.
<b>Empirical Data</b>	We collected our empirical material by conducting 12 semi-structured interviews with the case company representatives and students who had participated in KPMG's case events.
<b>Findings</b>	Based on our empirical findings, we propose that case events can be strategically utilized as an employer branding initiative. We identified the drivers behind case events from the company and the student perspectives. Their motivators are presented through the developed Corporate Case Event Matrix consisting of eight elements. To our understanding, the phenomenon of case events within employer and corporate branding has not been previously researched from the perspectives of both organizers and participants. The originality of this thesis derives from the unique approach to the topic as well as the novel framework guiding managers to implement case events more strategically regarding employer branding.
<b>Key words</b>	Employer Branding, Corporate Branding, Corporate Brand Identity, Strategic Brand Management, Case Competition

# Acknowledgements

We would like to start by thanking our supervisor Mats Urde for his appreciated input throughout the thesis process. We are not only inspired by your expertise in branding but also your passionate attitude. It has been an enriching experience collaborating with you who always provided us with great support.

Moreover, we want to thank the case company KPMG and students interviewed for letting us conduct the case study with them. We are thankful for your time and insights provided - without your input this research could not have been realized.

Finally, we want to extend our thanks to our family, friends and peers for supporting us and standing by our sides.

Lund, 28th of May, 2018



-----  
Meri Nordström



-----  
Rueisen Huang

# Table of Contents

<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of Case Events.....	2
1.2 Aim and Purpose.....	3
1.3 Outline of the Thesis.....	4
<b>2 Literature Review.....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Brands and Strategic Brand Management.....	6
2.1.1 The Definition of Brands.....	6
2.1.2 Strategic Brand Management.....	7
2.2 Corporate brand management.....	8
2.2.1 The Definition of A Corporate Brand.....	8
2.2.2 Framework Corporate Brand Management.....	9
2.3 Employer Brands.....	11
2.3.1 Defining Employer Brand .....	12
2.3.2 Employer Brand Management.....	13
2.4 Entry-level Recruitment.....	15
2.5 Summary of Literature Review .....	17
<b>3 Methodology</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 Research Philosophy.....	18
3.2 Research Approach.....	19
3.3 Research Design.....	19
3.3.1 Case Study and Research Focus.....	19
3.3.2 Overview of KPMG and its Case Events.....	20
3.4 Data Collection Methods.....	21
3.4.1 Participants of the Research.....	22
3.4.2 Structure and Conduction of Interviews .....	24
3.5 Data Analysis.....	25
3.6 Validity and Reliability.....	26
3.7 Limitations.....	27
3.8 Theoretical Development.....	27
<b>4 Empirical Findings.....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1 Motivators Behind Case Events.....	29
4.1.1 Mission and vision.....	29
4.1.2 Culture.....	30

4.1.3	Competence.....	31
4.1.4	Expression.....	32
4.1.5	Personality.....	33
4.1.6	Value Proposition.....	34
4.1.7	Relationships.....	35
4.1.8	Position.....	36
4.2	Employer Branding through Case Events.....	39
4.2.1	The Role of Case Events in Employer Branding and Talent Spotting .....	39
4.2.2	Employer Branding through People and Culture.....	40
4.2.3	Participants' Views on Employer Branding.....	41
4.2.4	Employer Branding Communications.....	43
<b>5</b>	<b>Analysis.....</b>	<b>45</b>
5.1	The Corporate Case Event Matrix.....	45
5.2	Realizing Purpose.....	46
5.3	Cultural Interaction.....	47
5.4	Source of Inspiration.....	48
5.5	Getting Attention.....	48
5.6	Showing Who We Are.....	49
5.7	Building Connections.....	50
5.8	Talent and Career Spotting.....	51
5.9	Being in the Spotlight.....	52
5.10	Summarizing the Matrix.....	53
<b>6</b>	<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>54</b>
6.1	Top Layer.....	54
6.2	Middle Layer.....	56
6.3	Bottom Layer.....	57
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>59</b>
7.1	Reflection on research questions.....	59
7.2	Theoretical Contributions.....	60
7.3	Managerial implications.....	61
7.4	Future Research.....	63
	<b>References.....</b>	<b>64</b>
	<b>Appendix A.....</b>	<b>76</b>
	<b>Appendix B.....</b>	<b>77</b>
	<b>Appendix C.....</b>	<b>78</b>

<b>Appendix D.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Appendix E.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Appendix F.....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Appendix G.....</b>	<b>85</b>

# List of Tables

Table 1. Research participants.....	23
Table 2. Overview of motivators for case events.....	38

# List of Figures

Figure 1. Positioning of the research.....	2
Figure 2. The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013).....	10
Figure 3. Theoretical flowchart of the thesis.....	28
Figure 4. The Corporate Case Event Matrix (Adapted from Urde, 2013).....	46
Figure 5. Top layer of the CCEM.....	54
Figure 6. Middle layer of the CCEM.....	56
Figure 7. Bottom layer of the CCEM.....	57



# 1 Introduction

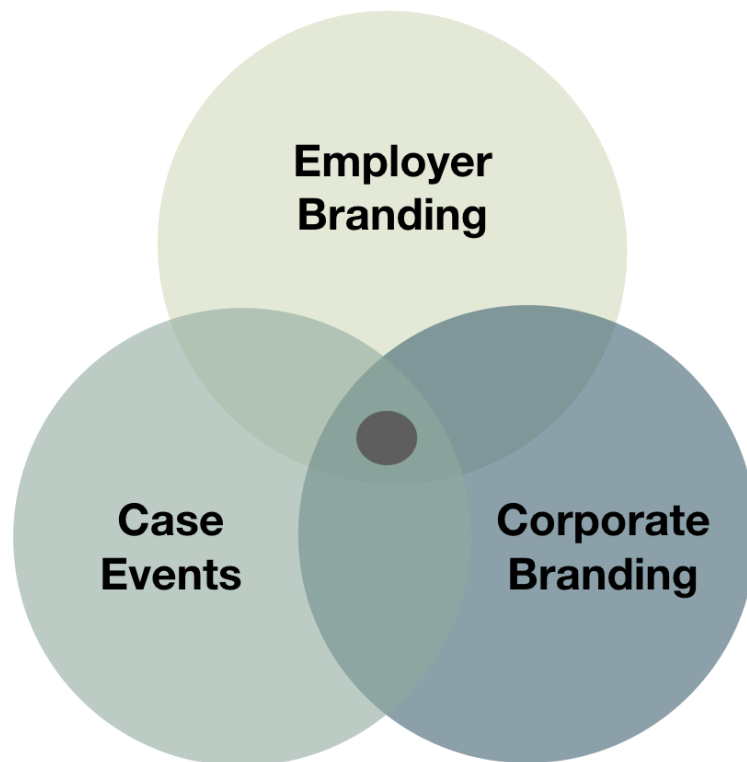
Successfully attracting and retaining highly competent talents has long been regarded as a significant identifier of organizational performance (Barber, 1998; Rynes, 1991). The importance of talent attraction is emphasized by recent studies that have highlighted the employees' role in creating sustainable competitive advantage for companies (Brymer, Molloy, & Gilbert, 2014; Myrden & Kelloway, 2015). The broad recognition of personnel resources has therefore led to an increasing demand for highly skilled and competent employees (Aslam, Mason, Zakria, & Farid, 2015; Moroko & Uncles, 2008). However, in recent years, companies worldwide have been facing challenges in attracting potential candidates as well as retaining qualified existing employees due to shortages in talents and skills (ManpowerGroup, 2016; Richardson, 2007). A global study, conducted by a staffing firm ManpowerGroup in 2016, concretized the urgency by indicating that 40% of more than 42,000 employers have encountered difficulties in filling vacancies (ManpowerGroup, 2016). These rates were at the highest level since the year 2007 (ManpowerGroup, 2016). Besides, the demographic changes in the labor market including the decreasing amount of young talents and aging of workers have further intensified the competition over candidates (Dohm, 2000; McDonnell, 2011).

In such a highly competitive labor market, targeting young and motivated students has become a popular strategy adopted by many companies. It is claimed that the early engagement of students helps to create a positive employer brand perception in their minds (Graham & McKenzie, 1995; Tims, 2011). Therefore, in order to create positive employer images and awareness (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Edwards, 2010), companies are increasingly attempting to approach students by providing internships and organizing various networking events such as career fairs (Saini, Rai & Ghardhary, 2014; Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010). To construct an attractive employer brand through these events is pivotal as employer brand perceptions guide prospective employees' intention to apply for certain positions and accept job offers (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

Of the company initiatives, case events have particularly gained popularity among business students around the globe as a learning platform and branding opportunity. Case events are case-based activities where participants are given real business cases to solve in teams within a specific timeframe (Ireland, 2010). On the one hand, case events are a venue for students to improve and promote their problem-solving and analysis skills (Ireland, 2010). With the help of these events, students can also develop their abilities in giving presentations and working in groups (Ireland, 2010). On the other hand, case events provide opportunities for companies to interact with participants (LUSEM, 2018). During the interaction, companies may acquire chances to promote themselves both as a corporate brand (Balmer & Liao, 2007) and an employer in the minds of participants (Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010). This implies that

perspectives from both corporate branding as well as employer branding should be taken into consideration in understanding case events.

Despite case events' potential implications of corporate and employer branding, our literature review has revealed that the knowledge regarding case events is limited. It is the growing trend of case events and the knowledge gap that motivates us to analyze this specific phenomenon. We are particularly interested in how case events can be comprehended under both contexts. With our study, we aim to contribute to the understanding of case events at the intersection of these three fields. The positioning of our research is illustrated below in figure 1.



*Figure 1. Positioning of the research*

## 1.1 Background of Case Events

The case method teaching was introduced at the Harvard Business School in 1912, and since then it has been widely used within the field of management education (Mesny, 2013). The cases utilized often resemble real-life business situations, allowing students to practically learn about decision-making at a managerial-level (Harvard Business Publishing, 2018). In addition to classroom learning, cases are used in specific competitions which provide participants with opportunities to learn, network and solve complicated problems (Gamble & Jelley, 2014). Case competitions are partly sponsored by businesses that offer real-world professional problems for

students to solve (Kirchner, 2015). According to Armstrong and Fukami (2010), students may also benefit from case contests regarding career advancement. The authors mention how recruiters, possibly attending these events, can reflect students' performance in case competitions to real-life work situations.

Companies have multiple ways to participate in case events. Along with the large competitions, there are smaller-scale occasions or possibilities to purely sponsor competitions. Case events and competitions can also be of national or international scope thus they may vary by size and geographical reach. The longest-running contest is John Molson MBA International Case Competition, that has been arranged in Montreal, Canada, since 1982 (John Molson MBA International Case Competition, 2017). Besides company-sponsored university case competitions, there are also firms arranging their own contests. One example of a large-scale company-owned case competition is the KPMG International Case Competition that engages thousands of students around the world each year. In 2018, KPMG's global contest attracted more than 21,000 student applications from almost 500 universities and 22 countries (Miller, 2018).

## 1.2 Aim and Purpose

This research is a case study on the consultancy company KPMG and its International Case Competition (hereafter referred as KICC). Besides the KICC, a smaller-scale case event by the firm, Ace the Case, is included within the scope of the research. The purpose of this research is to explore the phenomenon of case events – specifically within the framework of strategic employer branding. To provide novel insights on the phenomenon can be considered important due to the accelerated 'competition' for top talents that forces companies to make high investments in their candidate attraction processes (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Case events can be seen as platforms to create this kind of attraction and overall awareness among younger, entry-level candidates. In order to investigate the phenomenon, the following three research questions are formulated:

1. Why does a company organize case events?
2. Why are students attending case events?
3. Is it possible for a company to use case events to communicate its employer brand? If yes, how?

As the second research question suggests, the perspective of case event participators – namely students – are considered in addition to the company views. This, we believe, contributes to a broader understanding of the phenomenon and aids comprehending the 'target group' of case events. The research aims at developing more theoretical knowledge on employer and

corporate branding through case events – areas that still seem to be relatively uncovered. This limited research, as well as our personal interest towards employer branding and talent attraction, had a bearing on our choice of research topic. We had touched upon the topic of employer branding through case events before, during our university’s methodology course. This previous research had raised our curiosity towards the particular topic, and we were keen on examining it more broadly in our thesis.

One of the primary objectives of our research is to compile a theoretical framework that sheds light on the drivers behind organizing and attending case events. We assume that increased knowledge on the participants’ motivations can help managers to design more value-adding events – both for the company as well as the contestants. Our research may be of particular interest to managers aiming at executing employer and corporate branding initiatives with the help of case events. Besides, we provide useful insights for managers interested in furthering their entry-level recruitment processes with the help of student events.

### 1.3 Outline of the Thesis

Our research paper is altogether comprised of seven chapters. The introduction is followed by a literature review chapter presenting the concepts of strategic brand management, corporate branding, and employer branding. Also, a section on entry-level recruitment explains how companies can attract young job seekers. By discussing these literature streams, we wish to illustrate that, from a strategic brand management perspective, companies can utilize their corporate brands to implement employer branding initiatives as well as tap into the top candidates.

The methodological choices of our thesis are introduced in the third chapter. In this part, we describe our research approach, design and methods in detail. Here, the reader will also learn more about the case company KPMG and its case events included in our research scope. This chapter also discusses the validity and reliability concerns as well as the limitations of our research. The chapter is concluded with an overview of the theoretical connections of each part of the thesis.

The fourth chapter focuses on the empirical data collected from the qualitative interviews with the help of preconceived theoretical constructs. The first part of the chapter presents the findings regarding the motivators behind case events from the perspectives of the case company and the event participants. A preliminary analysis, which leads us to define categories for the theoretical framework the research aims to develop, is also included in this part. The latter part of the chapter presents the findings on KPMG’s employer branding practices on case events. Also here, the views of student participants are included to maintain the ‘two-sided’ perspective of the research.

Our analysis, emerging from the empirical findings, is covered in the fifth chapter. One of our main findings is that the motivators behind the case company and the participants can be

explained by eight case event elements. Building upon the elements and their linkages to theory, we construct a new framework: the Corporate Case Event Matrix. In this chapter, each component of the matrix is discussed concerning its formation and implication.

The sixth chapter addresses the application of the proposed framework in the context of employer branding. Based on the findings of our research, we examine and discuss how each element of the matrix can be applied to employer branding.

The final chapter commences with a reflection on our research questions, which leads us to uncover the motivators of case events and findings that case events can be utilized as an employer branding initiative. The last sections of the seventh chapter discuss the theoretical and managerial contributions of the research. Lastly, suggestions for future research are proposed.

## 2 Literature Review

*This chapter presents relevant literature and theoretical concepts applied in the research. The first section outlines the concept of brands and strategic brand management. The discussion of brands is extended by the review of corporate brand and reputation management. That is followed by a discussion on employer branding and its connection to corporate branding. The last section of the literature review illustrates the concepts and practices of entry-level recruitment. To conclude the chapter, the literature streams of corporate brand, employer brand, and entry-level recruitment are intertwined to form a foundation on which the empirical research is based.*

### 2.1 Brands and Strategic Brand Management

Brands have become one of the most important, timeless assets of companies today. Having a strong brand is the key to generating sustainable competitive advantage in the market (Kapferer, 2012). In order to comprehend the implication of corporate and employer branding within case events, we believe it is necessary to understand the concepts of brands and strategic brand management. In this section, the fundamental literature within the field is briefly discussed.

#### 2.1.1 Definition of Brand

In contemporary society, brands have played a significant role and become almost visible in every sphere of our lives (Kapferer, 2012; Roper & Fill, 2012). Initially, the term ‘brand’ referred to crafting marks on the cattle to prevent thefts (Kapferer, 2012). Following this function of identification, brands also became a measure of creating additional value and differentiating products or services from other competitors (Roper & Fill, 2012). Nowadays, the concept of brand has evolved to cover from tangible objects to intangible elements, bearing symbolic meanings instead of merely functional values (Kapferer, 2012; Roper & Fill, 2012). In spite of the broad application and historical development, the definition of brands remains an area of continuous debate among scholars (Kapferer, 2012; Roper & Fill, 2012).

In the brand management literature, multiple definitions of brands or branding exist depending on the researchers’ focus (Balmer & Gray, 2003). For instance, Aaker (1991) defines the idea of brand as a differentiator by stating that “a brand is a distinguishing name and symbol intended to identify the goods or services of one seller from those of competitors” (Aaker, 1991, p.110). Built on the argument, other researchers claim that brands are more than a method of

differentiation and describe them as symbols that carry attributes or meanings in the minds of consumers (Gardner & Levy, 1955; Kim, 1990). Furthermore, a brand can be argued to represent a relational bond between a company and its customers, which bears an ability to convey complex messages to customers and relate them closer to the product, service or the company (Fournier & Yao, 1997). From the consumers' point of view, a brand becomes a token of self-expression concerning value, lifestyle, and taste since consumers usually choose brands that have a close match with their preference (de Chernatony & McDonald, 1998).

To conclude, a brand can be seen as a sign that summarizes the associations generated by the brand name, and it is also a bridge between companies and their external customers. In this sense, a brand is indeed a company's most important asset (Kapferer, 2012). In order to create sustainable competitive advantage, companies should regard brands as strategic resources that require careful management (Urde, 1999).

### 2.1.2 Strategic Brand Management

To excel in the fast-paced modern economy, characterized by intense competition, firms need to develop strategic brand management processes. According to Kapferer (2012), this practice refers to creating and sustaining long-term brand equity. Brand equity is characterized as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers” (Aaker, 1996, p.15). Kapferer (2012) stresses that strategic brand management is about creating values for companies through proper management and integration of three elements: brand name, brand concept, and brand product or service in the brand system. Similarly, Keller (2012) defines strategic brand management as an implementation of marketing initiatives seeking to construct, measure, and manage brand equity. He explains that a series of activities – including identifying brand values, enacting brand marketing, and sustaining brand equity – are therefore integrated into the holistic brand management process.

To successfully build sustainable brand equity, researchers have emphasized the importance of brand orientation in the branding strategy (M'zungu, Merrilees & Miller, 2010; Urde, 1994). Brand orientation denotes a mindset with which a company satisfies the needs and requirements of a customer within the scope of its own brand identity (Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees, 2011). By combining the concepts of brand equity and brand identity, Urde (1999) proposes that a brand orientation approach regards brand as a strategic resource and platform that emphasizes the positioning of a brand's core values in the branding process. Successful positioning allows a company to communicate its core values to the customers and achieve a distinctive place in their minds (Kotler & Keller, 2015). It relies on a synchronized communication that strives for a fit between customer's perception and firm's desired image (Erdil, 2013), delivering a consistent branding message over an extended period of time (Urde, 1994).

Thus far, the discussion has covered the definition of brand and the management of branding strategy. Based on the discussion above, we conclude that a brand is a symbol that creates differentiation and conveys desired attributes for targeted customers. To achieve long-term

sustainable competitive advantages in the increasingly complex market, companies are moving towards corporate branding to communicate the essence of the brand to relevant stakeholders (Kapferer, 2012).

## 2.2 Corporate Brand Management

The research on corporate brands has gained increasing interest since the mid-1990's (Balmer, 2010). In order to manage a corporate brand effectively, it is essential to understand what this term represents. This section covers the central concepts as well as benefits of corporate brands and their management for a company, which will lead to the discussion of employer brands in the next section.

### 2.2.1 Definition of Corporate Brand

A corporate brand is generally described as a symbol for a company that informs both internal and external stakeholders about its core values and corporate culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Ind & Mariussen, 2015; Roper & Fill, 2012). The term is also defined as a promise between a company and its key stakeholders which has to be kept at all times (Balmer, 1998). According to Ind and Mariussen (2015), a corporate brand is defined as a holistic expression of a company's business model. For the expression to be effectively identified by the targeted stakeholders – such as employees, investors, consumers, or prospective job applicants – the authors argue that a company has to maintain a favorable image and reputation. They mention that this can be achieved internally by shaping employees' attitudes and behavior. Externally, according to the authors, it can be done by sending positive messages about the company's values and culture. In addition, Balmer (1998) states that to construct a strong corporate brand requires the brand's values and mission to be understood by the employees as well as external stakeholders of the company. This is to say that a corporate brand offers a company an opportunity to leverage on its core values and culture as a brand's value proposition presented to its various stakeholders (Ackerman, 1998; Balmer, 1995; de Chernatony, 1999; Ind, 1997).

The rise of corporate brands in recent years can be attributed to the rapid growth of service sector and the marketing challenges within the industry (Roper & Fill, 2012). The challenge of service-based companies, such as consultancy firms as KPMG, lies in the complexity of having multiple touchpoints with customers and the intangible nature of products (Roper & Fill, 2012). Also, employees are argued to be the key element in building corporate brands (King, 1991), since it is through their interaction with customers that the corporate promise is delivered (de Chernatony, Drury & Horn, 2003). Under such circumstances, a corporate brand helps a company with service products to unify its employees with a clearly communicated culture and purpose (Smyth, Dorward & Reback, 1992). This, in turn, is beneficial for sustaining customers' perception of a corporate brand if employees deliver consistent message that aligns with its



culture and values through their behavior (McDonald, de Chernatony & Harris, 2001; Wilson, 1997).

There are several benefits from implementing corporate branding strategies. First of all, corporate brands are constantly claimed to exert enormous impact on companies' reputation and image (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Khojastehpour, Ferdous, & Polonsky, 2015; Roper & Fill, 2012). Corporate brands can also be strategic assets for companies to differentiate themselves from competitors (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012) as customers recognize a brand from its unique meanings instead of merely its service commodity (Kapferer, 2012; Keller, 2012). Finally, researchers suggest that corporate brands can be used as a tool for recruitment (Balmer & Gray, 2003; De Roeck, Maon, & Lejeune, 2013; Ind, 1997; Roper & Fill, 2012). From the perspective of employer branding, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) believe that a well-constructed corporate brand – that clearly communicates its core values and culture – can help a company to tap into talents who have a closer fit with the company.

The existing literature suggests that the essence of a corporate brand resides in its brand identity which requires constant and careful management over time (Balmer, 2001; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Roper & Fill, 2012). A brand identity is important for multiple reasons. The identity of a brand, according to Aaker (1996), refers to a unique set of associations of a brand that represent what it stands for and what it promises to customers. Therefore, a clearly crafted brand identity can facilitate conveying a brand's value proposition towards its target groups convincingly (Aaker, 1996; Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen, 2009). Besides, a long-lasting relationship between a brand and its stakeholders can result from a clearly projected identity of a company (Aaker, 1996; Kotler et al., 2009). Most importantly, having a suitable brand identity is pivotal in creating market success and differentiation (Aaker 1996; Kapferer, 2012; Keller, 2012).

The outlined benefits of having a corporate brand with clearly constructed identity leads us to conclude that corporate brands render a symbol capable of enhancing companies' reputation and carving out a differentiating position. Especially for service-based companies like KPMG, corporate brands have an even higher importance due to the nature of products as well as employees' influence on customers' perceptions. The review of literature also leads us to believe that, by leveraging their own corporate brand identity in communication, companies can better appeal to the targeted customers (Aaker, 1996; Kotler et al., 2009). These customers may as well include potential external candidates with whom respective values and culture are shared (Ind, 1998).

## 2.2.2 Framework of Corporate Brand Management

Several authors in the field of branding have proposed relevant brand management frameworks. For instance, in his books about strategic brand management, Kapferer (2012) created Brand Identity Prism which contains six core components that constitute a brand's identity. The elements include internal factors such as personality, culture, and self-image – as well as external factors covering physique, reflection, and relationship (Kapferer, 2012). Despite the

popularity of Brand Identity Prism in the field of brand communication, it has been claimed to neglect the influence of a company’s mission, vision, and core values of the corporate brand (Urde, 2013). Furthermore, the framework may run the risk of over-simplifying a company’s positioning and value proposition (Urde, 2013). It becomes therefore imperative for brand managers to assess the identity of corporate brands with a new approach that includes essential elements of a corporation.

As a response to the highlighted issue, Urde (2013) has developed the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (the CBIM), serving as a practical corporate brand management framework and tool. His matrix is presented below in figure 2. Urde (2013) divides the CBIM into three layers that contain nine elements. In the CBIM (Urde, 2013), the upper layer constitutes three external components: *value proposition*, *relationships*, and *position*. The middle layer is comprised of external and internal elements including *expression*, *brand core*, and *personality*. The bottom layer contains three internal elements: *mission & vision*, *culture*, and *competences*. Urde (2013) emphasizes that the components of the matrix are interrelated and the relationships are indicated by the arrows radiating from the *core*. The nine elements therefore surround the brand core to form a single unified identity of a corporate brand (Urde, 2013).

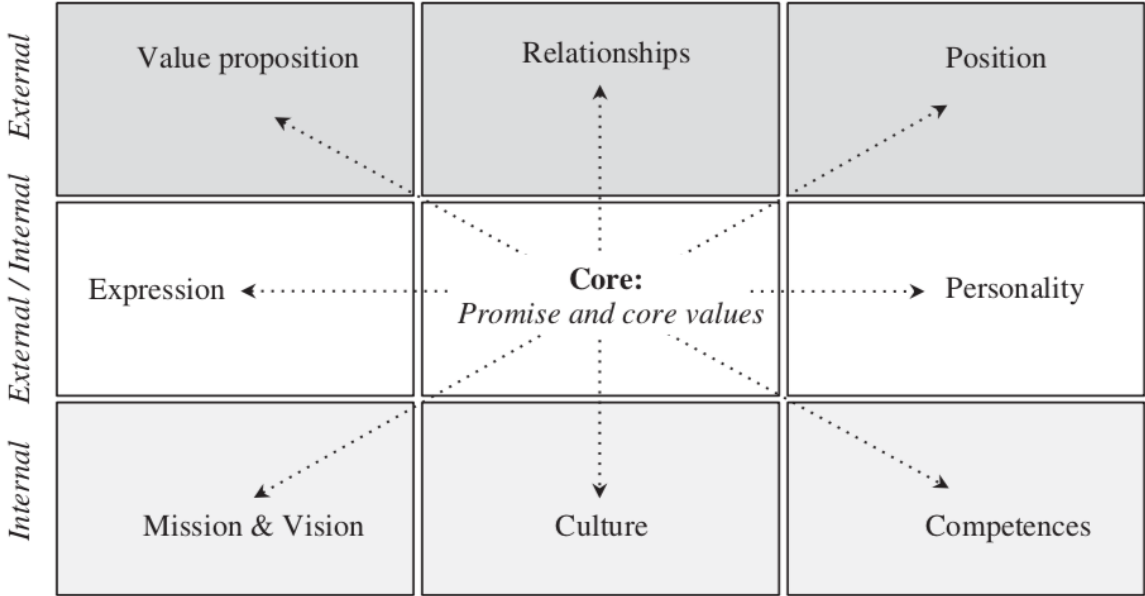


Figure 2. The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013)

*External Elements*

According to Urde (2013), the external elements of the CBIM influence a company’s image and reputation to a large extent. Regarding the contributing elements on this level, the author explains that *value proposition* concerns the key benefits a company has to offer to its stakeholders. He describes how the *relationships* element depicts the nature of the relationships

of a company with its stakeholders. Lastly, the author clarifies that *position* denotes the intended position in the market as well as the minds of stakeholders.

#### *Internal / External Elements*

The middle layer of Urde's (2013) bridges the internal and external elements of the CBIM and form the center of a corporate brand. According to him, *personality* defines the characteristics of a corporate brand, demonstrated to a large extent by the characteristics of its employees. *Expression* element describes "the verbal, visual, and other forms of identification as part of a corporate brand identity" (Urde, 2013, p.752). The *brand core* is placed at the center of a corporate brand identity, denoting the core values and promise of a brand (Urde, 2013).

#### *Internal Elements*

Three internal elements are placed in the bottom layer of the CBIM. They signify the "realities of the organization and its values" (Urde, 2013, p.751). Urde (2013) describes that *mission and vision* explain the purpose of a corporate brand. According to him, *culture* element reflects the way a company works and behaves. *Competences* relate to the areas where a company is performing at a level that leads to competitive advantages (Urde, 2013).

## 2.3 Employer Brands

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) write that, despite the tendency to utilize branding for product and corporate brands, also human resource management may benefit from the practices of branding. This, according to them, is defined as 'employer branding'. The authors state that, per se, employer brands are to be aligned with product and corporate brands. Nevertheless, they point out two main disparities between these brand categories. Firstly, the authors mention that the employer brand is employment-specific thus focused on portraying company's identity as an employer. Secondly, when product and corporate branding are mainly addressed to external stakeholders, employer branding aims to reach external – as well as internal – stakeholders (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Moroko and Uncles (2008) also acknowledge the connected theoretical foundations between employer and corporate branding. Besides, they mention the similarities between the two concepts and consumer branding. The authors describe how all the three brand categories impact on multiple same audiences – such as employees, customers and shareholders of the company. Nevertheless, as Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), also Moroko and Uncles (2008) underline that the employer brand is primarily focused and targeted on the existing and potential employees of the company.

### 3.3.1 Definition of Employer Brand

The most successful people companies have created employer brands to recruit the top talents as the pursuit for the best employees is a market itself (Roper & Fill, 2012). Probably the most popular definition of employer brand, often cited by other scholars (Alshathry, Clarke & Goodman, 2017; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Moroko & Uncles, 2008), is by Ambler and Barrow. They define employer branding as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p.187).

Two other ‘classical’ definitions underline the attractiveness of an employer, as well as clearly state the internal-external aspect of the employer branding concept. According to one of them, employer branding can be regarded as “the sum of a company’s efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work” (Lloyd, 2002, p.161). A similar aspect is emphasized by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) who write followingly: “employer branding represents a firm’s effort to promote, both within and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer” (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p.502).

According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), internal marketing assists developing a unique workforce and culture which cannot be easily copied by contesting companies. The authors describe how these endeavors can be furthered by building a working culture on the established corporate goals and educating the personnel on employee value proposition. External marketing, then again, aims at creating a unique employer brand that sets the company apart from its competitors and enables obtaining exquisite personnel resources (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Roper & Fill 2012). Another important objective of external marketing is to present the company as an ‘employer of choice’ (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) that has resources to provide unique and compelling work experiences to potential employees (Roper & Fill, 2012).

Today, there are various measurements on companies’ attractiveness as employers. Probably the most well-known ones are employer branding company Universum’s employer rankings or certifications provided by ‘Great Place to Work’ organization. Candidates and employees may also share their recruitment process and employment experiences through word of mouth and on various online channels. For these purposes, one of the most popular channels is Glassdoor: a website where job applicants and employees can tell about their interview processes, thoughts on top management, salary rates, and more (Glassdoor, 2018). Naturally, these kinds of rankings and the increased transparency makes it more crucial for firms to carefully manage the candidate and employee experiences.

Employer branding can additionally be comprehended from the viewpoint of employer brand equity (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), which can be described as an intangible and measurable asset perceived by company’s current and prospective employees (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) explain that, as a result of different employer branding initiatives, employer brand equity encourages candidates to apply for job openings. The authors emphasize

how employer brand equity also aims at retaining current employees, having them as ‘supporters’ of a firm.

### 3.3.2 Employer Brand Management

Ambler and Barrow (1996) state that, compared to consumer brands, creating an employer brand can be seen relatively time-consuming as it may take years to develop one. According to the authors, successful management of an employer brand requires the collaboration of employees from different units of an organization as well as support from top management. Due to this cross-functional nature, they see the employer branding process politically sensitive and underline the importance of compassion between the perspectives of senior managers, marketers and human resource practitioners. Moroko and Uncles (2008) also emphasize the alignment between marketing and HR teams. They remind that the two teams are highly involved in corporate culture, policies and processes – as well as how these are communicated to internal and external audiences. In terms of practical employer branding management, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) describe that employer branding process is traditionally divided into three steps: creation of a value proposition, external and internal marketing.

Roper and Fill (2012) explain that employee value proposition (EVP), the first step of the employer branding process, contains a set of perks one would receive as an employee of a company. They describe it as a “psychological contract represent[ing] the mutual beliefs, perceptions and informal obligations between the employer and employees” (Roper & Fill, 2012, p.68), and highlight the importance of trust due to the somewhat informal nature of the contract. According to them, this kind of agreement aims at impacting positively on employees’ behavior at the workplace – also associated with the culture and performance of a company. The primary objective of the EVP is to “provide a consistent platform for brand communication and experience management” (Mosley, 2014, p.123). According to Mosley (2014), the main elements of the EVP are presented by the brand’s core positioning, personality and pillars – last-mentioned presenting key qualities that elaborate the most important objectives and themes of an employer brand. He concludes that, once these essential parts are refined, focus can be directed to marketing communications and activities.

The main objective of marketing employer branding externally, is to appeal to a specific target group (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Mosley (2014), for his part, opines that the primary goals of employer brand communications are the engagement of target group, conveying the desired message and forming a more unique and favorable brand image. He underlines the importance of consistency as well as communication of the selected employer brand associations. The study conducted by Sivertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen (2013) explored the elements companies should emphasize within their employer brand communication practices. The authors claim that, instead of purely focusing on monetary factors, the emphasis should be on more intangible aspects. Their study found out that – when evaluating prospective employees – candidates appreciate especially psychological and innovational values linked to professional growth, learning opportunities and the feeling of being valued within the work community. These

preferences play an essential role when creating an affirmative corporate reputation, as they will encourage prospective job applicants to seek career opportunities from a company (Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013).

Internal marketing, the final step on the employer branding process is targeted towards the existing members of personnel (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Foster, Punjaisri & Cheng, 2010). Marketing towards internal stakeholders aims to ensure that employees are engaged in the values and goals of a company (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). De Chernatony (2001, cited in Roper & Fill, 2012) emphasizes the central role employees play in 'living up to' and advancing the values of a brand. Also Davies and Chun (2002) highlight the internal aspect by mentioning that employees should be the ones with the most favorable perception of the brand. According to Roper and Fill (2012), it is important that employees are passionate towards the culture of the company as they are the 'channel' between the firm and its customers. They state that strong corporate brands have succeeded in communicating and engaging the personnel with the values, vision and mission of a firm. Additionally, the authors call attention to the causal relations between values, culture, quality staff and powerful brands. This they describe as a continuously ongoing process that strengthens the corporate brand and fosters its competitiveness.

Many scholars (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood & Bolino, 2002; Roper & Fill, 2012) have warned about possible gaps that may occur if the external communications of a company and the identity perceived by its employees are contradicting with each other. Lester et al. (2002) claim that a possible breach of the psychological contract between the employer and an employee may have harmful consequences on the attitudes and behaviors of employees. According to the authors, this kind of gap can lead to reduced personnel engagement and weaker work performances on an individual level. They point out that, ultimately, these may reflect deteriorated results on an organizational level. Improved communication (Lester et al., 2002) and consistency within all areas of the brand (Roper & Fill, 2012) are suggested means to overcome this kind of risk. To constitute a truthful psychological contract, it is of importance to promote the culture, identity and values of a company realistically to prospective candidates (Foster, Punjaisri & Cheng, 2010).

Even though the literature on employer branding mostly focuses on its benefits, the concept has gained some criticism as well. One of the academics engaged in the debate is Edwards (2005) who claims that internal branding aims at harnessing employees as firms' 'brand agents', influenced by 'scripts' written by employer brand managers. According to the author, employees acting this way have been branded by the company. Edwards and Kelan (2011), for their part, have reflected the aims of employer branding with the diversity aspects of companies. The authors describe how employer branding conflicts with the ideal of embracing the differences between people by trying to homogenize the values and behavior of the company and its employees through aligning them with a determined brand identity. This kind of homogenization is seen particularly problematic for human resources since it can contradict with a fundamental principle of managing diversity: accepting that people are not similar (Edwards & Kelan, 2011; Kandola & Fullerton, 1994). However, Edwards and Kelan (2011) state that employer brands can be inclusive by creating messages considering diversity and

various stakeholders. The authors mention that it is not sufficient to include diversity in companies' core values. They highlight the importance of including multiple employees – not only the marketing and employer branding teams – within the dialogue when branding processes are developed.

## 2.4 Entry-level recruitment

Several scholars (Dohm, 2000; Myrden & Kelloway, 2015; Potter, 2005) have discussed the changing demographic trends that will bring considerable challenges to workforce management. The retirement of the baby boomers and the decreasing supply of young employees will create difficulties for companies aiming to fill their vacancies (Dohm, 2000) – especially in the Western world. Graham and McKenzie (1995) explain that, to respond the challenging situation, firms need to invest more in strategic candidate attraction as well as in the development and retention of existing employees. They underline that the attraction of new graduates will be a key issue for many companies. Beechler and Woodward (2009) highlight the importance of targeting these entry-level candidates in time and sharing information about the firm with them prior to the actual hiring process. This the authors refer as a practice of creating a next-generation workforce, requiring specific future talent development processes.

As many companies need to compete on attracting young talents (Sparrow, 2007), there has to be understanding on the preferences and wishes of the target group. If companies are aware of the attitudes and hopes of young adults, they are more likely to succeed in customizing employment experiences, employer branding and recruitment marketing towards them. This knowledge is provided by, for instance, Universum that conducts yearly a survey on students' expectations towards work life and prospective employers (Universum, 2017). Their global report from 2017 (Universum, 2017) indicates the increasing importance young adults put on work-life balance which, the report assumes, is partly a result of gender role shifts within the overall society. Consequently, investments in workplace gender diversity – and diversity in general – are suggested for companies aiming to appeal to this group of talent (Universum, 2017).

Another interesting finding on the report denotes that a growing number of students, within the fields of Business and Engineering/IT, prioritize small and medium-sized companies over large ones with more than 1000 employees (Universum, 2017). As opposed to huge stable enterprises, young adults wish to find a workplace that has a culture resembling that of a start-up or small business (Universum, 2017). Also, the ideal of entrepreneurship is relatively sound among the youth today (Mosley, 2014). This has forced larger companies to act more in an 'entrepreneurial' way and mimic the characteristics of start-ups to seem appealing to driven and talented young people (Mosley, 2014). Despite all these trends listed, the survey of Universum (2017) points out that the main attractor for students is, after all, of financial nature. Regardless the geographic location, monetary rewards and other benefits were prioritized over other aspects by the

surveyed students (Universum, 2017). Nevertheless, the report reminds that the more intangible attributes mentioned should not be neglected by companies in their ‘pursuit’ for the top talents (Universum, 2017).

Recruitment literature reminds about the links between brand image and the situation confronted by newcomers in the job market (Collins & Stevens, 2002). For recent graduates, comparison of different options can be difficult as many true aspects, related to the job and the company, are ‘hidden’ or they cannot tap into that information (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Here, young applicants might count on the images conveyed by the employer brand to make decisions on a potential future employer (Collins & Stevens, 2002). According to Mosley (2014), employer branding towards students has lately faced some essential changes. The author mentions that nowadays the relationships companies create with highly-ranked colleges are more consistent and deeper by nature than before. Also, according to him, the selection of partner universities by firms is more targeted today. Moreover, Mosley (2014) describes how employers aim to connect with the targeted students at an earlier phase of their studies and reminds about the importance of personalizing the employer branding communication towards them. Some level of message modification is also suggested by the report of Universum (2017) that underlines the need to localize employer branding narratives for students.

The main platforms for companies to connect with students are social media channels, career websites, recruitment fairs, job boards and employee presentations at colleges (Universum, 2017). In addition to these more traditional means, different kinds of events – whether professional or recreational of nature – have gained visibility at campuses. To raise awareness among business students, many firms are engaged in case events of different sizes and purposes. Traditionally the larger-scale case events and competitions have been organized by consulting companies as, for many of them, cases are in an essential role within their recruitment and real-life working processes. As an example, The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and McKinsey & Company utilize cases within personnel selection to evaluate the problem-solving skills of candidates (BCG, 2018; McKinsey & Company, 2018). In addition to the consulting firms, employers from different and less obvious industries have started to involve with case events directed towards students. For instance, such companies as L’Oréal, Nespresso and Google – from the industries of cosmetics, coffee and technology – have their own case competitions today.

Case contests provide company representatives an opportunity to evaluate competitors – their potential future employees – thoroughly as the participants are required to utilize multiple different skills for solving the problems and presenting their solution (Kirchner, 2015). Essential focus is on group work skills: how can a team reach an accord with a tight time limit and stand for the solution formed together (Kirchner, 2015). This kind of real-life tryout may reveal much more than a sole job interview with a candidate could do (Kirchner, 2015). On student perspective, participation in case competitions can be beneficial in multiple terms. Firstly, contest participants gain some level of understanding how to work as consultants and what their typical work projects could look like (Ireland, 2010). Kirchner (2015) describes that the core competencies developed are related to problem-solving, influencing, teamwork and



presentation. The author mentions that the close collaboration with companies allows students to learn more about the organizations and evaluate if they would ‘fit’ into the firm. She also points out that direct networking with companies can prove beneficial when the time comes for students to apply for an internship or first job.

## 2.5 Summary of Literature Review

In this chapter, we have discussed the theoretical concepts of corporate and employer branding that form the foundation of our study. Based on the literature, we come to observe the similarity between corporate and employer brands. First, both concepts can be related to ‘fulfilling the needs of stakeholders’. As a corporate brand encompasses its ability to fulfill customers’ symbolic, functional and experiential needs (Park, Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986), an employer brand is similarly identified as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p.187). Besides, both concepts emphasize the importance of ‘keeping promise’ between organizations and their ‘customers’. For instance, a corporate brand is considered as a promise between a corporation and its stakeholders (Balmer, 1998). Similarly, an employer brand can be referred to as a psychological contract between employer and employees (Roper & Fill, 2012). The similarity leads us to believe that an alignment between corporate brand and employer brand should be considered when studying the phenomenon of case events.

Additionally, the previous literature states that successful conveying of a corporate brand’s value proposition relies on a clearly defined corporate brand identity (Aaker, 1996; Kotler et al. 2009). Similarly, the communication of employer brand value proposition also lies in a company’s personality and core values (Mosley, 2014), which corresponds to the key elements of corporate brand identity (Urde, 2013). That is to say, corporate brand identity lays the bedrock for building a strong employer brand in the minds of targeted groups. To investigate how a company can use case events to communicate its employer brand, it becomes necessary to realize what aspects of its corporate brand identity are presented during the process. As a practical tool in analyzing corporate brand identity, the CBIM (Urde, 2013) provides solid guidance concerning the elements of a corporate brand identity. This regard motivates us to apply the matrix in investigating the phenomenon of case events in order to understand how the elements of the KPMG’s corporate brand are manifested in case events, and how those elements can be linked to their employer branding initiatives.

## 3 Methodology

*In this chapter we present the methodological foundation of the thesis by describing the approach as well as methods involved in the research. Firstly, we introduce our philosophical stance and the research approach of the study. Secondly, the argumentation regarding our research design, data collection and data analysis are discussed. In the last sections we elaborate on the validity, reliability and research limitations. Besides, we present the theoretical development of the research with the help of a flowchart.*

### 3.1 Research Philosophy

As researchers, our understanding of philosophical position of the thesis is at the central concern of the research design. A clear understanding of philosophical issues such as ontological as well as epistemological stance, helped us to determine the proper research design and the type of data to collect (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Ontology addresses our belief in the nature of reality, while epistemology concerns how we acquired knowledge (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). When it comes to ontological stance, we adopt a relativist ontology throughout the research. We acknowledge that multiple perspectives have to be taken into consideration in order to understand the phenomenon of case events (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Our belief led us to adopt a case study that included perspectives of both the case company and the participants. For us, it was an appropriate way to explore the research phenomenon and generate new theoretical framework based on the multiple perspectives involved (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Following our ontological belief, the research follows an epistemological position of social constructionism. That is to say, we believe the reality of social construct is determined by people rather than objective criteria (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As our research questions concern the case company's and participants' motivators behind case events, we acknowledge that the phenomenon is constructed by respondents' personal opinions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The belief led us to place our focus on the interviewees' perceptions and experiences during the case events. Particularly, we were interested in what meanings the respondents gave to their experiences so that we, as researchers, were able to realize the multiple aspects of case events and further theorize them based on the insights.

## 3.2 Research Approach

We conducted the research with a qualitative approach in an attempt to better respond to our research questions. As our research intends to study ‘why does a company organize case events?’ and ‘why are students attending case events?’, we consider a qualitative study approach appropriate. This is because we were able to collect respondents’ interpretations regarding case events which were not measurable in quantifiable form (Merriam, 2002). Additionally, corresponding to the purpose of our research, a qualitative approach is suitable for us to develop a theoretical understanding of the case event phenomenon (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug, 2001; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). As we explore case events and their application in employer branding, we conduct the research with an exploratory nature. An exploratory approach enables the research to unfold based on new insights stemming from our interviews (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

Moreover, we adopted an abductive approach to connect empirical findings with existing theory. For us, an abductive approach that goes forth and back between the theory and the empirical world (Dubois & Gadde, 2002) was a suitable way to thoroughly understand the views of the case company and the participants. With an abductive approach, we adapted theoretical preconceptions to guide our data collection process and, in the meantime, connected our empirical material back to the theory. During the repeated process, we were able to identify new categories generated from the interaction of the theory and the empirical data obtained (Boyatzis, 1998; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

## 3.3 Research Design

### 3.3.1. Case Study and Research Focus

This research was conducted as a case study – a research strategy that can be seen suitable when the objective is to understand a phenomenon as thoroughly as possible (Punch, 1998; Silverman, 2010) as well as to comprehend the research context and the process that is being executed (Morris & Wood, 1991). These objectives are firmly connected to the purpose of our research. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) explain that case study methods can be beneficial when researchers wish to get responses on ‘why?’, ‘what?’ and ‘how?’ questions. They add that, due to the formulation of the questions, case studies are most frequently utilized within explanatory and exploratory research. We had an exploratory approach within our research, and the purpose was to gain broad understanding on the phenomenon of case events within employer branding. We saw this approach suitable as we had ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ questions for the research.

The phenomenon investigated in our research, employer branding in the context of case events, is relatively unexamined and considered only by few; hence we regarded a single-case focus as

most suitable for this study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). We saw this approach useful in order to obtain more in-depth insights on our research questions – as opposed to utilizing multiple cases with less comprehension (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Also, we believe that one-company focus provided us better access to information and interviewees, allowing us to gain more valuable information for our research. We assume that widening the research on multiple companies could have provided somewhat superficial results as there would not have been possibility to conduct various interviews due to limited time frame.

We had familiarized with case learning methods during our studies and paid attention to the amount of different case-related events and competitions organized in our campus. The KPMG International Case Competition (KICC) was first established in Lund. Hence the competition and the preceding ‘Ace the Case’ event have gained much visibility in the faculty of Economics, and we were also personally informed of them. Building on its high exposure, KPMG’s emphasis on employer branding and high involvement with university activities contributed to our choice of case. Besides, the size and reach of the KICC, as well as its established role among the major company-owned case competitions worldwide, influenced to the choice of case company. Other firms, within and outside the field of consultancy, were also considered as potential case companies but – due to the above-mentioned reasons – we decided to focus on KPMG.

We wanted to include two perspectives, company and participants, in our research to gain a more in-depth view on our research phenomenon. We believe that this dual perspective approach enabled us to evaluate if and how the aims of the two groups meet and where there might be ‘gaps’ or possible contradictions. Having these two perspectives also challenged us to think about the subject more broadly and from the viewpoints of different stakeholders.

### 3.3.2. Overview of KPMG and its Case Events

KPMG’s roots are in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (KPMG, 2018a). In the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, accounting started to develop into a profession of its own and KPMG’s four ‘founding fathers’ were in the forefront to shape the industry (KPMG, 2018a). These founders – William Barclay Peat, James Marwick, Piet Klynveld and Reinhard Goerdeler – had their own companies which later on merged as KPMG (KPMG, 2018a). The initials of their surnames are, in fact, behind the name of the company (KPMG, 2018a). Today KPMG is a worldwide network of independent member firms providing services in the areas of audit, tax and advisory (KPMG, 2018b). These firms are present in more than 150 countries, and they have almost 200,000 employees (KPMG, 2018b). The headquarters of the company is located in Amstelveen, the Netherlands (KPMG, 2018b). The key clients of the firm involve businesses, governments, agencies within the public sector and nonprofit organizations (KPMG, 2018b).

The main aim of KPMG is to sustain and develop the quality of its personnel as well as to position itself as a “professional employer of choice” that is able to attract, retain and advance the top talents (KPMG, 2018b; KPMG, 2018c). How the company performs in different

external employer rankings varies depending on survey provider, participants and focus. The Consulting Magazine named KPMG as the 7<sup>th</sup> ‘Best Firm to Work For’ in their 2017 survey, bypassing the other ‘big four’ consulting companies Deloitte, PwC and EY (Greenshields, 2017; Kornik, 2017). In the business magazine Fortune’s 2017 ‘100 Best Companies to Work for in the U.S.’ list, KPMG was placed to number 29 (Fortune, 2017). A survey conducted among European business professionals in 2017, ranked KPMG between places 24 (Finland) and 79 (France) concerning its attractiveness as an employer (Universum, 2018). Higher rankings, within the same survey, were gained among business students (Universum, 2018). In order to appeal to and engage with that target group, the company arranges different activities – such as the two major annual case events: Ace the Case and the KICC.

Ace the Case can be described as a ‘case workshop’ and, in Sweden, it is usually organized as a one-evening occasion that includes case-solving, company presentations and a dinner (KPMG, 2018d; KPMG, 2018e). During the event, students learn about working with cases and network with the in-house consultants (KPMG, 2018d; KPMG, 2018e). Ace the Case precedes the KICC and functions also as a platform to inform students about the competition (KPMG, 2018e). In Sweden, Ace the Case is arranged every autumn as a touring event in the major business schools across the country (KPMG, 2018e). The larger-scale competition KICC started locally in Lund, Sweden, at the end of 1990’s (LundaEkonomerna, 2018). After that, it has expanded into a global contest, and today KICC is the largest worldwide case competition for students in the field of business (LundaEkonomerna, 2018). The competition is divided into two phases (KPMG, 2018f). Each participant country organizes a contest on a national level during which one student team is selected to represent the country at the international finals (KPMG, 2018f). In 2017, the Swedish national contest was won by a group of four students from Lund University (KPMG, 2018g). The winning team, ‘In Case of Consulting’, attended the international competition in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in April 2018 (KPMG, 2018g).

### 3.4 Data Collection Method

We became acquainted with the overall topic and the case company through a study we conducted at an earlier phase of our master studies at Lund University School of Economics and Management. The study was part of a course on Qualitative Research Methods, and it took place between January and March 2018 – before the dissertation project commenced. The study examined the relationship between employer brand attractiveness and case competitions – more specifically in the perspective of KICC national-level competitors and KPMG representatives. For the previous study, we interviewed four students as well as Head of Employer Branding and Project Leader for the KICC on KPMG side. All of them have been interviewed again for this research, and some responses gathered previously have been used to complement our primary data.

### 3.4.1 Participants of the Research

Primary data refers to “new information that is collected directly by the researcher” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015, p.339). In this research, the term refers to the qualitative interviews that were our main form of data collection. As with many case study practitioners, we utilized purposeful sampling to define suitable respondents for our research (Lapal, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012). Researchers utilizing purposeful sampling focus on how much can be learned from the respondents (Lapal, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012) and aim to seek sources that are “information-rich” (Patton, 1987, p.58). These aims were emphasized when the research participants for this study were being selected (Lapal, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012). The sample of this research included six participants from the case company KPMG and six students who had participated case events by the firm. On the company side, we reached to people who had been actively involved in case event organization as well as a current employee who, as a student, had taken part in the KICC. Our sample of students included people who had participated in Ace the Case or the KICC, either at national or international level.

To access the relevant interviewees, we contacted LundaEkomerna – a student union by Lund University School of Economics and Management. From them, we received contacted details for Project Leader of the KICC (KPMG) as well as names of students who had participated Ace the Case and the KICC during their studies. The Project Leader linked us with Head of Employer Branding at KPMG Sweden who provided us with further contacts within the company based on the objectives of the research. Through our previous study in Qualitative Research Method, we had learned that KPMG’s Student Representatives have a significant role in terms of different university collaboration and case events. Thus, the two student representatives of KPMG in Southern Sweden were interviewed concerning Ace the Case and the KICC. Interviews were also held with Head of Employer Branding, KICC Project Leader and Recruiter – all much engaged with the company’s employer branding and case competition activities. Additionally, we interviewed a Management Consultant who had previously, in a role of a student, participated in KICC at a national level. The aim of this interview was to obtain insights, for instance, whether participation in a case competition had influenced on the respondent’s employer brand perceptions and choice of employer. All interviews with the case company took place in April 2018.

For our previous study in Qualitative Research Method, we had interviewed all four members of the Swedish KICC winning team (2017/2018). Those interviews were held in February 2018, after the local and national contests. For this research, same respondents were interviewed in April 2018 – soon after they had competed at the international-level of the KICC competition in Malaysia. The objective was to investigate how KPMG had communicated its employer brand to contestants during the international competition. The contestants traveled to international finals together with Recruiter and Project Leader of KPMG Sweden thus they had interacted with the company more than during the local and national competitions. Besides, two students who had participated in Ace the Case, as well as KICC local and national-level

competitions, were interviewed. With these interviews, the aim was to obtain insights whether participation in a purely local or national case event can influence students' employer brand perceptions. Table 1 below presents all respondents as well as the format of interviews. Respondents that were also interviewed during the previous study have been marked with an asterisk (\*). For anonymity reasons, research participants are only referred with titles.

*Table 1. Research participants*

<b>Interviewee (title)</b>	<b>Interview format</b>	<b>Interview guide</b>
Head of Employer Branding (*)	E-mail	Appendix A
KICC Project Leader (*); Consultant	Skype	Appendix B
Recruiter	Skype	Appendix C
Student Representative A; Audits Associate	Face-to-face	Appendix D
Student Representative B; Audits Associate	Face-to-face	Appendix D
Management Consultant	Skype	Appendix E
Student A	Face-to-face	Appendix F
Student B	Face-to-face	Appendix F
Student C	Face-to-face	Appendix F
Student D	Face-to-face	Appendix F
Student E	Face-to-face	Appendix G
Student F	Face-to-face	Appendix G

### 3.4.2 Structure and Conduction of Interviews

In order to obtain insights for our research questions, we utilized non-standardized interviews – a strategy described as an instrument for discovery when the research subject is relatively uncovered, and somewhat flexible approaches are needed (Fielding & Thomas, 2008). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) divide qualitative interviews into four sub-groups: structured, semi-structured, unstructured and in-depth interviews. Within that division, structured interviews are regarded as standardized interviews whereas semi-structured and in-depth interviews fall into the category of non-standardized interviews (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This research applied semi-structured interviews, meaning that we had a list of themes and questions that partly directed the interviews with the research participants (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The utilization of semi-structured interviews allowed us to adapt the interview forms and the order of questions based on the information most relevant to obtain (Fielding & Thomas, 2008; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Despite there was a level of freedom when conducting the interviews, we ensured all topics were covered, and every respondent received the same information regarding the research.

Altogether we compiled seven interview forms for this research. Apart from the two Student Representatives at KPMG, each respondent from the case company had slightly modified question forms based on their position, background and role regarding KPMG's case events. For student respondents, two different interview forms were created: one for the international competitor group and another for the Ace the Case and KICC local and national level-contest participants. Nevertheless, each interview form was primarily built around our research questions and the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013), presented in the literature review. Hence, even though forms and questions were slightly modified, there were central themes, theoretical background and research questions connecting all of them. We tested the initial interview forms over a thorough 'mock-interview' to see if the questions were easily understandable and presented in a logical structure (Simmons, 2008). This enabled us to clarify the forms by making some changes regarding the wording and the order of questions before the actual interviews took place (Simmons, 2008). All interview forms can be found as appendices at the end of the paper.

The interviews with students and KPMG Student Representatives were conducted in person and held separately. Rest of the KPMG employees were interviewed by phone, Skype or e-mail as the respondents are located in Stockholm. Interview forms were not submitted to research participants in advance as we aimed to obtain spontaneous and authentic responses in terms of, for instance, employer brand perceptions and experiences. All interviews were conducted in English which obviated possible translation mistakes and eased the utilization of quotes afterward. Most of the interviews lasted approximately one hour. With the consent of the research participants, all interviews were audio-recorded. The recordings were transcribed, word-by-word, soon after the interviews to improve reliability.



### 3.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data is described to be particularly complex with a high volume of text, which therefore requires careful planning in analyzing and presenting data in a meaningful way (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Unlike quantitative data with numbers, qualitative one is collected in the form of words which adds even more complexity to the analysis process (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Silverman, 2010). Thus, we acknowledged the significance of a well-designed analysis since it is believed to be the “heart of building theory from case studies” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.539). Analyzing qualitative data involves three major steps: sorting, reducing, and arguing (Rennstam, 2018). We emphasize that the analysis process is not a linear continuance as we adopted an abductive approach. In order to sort the empirical data, our first step was to transcribe the recordings after the interviews. We divided the transcription tasks equally and completed them shortly after the interviews. With the assistance of written interview notes, we also aimed at capturing such nuances as facial expressions and emotional feedback which were not otherwise evident in the recordings.

Following Rennstam’s (2018) suggestion, we sorted the collected data through coding after the transcription process. In the first phase of reading and discussion, we started by classifying the perspectives of the case company and the participants due to the dual-perspective nature of the research. We continued to identify quotes that may be used to answer our research questions and categorized them with initial codes. As we took an abductive approach, the themes of coding derived both from the empirical data and the preconceived theoretical concepts (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). After that, we detected recurring themes among the codes based on the frequency, similarity, and difference among them (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

To reduce the data, we needed to consider the categories that were most relevant to the research questions (Rennstam, 2018). Therefore, we carefully scrutinized the categories developed in the previous step to identify their linkage to the theoretical concepts that guided us throughout the research. In this stage, we retained the ones that we deemed closer to the topic of employer branding and corporate brand identity, and omitted other categories. The process resulted in eight most relevant categories generated from the quotes. In order to ensure that we did not delete data that could have been meaningful to our research questions, we paid particular attention in reading through the quotes and explaining the reasons before any omissions.

Finally, in the stage of arguing, we made explicit connections among the categories and how they could be related to literature (Rennstam, 2018). We established the connections among the eight main categories and the preconceived theoretical themes. This was done by locating key quotes from both case company representatives and case event participants. Besides, we purposefully compared the respondents’ feedback from the two perspectives to make sure the categories identified were supported by both parties. At this point, we also started drafting our interpretations regarding the connections between categories and the framework of the CBIM

(Urde, 2013) to increase its theoretical relevance. These categorizations were classified under 'labels' which are presented in the next chapter of empirical findings.

## 3.6 Validity and Reliability

As researchers, we took the concerns of qualitative research into consideration to improve the credibility of our study. According to Lecompte and Goets (1982), there are four evaluation criteria for qualitative studies: internal and external validity as well as internal and external reliability. Below we describe how these concerns were addressed in our research.

Internal validity concerns the degree to which researchers are able to present convincing connections between the theoretical findings and empirical data (Lecompte & Goets, 1982). To increase internal validity, we strived to ensure the data collected was accurate and reflected what we intended to study with several measures. First, before conducting interviews, the interview guides were carefully designed and refined to ensure that there was sufficient theoretical support. As mentioned previously, the forms were piloted with a mock-interview to assure they would elicit meaningful responses. Besides, to include multiple perspectives in the research could also reduce concerns about the internal validity (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Therefore, in our exploration of the phenomenon of case events, we included perspectives from the case company and participants to attain a more accurate picture of the researched phenomenon. Furthermore, our pre-study on case events contributed to our experience in the field and helped us to reach insightful responses through the interviews. External validity refers to the extent the findings of the research could be transferred to another context (Lecompte & Goets, 1982), which can be understood as the generalizability of the research. Under our single case research design, the primary purpose was to produce a more developed understanding of the phenomenon instead of generalizability of the findings. Hence we intended to generate theory through our study.

Apart from validity, reliability of qualitative research also concerns researchers. Internal reliability refers to the degree multiple researchers agree with each other regarding the research findings (Lecompte & Goets, 1982). To overcome the issues concerning internal reliability, we conducted all the interviews together and recorded them for later discussion. During our discussions, we went through the interview quotes to reach shared understanding and interpretation of the interview results. Moreover, we carried out the analysis process collectively with a thorough discussion that led to a mutual agreement to the conclusions. Lastly, external reliability denotes the level to which the study could be replicated by other researchers to generate similar findings (Lecompte & Goets, 1982). To approximate high external reliability in our thesis, every aspect of our research methods is described in detail in this chapter. The intention was to provide a clear picture of how we, as researchers, conducted the study and reached the conclusions. With the description of our research methods, future researchers can follow the process to repeat the research in a different context – for instance, with a different cooperating company.

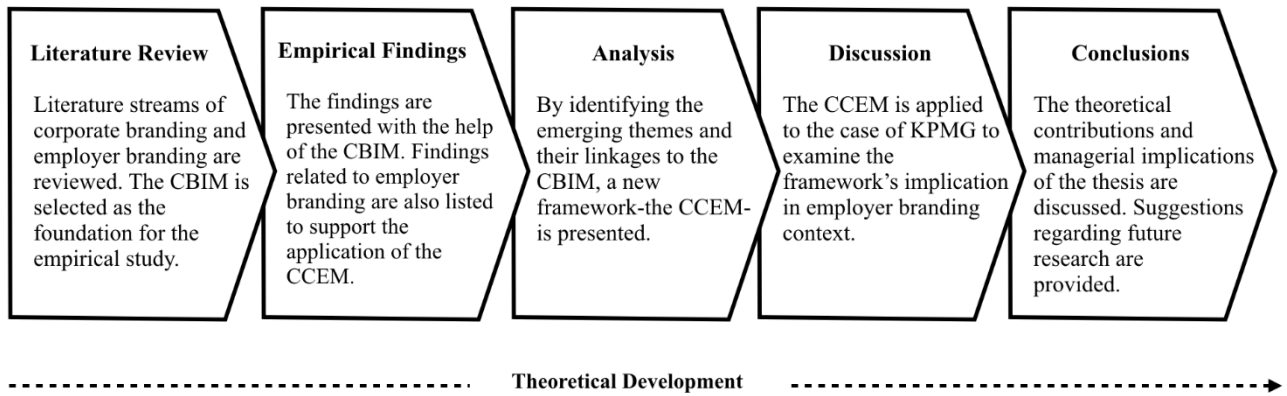
## 3.7 Limitations

By discussing the limitations of our research, we were able to reflect upon the weaknesses of our thesis as well as propose suggestions for future research. The first limitation of our thesis resides in its research design as a single case study. The choice of a single case study on KPMG would limit the generalizability of the research findings and make them less applicable to other companies or industries – especially because the nature of consultancy industry is quite distinctive from many others. However, as the purpose of the thesis is to explore the phenomenon of case events, a single case study would still be a suitable research strategy because it allows us to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon along the research process.

The second limitation of the thesis lies in the number and diversity of our interview respondents due to the constraint of time. In our research, we have conducted altogether twelve interviews with KPMG employees and case event participants. KPMG's case events are held internationally in many countries and by different subsidiaries of the organization. The number of the interviews in our research represented a relatively small part of the total amount of people involved in the case events thus, most likely, the findings would not be applicable to the organization globally. Furthermore, the fact that all of the respondents were from Sweden denoted that the findings were limited to a Swedish perspective. However, corresponding to our research purpose, we reckoned that focusing on KPMG Sweden allowed us to delineate the phenomenon more thoroughly, which formed the basis for future expansion of the topic.

## 3.8 Theoretical Development

In the theoretical flowchart (see figure 3), we provide an overview of how the theoretical parts of our thesis are connected with each other. The theoretical grounds are built on the literature review chapter where we presented the literature streams of employer and corporate branding. In that section, we introduced Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix that serves as a theoretical foundation for our empirical research. In the next chapter, the empirical findings are presented with the elements of the CBIM. In the first part of empirical findings, we conduct preliminary analysis for our own matrix that extends from the CBIM. In the second part, we explain how case events are regarded in terms of employer branding. Based on the identified categories and their linkage to the CBIM, a new framework – the Corporate Case Event Matrix (the CCEM) – is developed. The matrix is presented more in detail in the Analysis chapter. On the Discussion section, we describe and exemplify how the CCEM, and each element of it, can be applied in the context of employer branding. Finally, under Conclusions, the theoretical and managerial implications of our thesis are introduced.



*Figure 3. Theoretical flowchart of the thesis*

## 4 Empirical Findings

*This chapter introduces the empirical findings obtained through our qualitative interviews and is divided into two parts. The first part starts with the motivators of case events in the perspectives of the case company and the students. Within this part, a preliminary analysis of potential categories of our matrix is presented in the last paragraph of each section. The second part focuses on KPMG's employer branding practices through case events and forms the basis for the Discussion chapter.*

### 4.1 Motivators Behind Case Events

The interviews with KPMG representatives and the students provided us information on their motivators in arranging and attending case events. As mentioned previously, company's corporate brand sets the bedrock to communicate its employer brand to the target audience. Especially for a service-based company, such as KPMG, clearly-communicated corporate brand identity is beneficial for creating differentiation from its competitors (Kotler et al. 2009). Thus, we believe that it is essential to commence by scrutinizing KPMG's case events from a corporate branding perspective. To review the theme thoroughly, the empirical findings of this research are presented according to the elements of Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix.

#### 4.1.1 Mission and Vision

According to company representatives, creating and sharing knowledge are essential parts of how KPMG operates its business. The firm's intended position in the market is emphasized with the following mission statement: "Helping to build a knowledge-based economy using KPMG's expertise and resources" (KPMG, 2018h). KPMG further delineates its vision in becoming a knowledge-based company with the following words: "Distinguished by the learning opportunities offered, through a platform which shares the expertise, knowledge and experience of professionals across a global network" (KPMG, 2018h).

As communicated in KPMG's mission and vision statements above, the firm's way of doing business involves to a large extent the creation and extension of knowledge as well as learning in a network. Through our interviews, we found that a majority of the respondents associated KPMG's case events with the idea of learning from different perspectives. The learning aspects were commented by KICC Project Leader in the following way:

*The aim of case events is to provide participants with experience of solving cases they can use later in any jobs in their future careers. Case events develop especially students' teamwork and analysis skills (KICC Project Leader)*

The learning and development perspectives were also underlined by many students when they were questioned on their motivations to participate in case events. Students explained the reasons they took part in the KICC followingly:

*You can be there to learn about other people and their perspectives but also specifically about how to solve cases – this part, I think, is quite important for many business students. For me it was twofold: both learning about KPMG, but perhaps even more about cases and how to structure case-solving (Student B)*

*I wanted to practice case-solving as I aim to work within the management consulting industry and I know lots of cases are used for job interviews. I think that the KICC competition is good practice for that purpose (Student F)*

Based on these quotes, we noticed that 'learning' is a shared concept appearing both in the comments of the case company and the students. As 'learning' is an essential part of KPMG's mission and vision, we can infer that through organizing the case events, the firm aims at presenting the very purpose of the enterprise. Similarly, we have discovered that the students would like to learn about solving cases to become better at case interviews utilized in recruitment processes. Based on these insights, we conclude that both parties realized their purpose through case events. We believe that the label 'realizing purpose' can account for one of the essential drivers behind case events.

#### 4.1.2 Culture

During the interviews, the KPMG representatives described their culture as open and honest. In addition, they emphasized learning and work-life balance. These views depict how KPMG works and which kind of behavior is promoted within the company. With the help of case events, the company aims at conveying these cultural aspects to the attending students. KICC Project Leader explained objectives of the contest followingly:

*Through this competition, we want to show people that we are very open-minded, helpful, and that we value integrity and quality. We also want to show that we listen to one another and help out when people don't know the answer by themselves. In those situations, teamwork comes into play, and we help each other to be the best (KICC Project Leader)*

Among the multiple cultural elements of KPMG, open and honest communication with case event participants was emphasized by one of the Student Representatives:

*People are not afraid of telling the truth. Sometimes student representatives do not want to talk about things that students are curious about – for instance how much we work and how much we get paid. But at KPMG, we are very open about these things (Student Representative B)*

On the other hand, the opportunity to know more about the culture of consultancy firms with the help of a case competition was highlighted by the Management Consultant who had participated the KICC as a student.

*In the beginning, the focus was on practicing case-solving skills. But the further we went on, it became more about meeting other persons just like us, expanding the contact network and getting in touch with the company. After being in the event and meeting all the people in KPMG, like HR and judges, I really got to know the company a lot better (Management Consultant)*

He continued to explain how attending the KICC changed his perception of KPMG's culture in a positive way:

*If you compare the perception of strategy consultancy firms, you get the perception that they step on each other's heads in order to get forward, which was not true when I experienced KPMG (Management Consultant)*

Emerging from the interviews, it seems that, for KPMG, case events were means for communicating and expressing their corporate culture towards students. This was largely enabled by personal interactions during the events. Considering the aspects of the participants, it was expressed that case events created a setting where they can experience KPMG's corporate culture. Therefore, as a preliminary analytical take, we consider that the element of 'cultural interaction' is an essential motivator that applies both to KPMG and the participants.

### 4.1.3 Competences

Throughout the interviews, KPMG representatives and students addressed that the company's case events were the most professional ones of their kind. Interestingly, behind such professionalism lies the intention to provide inspiration as well as to get inspired. KPMG attempts to inspire the students with the highly professional case events at both national and international level. Moreover, the company utilizes the KICC to inspire the participants on the trends that affect work-life and the overall society. For them, it is essential to stay at the forefront of the development – as well as to promote it to the case event participants. According to KICC Project Leader, the latter can be furthered by a careful selection of cases used in the events.

*The challenge is that we are arranging a case competition with the brightest minds from all over the world. Also, we live in a period where innovation and transformation of whole society are at a change. In order to be in the forefront, we have to be very innovative in our cases and the whole competition. I think we deliver that very well and excelled this year when the theme was innovation (KICC Project Leader)*

While KPMG tries to inspire others, students look to get inspired by case events. This is demonstrated in two aspects. Firstly, many participants were impressed by how professionally KPMG organized the KICC.

*If I would have a company, I would trust KPMG. I could absolutely hire them because they are very professional. In that perspective, I think all these connections they make with the students are very good for KPMG (Student C)*

*You find a sense of professionalism because all of these events were organized so well. The cases were good. All the logistics went well when I was there. The judges were quite high-ranks professionals. So you got the sense that it is a well-working company (Management Consultant)*

Furthermore, students were inspired by looking at the presentations of other competitors. They believed this inspiration was particularly valuable for younger students.

*I would say it's about students solving and watching others solving cases to get inspired. This inspiration part is important especially for younger students who want to participate next year – at least that's how it was for me (Student F)*

The quotes from KPMG respondents highlight their competence in arranging case events that convey the professional and innovative images towards event participants. Emerging from the interviews, we come to believe that KPMG tried to 'inspire' desired associations in the minds of the participants through the KICC. The comments from the participants suggest that they were inspired by the way KPMG organized the KICC and the performance of other students in the events. Hence, it seems the KICC was a venue for both parties to either 'inspire' or 'to get inspired.' Thus, an emerging theme here is referred to as 'source of inspiration'.

#### 4.1.4 Expression

Expression for a corporate brand means the unique way to communicate itself (Urde, 2013). The scale and scope of the KICC have made the competition a distinguishable identification for KPMG. Many respondents from the case company believed that having such a large case event contributes to spreading the name of the firm through media and word of mouth. One of the Student Representatives summarized these thoughts followingly:



*I think that we are a very strong label – that is the main goal. We also aim to get a lot of exposure with the help of case events (Student Representative A)*

Furthermore, KICC Project Leader shared his viewpoint on the word of mouth effect resulted from their annual case events:

*We are in contact with over 20,000 students all over the world every year. They, in turn, talk to other people about the competitions. I would not be surprised if there would be a few hundred thousand people every year who talk about KPMG just because of the case competition. There is no event towards students with the same size. The volume and the scope of the event really make it a differentiator (KICC Project Leader)*

The benefit of gaining attention was not only mentioned by the company. Some of the participants explained how they also get visibility and can do ‘personal branding’ with the help of the events. One of the students summarized these thoughts followingly:

*To participate in a case competition is almost like ‘to get your name out there’ (Student C)*

Emerging from the interviews with the case company, we came to an understanding that the events – especially the KICC – are important platforms for the company to attract attention amongst business students and the greater public. Some students, quite similarly, also saw possibilities to ‘draw attention’ by attending the case events. We noticed that a shared motivator exists among the case company as well as the participants. Since it is much about the attention acquired through the KICC, we believe that ‘getting attention’ would be an appropriate label to capture the essence of the drivers behind case events.

#### 4.1.5 Personality

We noticed through interviews that, with the help of its case events, KPMG aspires to display the company characteristics to the participants. These endeavors are pursued by integrating multiple interactions between KPMG employees and the participants into the process of case events. Through these interactions, the company representatives can show ‘who they are’ and ‘how it is like to work at KPMG’. One student representative described the messages they aim to convey to participating students followingly:

*In this kind of work, it is really important to be open, ask lots of questions and show that you are willing to learn. We want to tap into the best talents in the beginning of their careers. Many people here [at KPMG] have done case competitions before. There is a sort of a match between participants and KPMG employees. Many people who think solving cases is fun also apply for this kind of job (Student Representative A)*

While KPMG aims to demonstrate its characteristics, the participants also potentially possess an opportunity to present their drive and motivations to the company. According to one Student Representative, the presentation of characteristics is a mutual action for both KPMG and the participants alike.

*One of the key benefits of case events is that students can get a picture of KPMG and see if they would fit into our company. They can also show their motivation and interest to us (Student Representative A)*

According to the the CBIM, Personality refers to the personal character of a corporate brand which relies on their employees (Urde, 2013). Based on that theoretical definition, we have noticed how KPMG aims at showing some characteristics of their employees to the participants. Furthermore, we can see a possibility for students to demonstrate their motivation and interest in KPMG as candidates. We can conclude that they both have the opportunity to promote their personality with the help of case events. Hence we propose a label ‘showing who we are’ to summarize the intentions of both parties.

#### 4.1.6 Value Proposition

Value proposition, according to Urde’s (2013) definition in the CBIM, refers to the key offerings of a company. Regarding KPMG’s key offering in the case events, the respondents emphasized the possibilities for building networks through which business opportunities could stem. Both Student Representatives pointed out that the KICC aims at retaining, as well as forming new, business connections.

*We have also judges from other firms which could be possible clients for us – however this is not the main goal. Also, it is not only about getting new contacts but also keeping up those that already exist (Student Representative A)*

In addition to making direct contact with companies, KPMG targets at building prospective business connections with the participants involved in the case events. KICC Project Leader described how such connections can be formed through the KICC:

*Looking at long-term perspective, we are meeting the best and brightest minds from the top schools in the world. Even though we don’t recruit everyone, I think all of them get a good feeling of the firm. Many of them will be business leaders in the future, so it’s a potential contact for services within tax, advisory, and audit (KICC Project Leader)*

If we turn to the perspective of the participants, we can find that they regard case events as a chance to connect with other students and KPMG. Students mentioned the mutual business connection possibilities as well as personal connections that might lead to work opportunities with the company later on.

*I think that the KICC is very good for them [KPMG], especially in terms of all the connections they make with the students. There was also top management from KPMG there. These can be very valuable connections for both ways (Student C)*

*I think being part of this event would open many doors at KPMG if I'd like to work there one day (Student B)*

Drawing on the theoretical concept of value proposition, we have observed that 'building connections' seems to act as a key offering that stems from the case events for KPMG and the case event participants. These quotes suggest that by involving in a case competition, both of them were able to build connections with all the people present in the occasions. Therefore, it is our belief that 'building connections' is among one of the motivators behind case events.

#### 4.1.7 Relationships

A recurring theme emerged throughout our interviews regarding the respondents' opinions on the relationships between KPMG and the participants in the case events. The company representatives mentioned the possibilities these events provide for forming relationships with students who might be potential candidates for the company. For KPMG, the case events serve as a 'dialogue' with the participants. The bond aspect was also mentioned by a student who attended the international competition.

*Our case events are dialogue with students. Students have lots of questions on our work and KPMG as a brand (Student Representative A)*

*Now, after the international competition, I have a stronger bond to KPMG representatives and I also got to talk to international recruiters which made the bond towards the company even stronger (Student B)*

The dialogue at the case events allows the company to spot the right talents more easily as compared to normal recruitment processes. For instance, the possibility to see students presenting allows company representatives to evaluate their possible work performance.

*It's also easier for us to see people that are more valuable for KPMG at case events than at other kinds of activities. We can see if you are good at presentations. So, it is easier for us to spot the persons that we want to hire through these events (Student Representative B)*

*An interview says something about a person but we get so much more information when people attend the KICC. We spend so much time with students: we see them presenting and we also have other events like dinner for national finals. That tells a lot (Recruiter)*

From the participants' perspective, many of them mentioned how, through the interactions with company representatives, they were able to learn more about the consultancy work. Also, one of the students mentioned how a discussion with a senior professional had strengthened his career aspirations.

*I could ask questions that would not maybe be possible during actual job interviews. So, now when I think about it, the interaction with student representatives was something very positive for me during the events. They also gave me insight on how it might be to work with management consulting since both management and consulting are very broad terms and the work can be difficult to define (Student F)*

*I had a chance to discuss with one of the Management Consultants during Ace the Case. She told me about the work which confirmed my idea that it is the path that I want to follow (Student F)*

'Relationships' in the CBIM refers to the nature of the relationships between an organization and its stakeholders (Urde, 2013). We have discovered that the relationships between KPMG and the participants were to a large extent related to career aspects. For KPMG, it appeared that they organized the KICC in order to establish a resourceful approach to spot the right talents. The participants, for their part, regarded the events as an opportunity to spot the right career and learn about the consultancy work. We have therefore summarized the career-focused nature of the relationships as 'talent and career spotting,' which explains one of the mutual drivers behind case events.

#### 4.1.8 Position

To carve out the desired association in the market as well as in the minds of candidates, KPMG seems to utilize their large-scale case events to create a sense of distinction when compared to other 'big four' consultancy firms. According to KPMG representatives, having the largest case competition is a way to achieve a distinctive position in the minds of students.

*We definitely have the biggest case competition, and the case events have been growing during the past two years. I think the other ones only have smaller case events, but the KICC is definitely the biggest one and, also, the most serious one in the minds of students. That is how I think the KICC differs from others (Student Representative B)*

*The key benefit is that we really stand out among the big four by having the biggest competition tournament. It's a branding and recruiting event that creates buzz all over the world (KICC Project Leader)*

From the interviews, we also noticed that to have a case competition as big as the KICC implies an opportunity for KPMG to shape the participants' associations upon the company. The contest also gives KPMG an advantage in terms of communicating its intended image. One of the participants observed how KPMG utilized the theme of cases to associate their brand with innovation. That contributed to his new perception of KPMG as an innovative company.

*This time they put lot a of emphasis on innovation with the cases. It is kind of cool and makes me connect the company with innovation now. That might differentiate them for me and I might keep them in mind if I need that kind of services in the future (Student A)*

The concept of distinction also seems to apply to the participants' motivations of joining in the case events. Just as KPMG enjoyed the advantage from the largest case events, the participants also could utilize the stage to differentiate themselves. Their performance during the case competitions shaped people's impression on them. One student elaborated on this aspect by calling it personal branding:

*We are talking about employer branding here, but taking part in these competitions is also about personal branding. I believe people think that if you are a person taking parting in a case completion, that means you are bright. I think people have that kind of general impression (Student E)*

According to Urde (2013), position in the CBIM is described as the intended position in the minds of stakeholders. Based on the theoretical concept, this section has uncovered the quotes that suggest both parties attempt to acquire distinctive associations in the minds of other people through the 'stage' of the competition. Thus, we summarize it as 'being in the spotlight' to describe the drivers behind the phenomenon of case events. For KPMG, 'being in the spotlight' means putting themselves in a distinctive position in the consultancy industry and the minds of the students. For the participants, it means they obtain a distinctive association in the minds of the audience.

Table 2 below summarizes the above-listed eight motivators for case events from the perspectives of KPMG and the participants. We shortly explain what each component of the CBIM means for the two parties. The 'conceptual element' column reminds about the analytical intakes we have presented.

Table 2. Overview of motivators for case events

<b>Theoretical concept</b>	<b>KPMG</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Conceptual element</b>
<b>Mission &amp; Vision</b>	Global learning platform for development and knowledge sharing	Learning and practicing case-solving skills	‘Realizing purpose’
<b>Culture</b>	Conveying KPMG’s ways of working and corporate culture	Obtaining a better picture of KPMG	‘Cultural interaction’
<b>Competences</b>	Showcasing competence and inspiring with innovativeness and professionalism	Getting inspired by new ideas and professionalism	‘Source of inspiration’
<b>Expression</b>	Building awareness through media and word of mouth	Gaining visibility	‘Getting attention’
<b>Personality</b>	Showing KPMG’s characteristics	Presenting personal motivators and drivers	‘Showing who we are’
<b>Value Proposition</b>	Establishing direct and future business partnerships	Connecting with KPMG and other competitors	‘Building connections’
<b>Relationship</b>	Creating a recruitment initiative	Getting career insights through interactions with KPMG	‘Talent and career spotting’
<b>Position</b>	Standing out with the largest competition	Personal branding	‘Being in the spotlight’

## 4.2 Employer Branding through Case Events

The latter part of this chapter focuses on explaining how case events are regarded at KPMG in terms of employer branding. The reader will learn about the practices the company uses for branding itself as an employer: which kind of messages are emphasized, who is in charge of strategic employer branding and which are the main channels utilized for reaching students. To consider how the target group perceives the employer brand of the company, the thoughts of the interviewed students are covered as well.

### 4.2.1 The Role of Case Events in Employer Branding and Talent Spotting

All interviewees at KPMG regarded that there is a firm connection between case events and employer branding, as students are potential entry-level candidates for the company. Since KPMG employs many graduates, it is important to connect with students already during their studies. Head of Employer Branding and Project Leader for KICC commented that the competition is strongly linked to the company's overall employer branding strategy and one of the initiatives that enables the company to profile itself as an attractive and popular employer.

*One of the aims of organizing a case competition is to attract the best individuals so that they see the company as a future employer. We want to create positive feelings and give good experiences for participants to market KPMG as a brand and an employer (KICC Project Leader)*

*The event creates an experience for the participants by providing them with 'something extra'. A normal event could be, for instance, an open house at the office where students would hear about different job opportunities at KPMG. International Case Competition is a different way of providing 'that extra' to potential candidates (KICC Project Leader)*

Recruiter for KPMG Sweden commented that, during previous years, there has been a lot of emphasis on employer branding at the KICC. However, about a year ago, there was a change in focus and now the aims of the competition have been linked additionally to recruitment. She mentioned that this transformation is still ongoing and thought there is yet much to do with the shift.

*The KICC is still an employer branding event, but we want to try to recruit as well. We meet so many great people over the course of the competition – of course we want to advertise KPMG and hopefully hire a few of the participants. The KICC gives us a chance to talk about KPMG: how it is to work here and what kind of opportunities we have (Recruiter)*

## 4.2.2 Employer Branding through People and Culture

The role of people and culture were underlined when KPMG respondents were questioned on how employer branding is actually done through case events. Student Representatives meet students during different university events, Ace the Case as well as local and national KICC competition. They considered important to tell students about the company culture and consultancy work – as well as to highlight the fun sides of working at KPMG.

*It is about the people you meet. The student representatives have a very unique role in selling KPMG at the job fair or the KICC. When I was a student, there were many colleagues who participated in the events, and I was thinking that 'these are the people I want to work with'. The culture appealed to me already then. (Student Representative B)*

*We try to show our fun and collaborative culture with the help of case events. I always tell students how I truly feel about working here and I think they get a realistic picture of our working culture through our discussions. Students usually think we work 24/7, but that is not the way it is. There is the high season, but that is compensated with holidays and less intense work periods. It is important to tell about that and the fun side, such as internal events, we have (Student Representative A)*

However, the intention to show the 'fun side' was sometimes seen a bit superficial by the students. In particular, almost every international final competitor who we interviewed mentioned a speech with many alcohol-jokes that was given by a KPMG presenter during a festive opening of the event. That was regarded as somewhat awkward and unsuitable for the occasion.

*Sometimes their [KPMG presenters] willingness to present 'being fun' turns out to be something quite the opposite and weird. We found the alcohol-jokes, during the presentation in Malaysia, a bit awkward (Student A)*

Nonetheless, the aims regarding culture and ways of working were noticed by the students who participated the international case competition. During the event, they had heard consultants and top-level managers discussing work-life balance, KPMG culture, and values such as integrity.

*They tried to promote that there is a balance between professional and personal life, and some sort of a really friendly culture. They also talked a lot about integrity (Student D)*

Also, Recruiter and KICC Project Leader opined that company and working culture are important topics to highlight when doing employer branding at case events. They explained that employer brand differentiation among the big four is challenging as all these consultancy companies operate in the same market and have similar candidate target groups. Therefore, the



KICC was seen as a way to differentiate KPMG as an employer towards students. The two interviewees explained that the competition can be seen as a platform through which such aspects as values, personality, learning opportunities and global career prospects at KPMG can be promoted.

*The international case competition is good for meeting people around the world and getting to work with them. It also shows that KPMG is a big international company, and people might have a possibility to work in different countries (Recruiter)*

*Learning and development are emphasized when we discuss with students. We also tell that each new employee gets a Performance Manager who mentors and coaches newcomers regularly. Performance Managers help new employees to map out their development areas as well as to plan how their personal goals can be realized (Recruiter)*

#### 4.2.3 Participants' View on Employer Branding

Students were also aware of the employer branding aspect KPMG has with the case competition. One of the students who had participated Ace the Case, as well as the KICC on a local and national level, commented these objectives followingly:

*They obviously want to impress students and seem like a cool and professional potential employer (Student E)*

Another student also acknowledged the employer branding part of the KICC but lamented the lack of interaction after the competition as well as the 'missed opportunities' regarding student recruitment.

*I think KPMG didn't take advantage of the competition the way they could have done. It's a bit frustrating to see an event that is so well-organized both by the student union and the company, but then they are not doing that much with it afterwards. The message I got was that they [KPMG] focus on employer branding but not for actually hiring us (Student F)*

The students who participated the international case competition, and had more interaction with the company and employees, talked about employer brand perception changes. Even though KPMG was not the 'employer of choice' for everyone, students regarded the company more attractive than before. Everyone highlighted the connections they had made with KICC Project Leader and Recruiter during the international competition days. These two were now referred to as 'friends' who the students are still in contact with. One of the respondents also discussed an emotional connection towards KPMG he had formed through personal interactions. He reckoned that this connection would set KPMG apart as an employer amongst the other big four consultancy firms.

*I got a lot more curious about KPMG. Our representatives were really nice, and I could imagine having them as my colleagues. I think that I could work for KPMG abroad (Student C)*

*My perception of the company as a potential employer has changed after the international KICC experience. I have never thought KPMG as a top choice, but that door has not been closed if an interesting opportunity would arise in the future (Student A)*

*I think that now, after spending so much time at the international event with KPMG, I have a more emotional connection to the company than I do towards the other big four. I think KPMG would be on top of mind if I would choose an employer between the big four. The event made me more attracted to KPMG. This attraction is more emotional and based on the people I met (Student B)*

All of the students had positive experiences with KPMG's Student Representatives, who were described as social and relaxed. However, students lamented that, during different career events, they usually meet employees only from the audit unit. As most students were interested in management consultancy careers, they felt that they did not get that relevant information from the audit people. Also, the culture within the audit unit was seen a bit 'stiff' and students reckoned it might not match how the work could be like at other units within the company. Students were hoping to meet people across functions and reckoned their employer brand perceptions could be different if they would have more various interactions.

The KPMG Management Consultant, who took part in the KICC as a student, acknowledged how the case competition had influenced his employer brand perceptions when he was still applying for jobs. He reckoned that the KICC experience influenced his choice of employer at the time he made decisions between job offers. The interviewee highlighted the personal connections and company information he had received as a competition participant. He also believed that what he had learned about KPMG, and for instance about its culture, affected his final choice of employer.

*The KICC was really a good means for me to find unique things on KPMG and to compare the big four companies. I knew more about KPMG, than for instance PwC, when I applied a job with the company because of this personal connection. I learned a lot about KPMG from my experience in the KICC (Management Consultant)*

*Once I got the final job offers, it was definitely an important factor that I had experience with the employer before – for instance the culture part. I would say having taken part in the KICC was a contributing factor (Management Consultant)*

#### 4.2.4 Employer Branding Communication

The strategic employer branding at KPMG Sweden is mainly managed by the communications team, who works closely with the human resources and marketing units. The recruitment team does not work with employer branding on a strategic level, but recruiters have an essential role in conveying the employer brand messages towards students as they attend career fairs, the KICC and other similar activities.

*I work a lot with employer branding by going, for instance, to different events and career fairs. This is more about mingling and answering to possible questions people might have on working at KPMG. It is also about being a point of contact to possible candidates (Recruiter)*

The Student Representatives commented that they have received some guidance on how to present KPMG as an employer, but that is relatively generic, and they can quite freely talk about the company. However, KICC Project Leader receives more employer branding guidance from the global marketing team. Few times a month, the team arranges meetings for all the countries that take part in the global competition. The marketing unit provides KICC Project Leaders with guidelines on how to present the company and compiles, for instance, presentation slides that are suggested to be used. During the meetings, the participants share their best practices on employer branding and try to learn about the topic from each other.

When it comes to media coverage, Head of Employer Branding commented that, in Sweden, KPMG gets much attention through its case competition. There are articles in the main local and national newspapers as well as wide coverage on social media. The success of employer branding in terms of the KICC is measured with public relations visibility, social media coverage and the number of students reached through the competition.

*There are articles about the KICC in the major Swedish newspapers. Local media has also written about the competition a lot – especially if winning team has been from that particular region (Head of Employer Branding)*

*I think the KICC gets a lot of attention on media. We also put a focus on the competition on social media which is a very strong channel towards students (Student Representative A)*

The Student Representatives, as well as many of the students, mentioned especially KPMG's Instagram social media account where the company shares different content related to the KICC. The platform was also described as a channel to strengthen and present the KPMG culture towards the company followers – both internal and external. Not only communications department, but everyone in the company, have a possibility to show how it is like to work at KPMG through this channel.

*We also 'open up' our culture through social media. For instance, on Instagram employees can show how it is to work here (Student Representative A)*

*I started to follow KPMG on social media during the KICC, and I'm still following them. They let different people oversee their Instagram account for each week which is a good way to see various perspectives. Their Instagram feels real and natural because it is not only about perfect pictures. They show different angles on how the work is at KPMG (Student F)*

In the comment above, one of the students describes how he started to follow KPMG on social media. He opined that the company's Instagram account seems authentic and shows different perspectives on the working at KPMG. He also mentioned that his perceptions of the company had changed, towards a more positive direction, during the international competition due to the social media content. Furthermore, word of mouth contributed to this perception change as his peers were competing in the national winning team.

*After the national competition, I started to follow KPMG on Instagram and now I'm following how they interact with the winning team at the international finals. They are telling me nice things about the company representatives who I did not meet during local and national competitions. Those things have changed my perception towards the company more positive direction (Student F)*

# 5 Analysis

*In this chapter, we introduce Corporate Case Event Matrix (CCEM), a conceptual framework based on the analysis of empirical findings. The matrix draws on the preliminary take from the previous chapter and is extended from Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix. The CCEM is composed of the following eight elements: 'realizing purpose'; 'cultural interaction'; 'source of inspiration'; 'getting attention'; 'showing who we are'; 'building connections'; 'talent and career spotting'; 'being in the spotlight'. First, we present the matrix and then the detailed exploration of each element. The purpose of the matrix is to provide a theoretical explanation to the motivations of case events from both the case company and the participants' perspectives. It can as well be utilized as a guiding tool for arranging case events and employer branding initiatives.*

## 5.1 The Corporate Case Event Matrix

In the previous chapter, the elements of the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013) provided a holistic structure for us to present the empirical data. With the help of the CBIM, we were also able to systematically discover and discuss certain patterns shared by both KPMG and the participants in the process of data presentation. These patterns later become the elements of the Corporate Case Event Matrix (CCEM) and will be examined in this chapter. As in figure 4, the eight elements of the Case Event Matrix are based on the CBIM (Urde, 2013) and can be regarded as an extension of theory into the field of case events. Therefore, each element has its theoretical background and is supported by the interviews conducted in our research. Corresponding to the purpose of our research, we analyze the phenomenon of case events by introducing these eight elements in the following sections.

## Corporate Case Event Elements

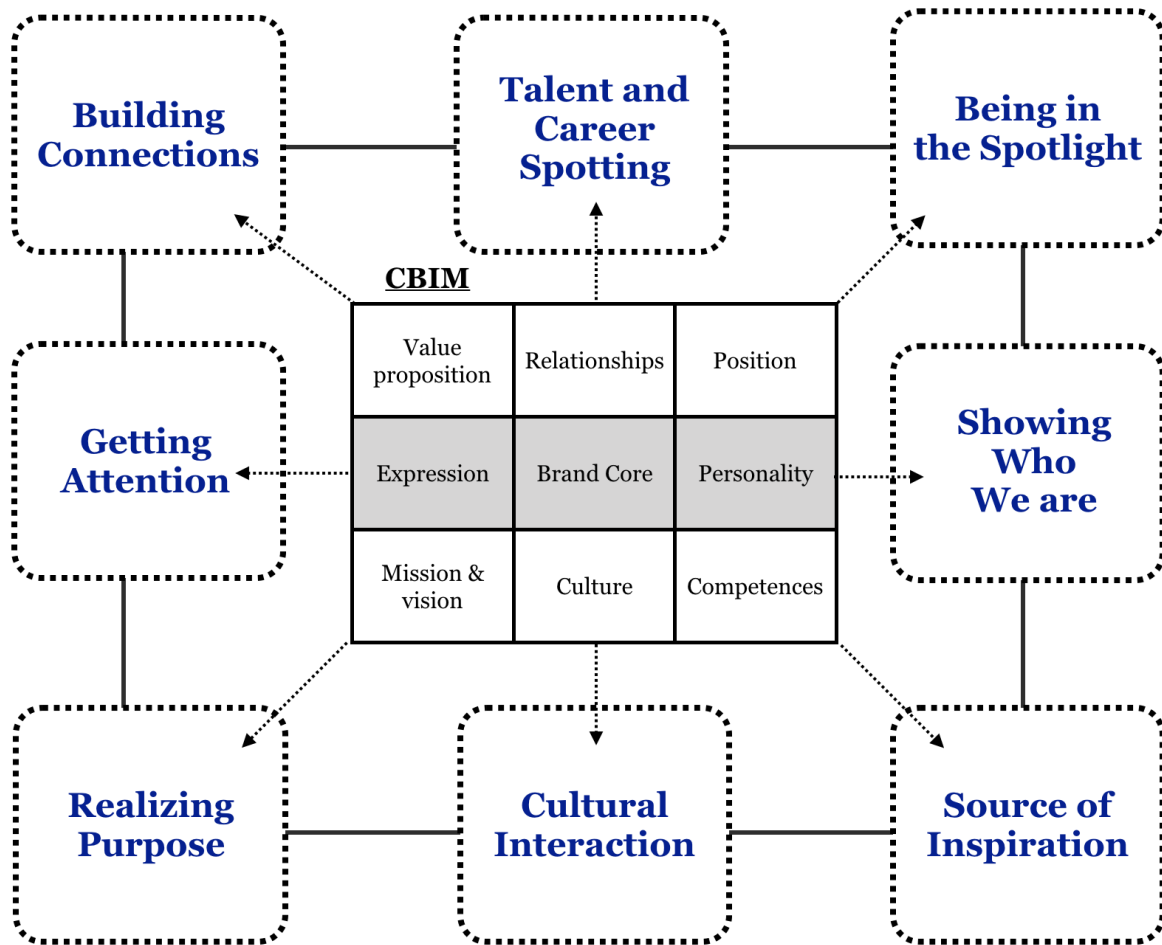


Figure 4. The Corporate Case Event Matrix (adapted from Urde, 2013)

## 5.2 Realizing Purpose

‘Realizing purpose’ is one of the fundamental elements in the CCEM. The element refers to the concept that, through case events, KPMG realize the corporate mission and vision whereas the participants realize their purpose of learning as students. The element gains its origin from ‘Mission and Vision’ in the CBIM (Urde, 2013) and guides us to examine how the case events reflect KPMG and the participants’ purpose throughout the competitions.

For KPMG, their mission and vision emphasize on contributing to the knowledge-based economy and distinguishing themselves by providing learning platforms where knowledge and solutions are shared (KPMG, 2018h). Throughout the interviews, the learning aspects of case events have been emphasized by the respondents. Their opinions suggested that, through arranging their case events, KPMG aimed at providing learning opportunities for the students on their way to become future leaders. From this perspective, we can notice that KPMG has

incorporated the essence of their mission and vision into the case events. This leads us to an understanding that one pivotal motivation behind the KICC is to realize the very purpose of their enterprise.

When we turn to the participants' perspective, we noticed that the main objective for them to attend case events resided in the learning opportunities in various stages of the events. Despite the fact that there were variances in the areas where the respondents wanted to learn, they all regarded the learning as an important preparation for case interviews many consultancy companies arrange for candidates nowadays. They also mentioned that case events had developed their practical skills as studies at the university were seen more 'theoretical'. Thus, we have found that the students also realized their purpose as students by attending the KICC.

Based on the arguments, we conclude that 'realizing purpose' is one of the Corporate Case Event Matrix elements. The element can apply to both students' and the case company's motivations behind case events. In addition to accounting for the motivations, this element can act as an important guiding rule for companies who intend to arrange case competitions. As literature suggests, a set of understood mission and vision by the stakeholders contributes to building a stronger corporate brand (Balmer, 1998). Thus, from a corporate branding perspective, 'realizing purpose' then plays an important role as to crystallize and communicate the mission and vision to the target audience in case events.

### 5.3 Cultural Interaction

'Cultural interaction' is one element in the CCEM that stresses the importance of corporate culture. The term cultural interaction refers to the different focuses held by the case company and the participants. For the former, the element denotes communicating the corporate culture to participants, and for the latter, experiencing the cultural aspects presented by organizers. The element stems from 'Culture' in the CBIM (Urde, 2013) and reflects how cultural aspects are taken into consideration when arranging case events.

Through our empirical research, we have identified that KPMG intended to present their corporate culture through the KICC by highlighting their way of doing things. These aspects were demonstrated by open communication established between KPMG employees and the participants as well as their emphasis on core values such as integrity, quality, and teamwork.

There was an interesting variance between KPMG and the participants regarding what the element represents to each party. As the Management Consultant said "*After being in the event...I really got to know the company a lot better,*" one of the key benefits of joining in the case events as a student was the opportunity to get to know the company better. The experience in the competitions led him to familiarize with KPMG's ways of working and even positively transformed his initial views of the company and its culture.

The element of ‘cultural interaction’ has a significant role in the matrix as it summarizes how the case company and the participants interact on the cultural aspects during the case events. The dual-perspective of this element makes it possible to account for the motivators of KPMG as well as the students. Moreover, the element provides a hint on how organizations can leverage their own corporate culture for engaging students.

## 5.4 Source of Inspiration

‘Source of inspiration’ in our matrix originates from ‘Competence’ in the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix which refers to the particular capability of a company (Urde, 2013). This element captures one of the common patterns discovered through our interviews. For KPMG, ‘source of inspiration’ denotes the ability to inspire intended associations in the minds of the participants. For the students, the element means that they were inspired by the events.

During the interviews, KPMG talked about their experience in organizing large-scale case events. With the KICC, the largest case event in the world, they seized the chance to inspire new perceptions in the minds of the participants. Such inspired perception was demonstrated by Management Consultant who explained followingly: *“You find a sense of professionalism because all of these events were organized so well.”* His opinion suggests how he came to associate KPMG with the ideas of professionalism in the well-organized case competition. On the other hand, as student F said *“As I would say it’s about students solving and watching others solving cases to get inspired,”* the students were inspired not only by the professionalism of KPMG but also by the ideas presented by other competitors in the events. The fact that the KICC serves as a source which KPMG and the students can utilize to either inspire or be inspired gives a dual-perspective nature to the element, which also leads us to believe that ‘source of inspiration’ could be included as one of the elements in our matrix.

Apart from the ability to explain the nature of case events, ‘source of inspiration’ also has a strategic implication for companies that wish to launch their case competitions. As the case study shows, through an effective demonstration and utilization of companies’ competence, there are opportunities to implement desired associations in the minds of the target audience as KPMG did.

## 5.5 Getting Attention

In our matrix, ‘getting attention’, is the element that refers to the benefit of building awareness through case competitions. The concept derives from the CBIM’s ‘expression’ component which refers to the unique identification of a corporation (Urde, 2013). Through the empirical



research, we have reached an understanding that case events have become a measure for the case company to achieve wider brand awareness. For the participants, the benefit was related to gaining visibility. These motivators are summarized in the ‘getting attention’ element of our matrix. For KPMG, ‘getting attention’ represents how they use case events as a unique expression of the corporation. For students, the label refers to the attention they can receive as participants of case competitions.

For KPMG, KICC has been an effective platform for creating exposure through external media as well as the company-owned online channels such as the official KPMG Instagram account. The stories of the competing teams provided them with material that attracts attention from the public. In addition, the widespread discussion on KICC during the period it was held was said to gain a lot of focus worldwide as KICC Project Leader commented: *“I would not be surprised if there would be a few hundred thousand people every year who talk about KPMG just because of the case competition.”* Similarly, students enjoyed the advantage of gaining attention. Student C described case events as a possibility *“to get your name out there.”* The competitions help to increase students’ visibility as bright students competing in the most serious case competition.

Emerging from the interviews, we can conclude a shared motivator between KPMG and the participants. Since the patterns are closely related to how each party acquired attention from others, we believe that ‘getting attention’ should be included in the matrix as an element summarizing the drivers related to recognizability.

## 5.6 Showing Who We Are

The ‘personality’ component in the CBIM, that refers to the personal character of a corporation (Urde, 2013), guided the theoretical development of ‘showing who we are.’ Based on the concept, we have identified another recurring theme between KPMG and the participants throughout our empirical study. Each party demonstrated an intention to present the characteristics of oneself to another, which we phrase as ‘showing who we are’ in the CCEM. For the case company, ‘showing who we are’ refers to revealing the personal characteristics of their employees during case events. For the participants, this offers a possibility to promote their interest towards the company as potential candidates.

As demonstrated in our findings, one of the key objectives for KPMG to organize their case events is to promote ‘who they are’ and ‘how it is like to work at KPMG’. Through the interaction between the employees and the participants in the case events, the students had a chance to know better the personal characteristics of the Student Representatives, Recruiter, KICC Project Leader and other personnel involved. By doing so, the students could also gain a better understanding of the corporate character of KPMG. This aspect corresponds to the argument of Keller and Richey (2006) stating that the personality of a corporation relies on the personality of its employees.

As mentioned by one of the KPMG Student Representatives, case events allow students to show their motivation and interest towards the company. Also, students can promote the ‘personal fit’ they might share with the firm. However, it should be acknowledged that this was not the main motivator for the students interviewed as their primary drivers were more linked to, for instance, learning and personal development aspects.

‘Showing who we are’ therefore implies an improved understanding between KPMG and the students, which might contribute to recruitment initiatives after the events. Besides, the element provides insight for organizations into designing case events that facilitate mutual understanding of corporate brand personality and that of the participants. From employer branding perspective, we regard ‘showing who we are’ as a critical step before entering a “psychological contract” (Roper & Fill, 2012, p.68) represented by employment. As literature emphasizes the role of trust in such contract (Roper & Fill, 2012), ‘showing who we are’ facilitates the formation of trust by disclosing the characters of both parties during the events.

## 5.7 Building Connections

In the Corporate Case Event Matrix, ‘building connections’ represents the key offerings provided through a case event. It draws upon the element of ‘value proposition’ from the CBIM (Urde, 2013) and extends it in the context of case events. While ‘value proposition’ refers to the key offering of a corporation to its stakeholders (Urde, 2013), ‘building connections’ can be seen as a key offering of case events. The element, for KPMG, represents how the firm can build connections with business partners and students through case events. For the participants, it refers to the connections made with other competitors as well as KPMG employees.

As was explored through our empirical study, the benefit of building connections was consistently mentioned as one critical aspect of why KPMG has been organizing the KICC for years. For them, the KICC is a platform through which they keep in touch with existing contacts as well as create new connections with potential clients. Another essential perspective refers to networking with prospective business leaders, namely the students, throughout the events. As KICC Project Leader put it: *“we are meeting the best and brightest minds from the top schools in the world ... it’s a potential contact for services within tax, advisory, and audit”*, we can therefore conclude that these connections are valuable for the fields of business KPMG operates within.

‘Building connections’ can additionally explain why students attended case events. This was relevant especially with the KICC as it provided students with more long-term and personal interactions with the company. Many students highlighted that the case events were to a large extent about making connections within the big network created by the KICC. They had recognized that such connections might be equally valuable for them as well as for KPMG as

they may become business partners in the future. This aspect led us to believe that connection-building is a fundamental aspect of the KICC.

From the analysis above, we have concluded that ‘building connections’ should be included in the matrix as one of the mutual motivators shared by KPMG and the students. The KPMG’s case event also has provided us with a good example of how to distinguish a case event by giving a key proposition to the stakeholders.

## 5.8 Talent and Career Spotting

The element of ‘relationships’ in the CBIM (Urde, 2013) provides the theoretical background for ‘talent and career spotting.’ While the former refers to the nature of the relationships between an organization and its stakeholders (Urde, 2013), the latter discusses the career-focused interaction in the case events. Through our empirical study, we have found that multiple interactions between KPMG and the students were closely interwoven in the case competitions. The focus of those interactions varied depending on perspectives of KPMG and the participants. For the organizer, it concerned finding the talents that were the best match to the company. For the students, the emphasis was on gaining career insights within the field of consultancy.

As Recruiter at KPMG commented, the company has planned to start utilizing the KICC more as a recruitment initiative. To find the matching talents, the interactions with students have been developed with several approaches. For instance, intensive dialogues have been established between the employees and the students who attended the KICC. By doing so, a tighter bond was gradually built with students who expressed their interest towards the company. These approaches contributed to an easier spotting of the right talents as was highlighted by Student Representative B: *“it is easier for us to spot the persons that we want to hire through these events.”*

Interestingly, when KPMG has been spotting the right talents through the events, the students have been trying to spot the right careers. This aspect can be supported by students when they pointed out they had opportunities to ask more questions and acquire insights on consultants’ work. That information, obtained through interactions with the company representatives, was considered valuable by the students when they evaluated the choices for their future careers. From the viewpoint of students, having a close collaboration with the company allows them to evaluate if the organization would be a suitable employer for them (Kirscher, 2015). The connections formed may be beneficial when the first steps in the career are taken (Kirscher, 2015).

Based on these insights, we have unveiled a career-focused relationship between KPMG and the participants. We take one step further to phrase the relationship in the case events as ‘talent and career spotting.’ The implication of this element in the CCEM highlights the importance of forming relationships with the young talents at an early stage. This reasoning is in line with

Mosley's (2014) argument about the importance of early connection with students and personalized communication, which seem to be realized in the interactions in case events.

## 5.9 Being in the Spotlight

The last element in our matrix is 'being in the spotlight.' This element sheds light on case events' potential in carving out a niche for the organization as well as the participants. 'Position' in the CBIM (Urde, 2013) refers to a corporation's position in the market or the minds of customers (Keller, Aperia & Georgson, 2012). Drawing upon this concept, 'being in the spotlight' is defined as the unique position or association that a case event gives its organizers and participants.

From our empirical research, we have discovered that one primary motivator behind the KICC was that KPMG attempted to differentiate itself from the competitors in the consultancy industry. As KICC Project Leader commented: "*The key benefit is that we really stand out among the big four by having the biggest competition tournament*", we can infer that with the largest-scale case competition, they aimed at positioning themselves as a leader in the market and the most serious and professional case competition organizer in the minds of students. The reasoning here is congruent with Esch, Tomczak, Kernstock, and Langer's (2006) argument that the chosen position of a brand can differentiate its identity from the others.

The same argument, interestingly, can also apply to the participants' motivator of competing in a case competition. For them, the competition was described as a stage for 'personal branding.' With their performance in the case events, they were associated with bright and competent students who were good at solving cases. According to student E, "*taking part in these competitions is also about personal branding ... that means you are bright.*" He has observed that this general impression of others was formed almost automatically after their participation in the KICC.

Emerging from our findings, we have come to conclude that both KPMG and the students acquired distinctive associations in the minds of other people through being on the 'stage' of the competition. Therefore, we have decided to summarize the phenomenon as 'being in the spotlight' to illustrate the distinctive associations given upon each party. For the participants, it means obtaining a distinguished association in the minds of the audience. For KPMG, 'being in the spotlight' means positioning themselves in a distinctive place in the consultancy industry and the minds of the students. From an employer branding perspective, the distinctive position or association created by 'being in the spotlight' is in line with the objective of external marketing, aiming to shape a unique employer brand image that sets the company apart from its competitors (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

## 5.10 Summarizing the Matrix

In this chapter, we have introduced the Corporate Case Event Matrix as a tool that explains the motivators of both case event organizers and participants. The matrix aims at providing a better understanding of the phenomenon of case events by identifying and defining the eight elements in the matrix. The CCEM stems from Urde's CBIM (2013) and, therefore, adopts a corporate brand management perspective in deciphering the growing phenomenon.

Each of the eight elements in the matrix draws upon one specific area of a corporate brand identity and has the potential in communicating it to the target audiences through the help of case events. However, what is noteworthy is that our matrix has the same central element – the 'brand core' – as the CBIM (Urde, 2013). In the CBIM, that component is defined as a set of core values that supports the organization's promise (Urde, 2013). It is placed at the center of the matrix and reflects every element that surrounds it. Through our empirical study, we have acquired an understanding that KPMG incorporate their core values into their case events and relevant communication. This aspect leads us to believe that the 'brand core' in the CBIM is still highly relevant. Theoretically, it forms the center of the Corporate Case Event Matrix and influences all components of the framework.

# 6 Discussion

*In this chapter, we discuss how the previously presented Corporate Case Event Matrix can be linked to company's employer branding processes within the context of case events. Each element of our matrix is presented within that context in mind. To facilitate the discussion, the elements are grouped under the top, middle and bottom levels of the matrix. The implications are supported by the findings obtained through our interviews. Furthermore, as in the previous chapter, we connect the findings and interpretations to relevant corporate and employer branding literature.*

## 6.1 Top Layer

The uppermost level of the Corporate Case Event Matrix encompasses the following elements: 'building connections', 'talent and career spotting' and 'being in the spotlight' (see figure 5). In relation to employer branding in case events, these components are discussed more thoroughly below.

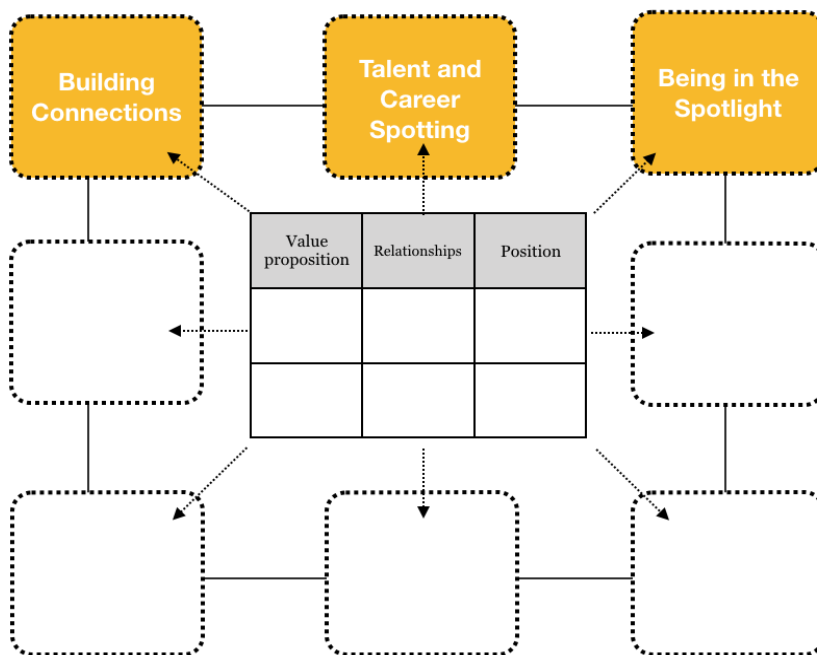


Figure 5. Top layer of the CCEM

### *Building connections*

Emerging from the interviews conducted, we consider that the label of ‘building connections’ is strongly related to corporate branding as high emphasis was put on networking aiming at business development. However, when connections are considered more broadly, the element can also be reflected to employer branding. During the interviews, students discussed emotional connections and potential work opportunities with the case company which were both affected by the personal connections formed in case events. Although our primary focus has been on students, we also came to consider that these events can be utilized as platforms for doing employer branding towards more experienced employees. The different stages of the KICC are attended by professionals from other companies, which provides KPMG an opportunity to impress also these participants with its large-scale competition. These experiences, as well as the personal connections formed, might influence how the employer appeals to that target group in addition to students.

### *Talent and career spotting*

Previously we have described how case events provide companies with opportunities to tap into the young talent. The representatives at KPMG highlighted that Ace the Case and the KICC can be utilized for having dialogues as well as creating bonds with students. This kind of early connecting was seen important as the company has a high focus on entry-level recruitment. Besides, it was mentioned that the focus of the KICC has lately been shifted towards recruitment since the competition provides KPMG with a unique ‘viewpoint’ on the competing students. Through following case presenters and mingling with them, company representatives can evaluate participants’ performance as well as their personal fit for the company. These views are in line with those of Kirchner’s (2015). She discussed candidate evaluation through case contests and explained how these real-life tryouts can give valuable insights on different skills and capabilities of a person.

### *Being in the spotlight*

For KPMG, case events – especially the wider-scale KICC – provide a possibility to ‘stand on the podium’ and to set itself apart from the other big four companies. These events can also be seen as channels through which the firm can strengthen one of its main aims – positioning itself as a professional employer of choice that is able to attract, retain and develop the top talents (KPMG, 2018b; KPMG, 2018c). Based on the interviews with participants, we suggest that companies can use case events for positioning themselves as attractive employers by forming emotional connections with students and presenting aspects that differentiate them from other employers. The distinction aspect of employer branding is also underlined by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) who explain that an exquisite brand enables companies to obtain unique personnel. Through creating emotional connections and differentiation, companies may shape the employer brand perceptions of contest participants, who might be their future employees.

## 6.2 Middle Layer

The middle layer of the CCEM contains the elements of ‘getting attention’ and ‘showing who we are’ (see figure 6), that are presented below within the context of employer branding.

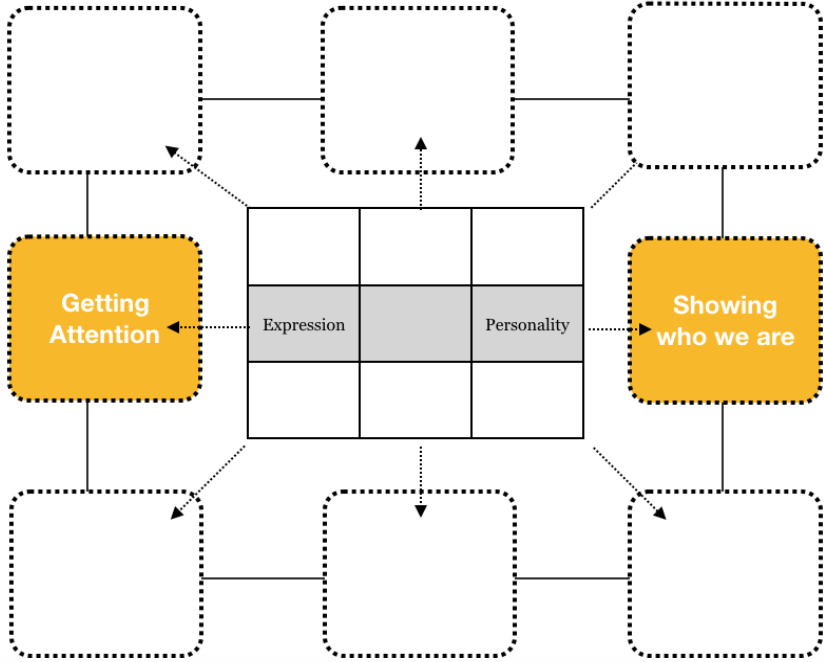


Figure 6. Middle layer of the CCEM

### Getting attention

The representatives at KPMG discussed how its case events contribute to the brand communications of the firm since, particularly the KICC, provide the company with high visibility on social and traditional media. Besides media focus, the attention gained through word of mouth was often mentioned. For instance, KICC Project Leader reckoned that, through word of mouth deriving from the competition, there might be thousands of people talking about KPMG each year. Interestingly, some of the student interviewees described how word of mouth and media posts had influenced their employer brand perceptions towards KPMG in a positive way. We assume that the possibility to get external attention through case events may contribute to the employer branding efforts of a company. We believe that getting visibility and attention on the targeted channels may lead to increased employer brand awareness and improved associations towards the company. To do employer branding systematically, consistency and the clear communication of the selected employer brand associations are of importance as well (Mosley, 2014).



## Showing who we are

As found out through our interviews, case events had provided KPMG with an opportunity to promote the features and attributes it strives to be associated with – as a company and an employer. The respondents from KPMG described how, through interacting with students at case events, they could present the ‘fun side’, friendliness and learning mindset of the company and its employees. These kinds of emphases are in line with the thoughts of Sivertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen (2013) who underlined the role of intangible aspects, such as development opportunities and the feeling of being valued at the workplace, within employer branding. As the authors, we conceive that the communication of the above-described attributes can encourage potential job applicants to seek job opportunities within a firm – especially if the aspects are ‘matching’ to those preferred by the prospective candidates.

### 6.3 Bottom Layer

The bottom layer of our matrix depicts the following components: realizing purpose; cultural interaction; source of inspiration (see Figure 7). Below, we explain how these components can be utilized within company’s employer branding efforts.

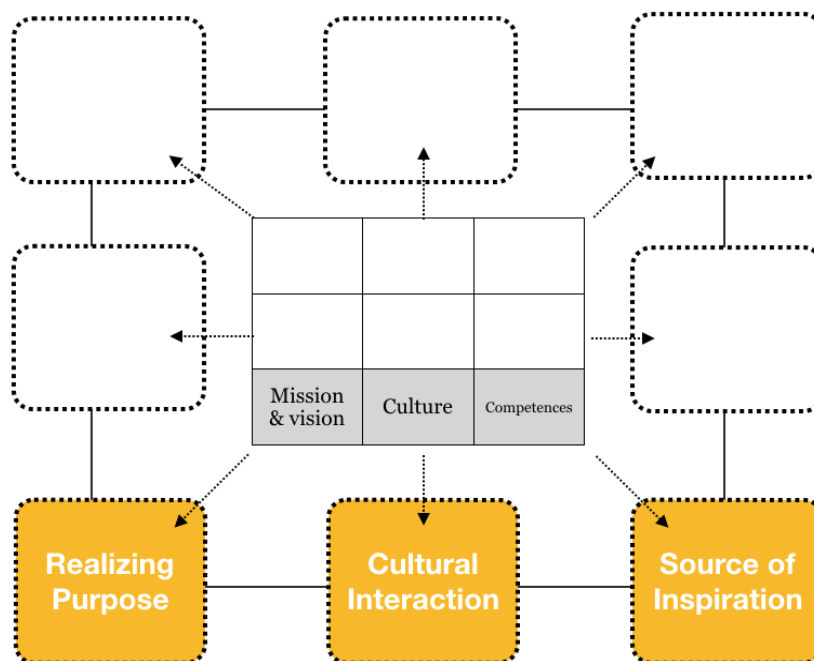


Figure 7. Bottom layer of the CCEM

### Realizing purpose

Learning and development are strongly rooted on KPMG's mission and vision – as well as on the corresponding label of the CCEM, 'realizing purpose'. These aspects were highlighted both by the company and the participants. Through case events, KPMG can develop various skills of participants as well as to market the learning and development possibilities students would enjoy as employees of the company. This is firmly linked to the classical definition of employer branding describing the concept as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p.187). We see that the embrace of 'realizing purpose' element is essential in order to keep the company's 'main messages' – mission and vision – connected to its employer branding communications through case events.

### Cultural interaction

Many KPMG respondents described how case events provide opportunities for 'opening up' the company's culture, as well as their ways of working, for the participating students. Such aspects as, for instance, openness and honesty were often mentioned during the interviews. When promoting the ways of working, collaboration and work-life balance were one of the most emphasized aspects. We regard that communicating about the company culture is an essential part of employer branding within case events. We assume it helps especially service-providing companies, who cannot differentiate themselves with tangible products, to stand out as employers and advance their recruitment efforts. Similar thoughts are shared by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) who state that clearly communicated culture and core values can help to attract employees who fit closely with the company. However, we point out the importance of being tactful in order not to overdo the communication of cultural aspects. As some of the KICC participants mentioned, sometimes the company's pursuit of being seen as fun was, in their opinion, a bit superficial and regarded more as awkward.

### Source of inspiration

Through case events, KPMG aims at providing participants with inspiration and link such associations as innovativeness and professionalism towards the company. Particularly the selection of cases to be solved by students allows KPMG to showcase its relevancy and innovativeness. Some of the student participants commented how the events and selected cases had conveyed professional and innovative images of the company for them. This had changed, at least to some extent, their thoughts on how the company is like and how it works. We suggest that through being 'a source of inspiration', a firm can influence even the employer brand perceptions of case event participants. We also highlight the importance of case selection because through them, like KPMG, firms can convey the attributes they desire stakeholders to associate with them. These associations might affect young applicants' decisions on future employers, as for them, comparison of different jobs and companies can sometimes be difficult (Collins & Stevens, 2002).

# 7 Conclusion

*The final chapter commences by revisiting the research purpose and aim, summarizing the process and main findings, and reflecting to research questions. Secondly, theoretical contributions and managerial implications are presented. Lastly, possibilities for future research are proposed.*

## 7.1 Reflection on Research Questions

This thesis was set out *to explore the phenomenon of case events within the context of employer branding*. More specifically, the focus was on KPMG Sweden's case events Ace the Case and the KPMG International Case Competition. To obtain a 'two-sided' view on the phenomenon, both the perspectives of the case company and the event participants were taken into consideration. One of the primary objectives of our research was to create a theoretical framework that would provide knowledge on the motivators behind organizing and attending case events, and that could be utilized for strategic employer branding through the events. We approached these objectives by conducting qualitative interviews with KPMG and students, who had attended the aforementioned case events by the case company.

Based on the findings of our interviews, we developed the Corporate Case Event Matrix, extended from Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix. Our matrix is compiled of eight elements that help to understand the drivers behind arranging and taking part in case events. The elements provided us insights into our first research question: *'Why does a company organize case events?'*. Here we shortly conclude that the most important reasons for KPMG to arrange case events were linked to providing learning opportunities, branding both on corporate and employer perspective, as well as creating and sustaining relationships with students and other businesses.

The 'two-sided' components of our matrix also enabled responding to the second research question of this thesis: *'Why are students attending case events?'*. For students, attending the case events was also closely linked to learning and networking possibilities. Branding, although from a personal perspective, was also an aspect highlighted by them. Our third research question, *'Is it possible for a company to use case events to communicate its employer brand? If yes, how?'*, was also responded with the help of our empirical findings and the CCEM. For KPMG, employer branding through case events had been an important objective as business students form an essential target group in their recruitment processes. By leveraging their corporate brand identity in the process of case events, KPMG communicated the intended message to the

participants. The elements of our matrix exemplify the areas where a company can address their employer branding messages during a case event.

## 7.2 Theoretical Contributions

The findings of our thesis indicate three major theoretical contributions. The first one regards **putting the phenomenon of case events, within the context of employer branding, to the map**. This we regard important and relevant due to the rising trend of case events and the challenges many companies encounter with appealing to young talents (Sparrow, 2007). To our knowledge, this is the first study that has examined case events in employer branding from the perspectives of participants as well as organizers. We acknowledge the pioneering research of Benon and Jansson (2016) from Uppsala University but make a distinction by the two-sided view on the case event phenomenon as the study of theirs was focused on the company-perspective. Moreover, while their study had a focus on the dynamics between employer branding and talent management in the context of case events, the current research adapts a strategic brand management perspective by including both corporate and employer branding literature.

The second theoretical contribution of this thesis is **the construction of the Corporate Case Event Matrix**. As far as we know, it is the first framework that attempts to explain the phenomenon of case events by combining the research fields of corporate branding and employer branding. Also, to our knowledge, it is the first multidimensional framework as it takes into consideration the views of the company and the students. The dual-perspective nature of the matrix provides a balanced explanation to the research phenomenon based on corporate brand identity literature.

Our third theoretical contribution regards **broadening and bridging the research fields of employer and corporate branding**. Below we present these theoretical contributions more in detail:

- a) The newly proposed matrix contributes to the literature by integrating the literature streams of employer and corporate branding. As mentioned before, employer branding represents a promotion of the distinctive aspects of an employer to the prospective employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Throughout the application of the matrix, we have examined how the case company incorporated their employer branding efforts in each element of the CCEM. This application has indicated that the case event elements are at the intersection of corporate brand identity and employer branding initiatives, suggesting a new research field where the role of corporate brand identity in building a strong employer brand can be further researched.

- b) Our thesis contributes to the employer branding literature by extending and developing existing theory under the context of case events. First of all, our thesis broadens the theory on employer brand perceptions by incorporating it in our framework. The demographic changes, also influencing labor markets, force companies to ‘fight’ for the young talents well in advance (Dohm, 2000; Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Myrden & Kelloway, 2015; Potter, 2005). Creating positive employer brand perceptions and conveying appealing employer images is crucial for firms aiming to tap into the best young candidates (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Considering that background, the results of our research affirm how positive brand perceptions can be attained by communicating one’s own corporate brand identity through case events. This is essential, as the images conveyed by employer brands may influence young job seekers’ choice of employers (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Therefore, with the developed framework, the research contributes to the existing employer branding theories by applying them in the utilization of case events. Secondly, our thesis further develops employer branding communication theory. As Mosley (2014) argues, the main objective of employer brand communication is to engage with the target audience, deliver desired messages, and create unique images. Our study complements his insights by showing how the matrix can be used to achieve the objectives concerning employer brand communications.
- c) Lastly, we believe that the framework proposed by our thesis provides a conceptualization of the case event phenomenon based on corporate brand identity theory. The conceptualization is achieved by linking the emerging themes of case events to the elements of the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013) and is consolidated into a new framework. The elements in the matrix represent an integration of corporate branding theory and the concept of case events. The result, thus, contributes to the existing corporate branding theory as the new matrix expands the boundaries of Urde’s (2013) CBIM. Even though the theoretical framework of the study is generated from a single case study, the conceptualization of the elements enables a more general application of the framework in the context of other case events.

### 7.3 Managerial Implications

As discussed, the phenomenon of case events has been gaining wide popularity across the world. More and more companies are adopting case events as a strategy to engage with their target stakeholders. Therefore, the importance of case events is calling the attention of managers in the fields of branding, marketing, and human resources. In our research, we have pointed out that case events represent opportunities to incorporate employer branding, corporate branding and recruitment initiatives into one single setting. Moreover, our thesis provides practical implications for managers, who are interested in catching the tide of case events, by discussing how the Corporate Case Event Matrix can be utilized as a multidimensional tool in the relevant

fields. We foresee that companies can obtain value from the implications and expect the concept of case events will be further developed by the continuous practical application.

Firstly, **the CCEM helps to comprehend the motivations behind case events, taking into account perspectives from both companies and students.** We believe that the understanding of motivations is particularly important in developing a strategy for carrying out case events. From company's perspective, our research has revealed that a case event serves as a combination of corporate branding, employer branding, and recruitment initiatives. Since those aspects are firmly embedded in the components of the matrix, it is expected that by carefully scrutinizing the importance of each element and setting corresponding objectives, a company can better formulate its strategy before actually launching a case event. We regard that this kind of pre-formulation contributes to more focused and successful events. Similarly, comprehending students' motivations advances the development of case event strategies. We foresee that understanding of the target group can be beneficial in two aspects. First, it enables companies to offer better experiences for the students by providing what they are looking for in the case events. Second, it improves firms' opportunities to fulfill the strategic goals of case events due to an understanding of students' preferences.

Secondly, **the CCEM can be used to design and analyze a company-owned case event.** As presented in the analysis, the matrix maps out eight essential elements in a case event and illustrates the relationships between the elements and a company's own corporate brand identity. Therefore, the matrix provides a structured framework for managers to conduct preparations for launching their case events. In this kind of a situation, each component in the matrix serves as a guiding block that helps to clarify the linkages between the corporate brand identity and the practical aspects firms would like to include in the case events. As our study suggests, the alignment between corporate brand identity and case events is essential to convey a consistent image as a company and an employer. We foresee that, by applying the CCEM in launching case events, one can formulate better-aligned messages between the case competition and the firm's brand identity. The research also unveils certain threats managers should be aware of when designing messaging through the events. For instance, KPMG's strive to be seen as fun was sometimes seen as somewhat 'forced' by the students. Thus, we highlight the importance of being tactful in order not to overdo the communication of associations company wants to be linked with. Besides, we consider that the matrix can be a useful tool for managers to review their existing case events concerning the alignment mentioned. We expect that, with the help of this framework, it would be easier for a company to demonstrate the important aspects of its corporate brand identity to the target audience through case events.

Thirdly, **the Corporate Case Event Matrix can be used as an analytical tool for managers willing to execute employer branding initiatives with the help of a case event.** In this research, we have discussed how the elements in the CCEM can be related to employer branding perspectives. For instance, Employer Brand Managers may attain an increased employer brand awareness in the minds of the participants and the public, if they take advantage of the 'getting attention' element of our matrix. An example comes from how KPMG utilized the KICC to achieve high exposure and awareness of the brand. In our research, we found out that KPMG

published the stories from the KICC on their social media platforms to appeal to people who are interested in the event, which led to more followers and increased the company's exposure generally. Besides, with a case event so enormous both in scale and scope, KPMG was able to communicate various aspects of their employer brand to thousands of students and other stakeholders across the world. By doing this, the company has largely enhanced the employer brand awareness among all the 'bright minds' attending the case events. In other words, the model provides practitioners a roadmap that indicates the areas where suitable employer branding initiatives can take place. In our research, we have provided examples regarding how each element in the CCEM was applied to KPMG's case events. Therefore, with the help of our thesis, managers can pinpoint the specific areas of employer branding to be developed – depending on the corporate strategic directions.

## 7.4 Future Research

This research focused on one company, as it allowed us to obtain in-depth comprehension on the research phenomenon. However, in future, it would be relevant to conduct a multiple case study that would consider the overall phenomenon of case competitions on employer branding at different consultancy companies. This would allow comparisons on the motivators and practices between the firms. The scope of the research could be extended beyond the consultancy field to find out how other businesses regard and utilize case events. Emphasis would not need to be limited to case events, but other kinds of student-focused competitions and events by companies could be researched as well.

As our interviewee participants were mostly focusing on KPMG's case events arranged during 2017 and 2018, we acknowledge that the results might be influenced by how the practices had been in the years concerned. Therefore, a longitudinal study of the occasions could be carried out to see if the events, as well as the motivators of the organizers and students, would change over time. To triangulate the findings of our research and to develop the introduced matrix, one could utilize other kinds of data collection methods. For instance, a qualitative study based on first-hand observation during case events could provide valuable insights on the phenomenon.

In addition to qualitative research, a quantitative study could be conducted in order to test, for instance, whether specific correlations occur between the elements presented in the matrix. Furthermore, through a quantitative study, we foresee potential theoretical contribution in identifying the relationships between the components and employer branding constructs, such as employer branding association, awareness, and experience. The result from future quantitative studies could improve the validity and reliability of the matrix's elements.

# References

- Aaker, D.A. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity*, New York: The Free Press
- Aaker, D.A. (1996). *Building Strong Brands*, New York: The Free Press
- Ackerman, L. (1998). Secrets of the Corporate Brand: Why do companies fall short of exploiting their hidden potential, *Across The Board*, [e-journal] vol. 35, no. 1, pp.33-36, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 29 March 2018]
- Alshathry, S., Clarke, M. & Goodman, S. (2017). The Role of Employer Brand Equity in Employee Attraction and Retention: A unified framework, *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp.413-431, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 27 March 2018]
- Alvesson, M. & Sköldböck, K. (2009). *Reflexive Methodology: New vistas for qualitative research*, 2nd edn, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Ambler, T. & Barrow, S. (1996). The Employer Brand, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp.185-206, Available through: LUSEM University Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 25 March 2018]
- Armstrong, S.J. & Fukami, C.V. (2010). Self-assessment of Knowledge: A cognitive learning or affective measure? Perspectives from the management learning and education community, *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp.335-341
- Aslam, S., Mason, C., Zakria, A. & Farid, M. (2015). Gender Perceptions: Employer branding through attractiveness, job characteristics and organizational attributes, *American Journal of Trade and Policy*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp.161-166, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 29 March 2018]
- Backhaus, K. & Tikoo, S. (2004). Conceptualizing and Researching Employer Branding, *Career Development International*, vol. 9, no. 5, pp.501-517, Available through: LUSEM University Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 25 March 2018]
- Balmer, J.M.T. (1998). Corporate Identity and Advent of Corporate Marketing, *Journal of Marketing Management*, [e-journal] vol. 4, pp.963-96, Available through: LUSEM University Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 30 March 2018]
- Balmer, J.M.T (2001). Corporate Identity, Corporate Branding and Corporate Marketing - Seeing through the fog, *European Journal of Marketing*, [e-journal] vol. 35, no. 3-4, pp.248-291, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 28 March 2018]



- Balmer, J.M.T. & Gray, E. (2003). Corporate Brands: What are they? what of them?, *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 37, no. 7-8, pp.972-997, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 1 April 2018]
- Balmer, J.M.T. & Liao, M.A. (2007). Student Corporate Brand Identification: An exploratory case study, *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, [e-journal] vol. 12, no. 4, pp.356-375, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 15 May 2018]
- Balmer, J.M.T. (2010). Explicating Corporate Brands and Their Management: Reflections and directions from 1995, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 18, pp.180-196, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 4 April 2018]
- Barber, A.E. (1998). *Recruiting Employees: Individual and organizational perspectives*, Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Beechler, S. & Woodward, I.C. (2009). The Global “War for Talent”, *Journal of International Management*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp.273-285, Available through: LUSEM University Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 25 March 2018]
- Benon, H. & Jansson, C. (2016). *Competing for Talents: How a company can work with employer branding and talent management to attract talent*, Master thesis, Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University. Available through: LUSEM University Library website <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 March 2018]
- Boston Consulting Group (2018). *Practice Interview Cases*. Available Online: <https://www.bcg.com/careers/path/consulting/practice-interview-cases.aspx> [Accessed 9 April 2018]
- Boyatzis, R.E. (1998). *Transforming Qualitative Information, Thematic Analysis and Code Development*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2011). *Business Research Methods*, 3rd edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Brymer, R. A., Molloy, J. C. & Gilbert, B. A. (2014). Human capital pipelines competitive implications of repeated inter organizational hiring. *Journal of Management*, [e-journal] vol. 40, no. 2, pp.483–508, Available through: LUSEM Library website <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 25 March 2018]
- Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C., & Gronhaug, K. (2001). *Qualitative Marketing Research*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Collins, C.J. & Kanar, A.M. (2013). Employer Brand Equity and Recruitment Research, in: D.M. Cable & K.Y. Yu (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Recruitment*, Oxford: Oxford Library of Psychology, pp.284-296

- Collins, C.J. & Stevens, C.K. (2002). The Relationship Between Early Recruitment-Related Activities and the Application Decisions of New Labor-Market Entrants: A brand equity approach to recruitment, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 87, no. 6, pp.1121-1133, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 April 2018]
- Davies, G. & Chun, R. (2002). Gaps Between the Internal and External Perceptions of the Corporate Brand, *Corporate Reputation Review*, vol. 5, no. 2-3, pp.144-158, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 28 April 2018]
- Davies, G. (2008). Employer Branding and its Influence on Managers, *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 42, no. 5-6, pp.667-681, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 3 May 2018]
- de Chernatony, L. (1999). Brand Management Through Narrowing the Gap Between Brand Identity and Brand Reputation, *Journal of Marketing Management*, [e-journal] vol. 15, no. 1-3, pp.157-179, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 7 April 2018]
- de Chernatony, L., Drury, S. & Horn, S. (2003). Building a Services Brand: Stages, people, and orientations, *The Service Industries Journal*, [e-journal] vol. 23, no. 3, pp.1-21, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 3 April 2018]
- de Chernatony, L. & McDonald, M. (1998). *Creating Powerful Brands*, 2nd edn, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann
- de Roeck, K., Maon, F. & Lejeune, C. (2013). Taking Up the Challenge of Corporate Branding: An Integrative Framework. *European Management Review*, [e-journal] vol. 10, no. 3, pp.137-151, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 7 April 2018]
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1998). *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and issues*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Dohm, A. (2000). Gauging the Labor Force Effects of Retiring Baby-boomers, *Monthly Labor Review*, [e-journal] vol. 123, no. 7, pp.17-25, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 21 March 2018]
- Dubois, A. & Gadde, L-E. (2002). Systematic Combining: An abductive approach to case research, *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 55, no.7, pp.553-560, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 17 April 2018]
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. & Jackson, P. (2015). *Management & Business Research*, 5th edn, London: Sage Publications Ltd.

- Edwards, M.R. (2005). Employer and Employee Branding: HR or PR? in S. Bach (eds), *Managing Human Resources: Personnel Management in Transition*, 4th edn, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp.266-286
- Edwards, M.R. (2010). An Integrative Review of Employer Branding and OB theory. *Personnel Review*, [e-journal] vol. 39 no. 1, pp.5-23, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 March 2018]
- Edwards, M.R. & Edwards, T. (2013). Employee Responses to Changing Aspects of the Employer Brand Following a Multinational Acquisition: A longitudinal study, *Human Resource Management*, vol. 52, no. 1, pp.27-54, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 21 March 2018]
- Edwards, M.R. & Kelan, E.K. (2011). Employer Branding and Diversity: Foes or friends? in M.J. Brannan, M. Parsons and V. Prola (eds), *Branded Lives: The Production and Consumption of Meaning at Work*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp.168-184
- Eisenhardt, K. (1989). Building Theories from Case Study Research, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp.532-550, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 April 2018]
- Erdil, T.S. (2013). Strategic Brand Management based on Sustainable-oriented View: An evaluation in Turkish home appliance industry, *Procedia - Social And Behavioral Sciences*, [e-journal] vol. 99, pp.122-132, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 26 April 2018]
- Esch, F.R., Tomczak, T., Kernstock, J. & Langner, T. (2006) *Corporate Brand Management*, Wiesbaden: Gabl
- Fielding, N. & Thomas, H. (2008). Qualitative Interviewing, in N. Gilbert (eds), *Researching Social Life*, 3rd edn, London: Sage Publications Ltd., pp.245-265
- Fortune (2017). Best Companies: KPMG. Available Online: <http://fortune.com/best-companies/kpmg/> [Accessed 23 March 2018]
- Foster, C., Punjaisri, K. & Cheng, R. (2010). Exploring the Relationship Between Corporate, Internal and Employer Branding, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol. 19, no. 6, pp.401-409, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 7 April 2018]
- Fournier, S. M. & Yao, J. L. (1997). Reviving Brand Loyalty: A reconceptualisation within the framework of consumer–brand relationships, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, vol. 14, pp.451-472, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 19 April 2018]

- Gamble, E.N. & Jelley, R.B. (2014). The Case for Competition: Learning about evidence-based management through case competition, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp.433-445
- Gardner, B.B. & Levy, S.J. (1955). The Product and the Brand. *Harvard Business Review*, March–April, 33-39.
- Glassdoor (2018). About Us. Available Online: [https://www.glassdoor.com/about/index\\_input.htm](https://www.glassdoor.com/about/index_input.htm) [Accessed 1 April 2018]
- Graham, C. & McKenzie, A. (1995). Delivering the Promise: Developing New Graduates, *Education + Training*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp.33-40
- Greenshields, A. (2017). KPMG Jumps to No. 7 on ‘Best Firms to Work for’ List by Consulting Magazine. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/xx/en/home/media/press-releases/2017/09/kpmg-no-7-best-firms-to-work-for.html> [Accessed 23 March 2018]
- Harvard Business Publishing (2018). Case Method Teaching. Available Online: <https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/pages/content/casemethodteaching> [Accessed 23 March 2018]
- Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M. (2003). Bringing the Corporation into Corporate Branding, *European Journal of Marketing*, [e-journal] vol. 37, no. 7-8, pp.1041-1064, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 25 March 2018]
- Ind, N. (1997). *The Corporate Brand*, London: Palgrave Macmillan
- Ind, N. (1998). An Integrated Approach to Corporate Branding, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 5, no. 5, pp.323-329, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 21 March 2018]
- Ind, N. & Mariussen, A. (2015). Corporate Brand: Place/destination branding, in T.C. Melewar & S.F. Syed Alwi (eds), *Corporate Branding: Areas, Arenas and Approaches*, London: Routledge, pp.149-166
- Ireland, C. (2010) Getting Down to Cases. Available Online: <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2010/08/getting-down-to-cases> [Accessed 20 March 2018]
- John Molson MBA International Case Competition (2017). Available Online: <https://mbacasecomp.com/about-us-3/our-history/> [Accessed 22 May 2018]

- Kandola B. & Fullerton, J., eds. (1994). *Managing the Mosaic: Diversity in Action* [e-book] London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Available at: Google Books: [books.google.com](https://books.google.com) [Accessed 22 April 2018]
- Kapferer, J.N. (2012). *The New Strategic Brand Management*, 5th edn, London: Kogan Page
- Keller, K.L. (2012). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, measuring, and managing brand equity*, 3rd edn, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall
- Keller, K.L., Aperia, T. & Georgson, M. (2012) *Strategic Brand Management: A European perspective*, 2nd edn, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall
- Keller, K.L. & Richey, K. (2006). The Importance of Corporate Brand Personality Traits to a Successful 21st Century Business, *Brand Management*, [e-journal] vol. 14, no. 1-2, pp.74–81, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 23 March 2018]
- Khojastehpour, M., Ferdous, A.S. & Polonsky, M. (2015). Addressing the Complexities of Managing Domestic and Multinational Corporate Brands, *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, [e-journal] vol. 20, no. 1, pp.48-62, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 27 March 2018]
- Kim, P. (1990). A Perspective on Brands, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp.63-67, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 21 March 2018]
- King, S. (1991). Brand-building in the 1990s, *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 7 no. 1, pp.3-13, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 3 May 2018]
- Kirchner, H. (2015). Case Competitions Can Boost Your Profile in the Jobs Market. Available Online: <https://www.ft.com/content/4e6bf944-f4d2-11e4-8a42-00144feab7de> [Accessed 23 March 2018]
- Kornik, J. The 2017 Best Firms to Work for: KPMG. Available Online: <http://www.consultingmag.com/sites/cmaga/2017/09/12/the-2017-best-firms-to-work-for-kpmg/?slreturn=20180313052005> [Accessed 23 March 2018]
- Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L (2015) *Marketing Management*, 15th edn, N.J: Pearson Prentice Hall
- Kotler, P., Keller, K.L., Brady M., Goodman M. & Hansen, T. (2009). *Marketing Management*, 13th edn, New York: Prentice Hall
- KPMG (2018a). History. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/xx/en/home/about/overview/history.html> [Accessed 23 March 2018]

- KPMG (2018b). Overview. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/xx/en/home/about/overview.html> [Accessed 29 March 2018]
- KPMG (2018c). Our Culture. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/xx/en/home/about/governance/values-culture/our-culture.html> [Accessed 23 March 2018]
- KPMG (2018d). Ace the Case. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/xx/en/home/careers/graduates/ace-the-case.html> [Accessed 29 March 2018]
- KPMG (2018e). Ace the Case – Sweden. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/se/sv/home/karriar/karriar-for-studenter/studentaktiviteter/ace-the-case.html> [Accessed 29 March 2018]
- KPMG (2018f). KPMG International Case Competition – Get Involved. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/xx/en/home/careers/graduates/kpmg-international-case-competition/kicc-get-involved.html> [Accessed 29 March 2018]
- KPMG (2018g). Lundastudenter Vann Svenska Finalen av KPMG International Case Competition. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/se/sv/home/nyheter-rapporter/2017/12/se-news-lundastudenter-vann-svenska-finalen-kpmg-international-case-competition-2018.html> [Accessed 29 March 2018]
- KPMG (2018h). KPMG Mission and Vision. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/ae/en/home/kpmg-business-academy/about-us/mission-and-vision.html> [Accessed 30 March 2018]
- KPMG (2018i). KPMG Value Proposition. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/sa/en/home/about/overview/value-proposition-.html> [Accessed 30 March 2018]
- Lapal, S.D., Quartaroli, M.T. & Riemer, F.J. (2012). *Qualitative Research: An introduction to methods and designs*, Hoboken, ND: John Wiley & Sons
- Lecompte, M.D. & Goets, J.P. (1982). Problems of Reliability and Validity in Ethnographic Research, *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 53, pp.31-6, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 April 2018]
- Lester, S., Turnley, W., Bloodgood, J., & Bolino, M. (2002). Not Seeing Eye to Eye: Differences in supervisor and subordinate perceptions of and attributions for psychological contract breach, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 23, no.1, pp.39-56
- Lievens, F. & Highhouse, S. (2003). The Relation of Instrumental and Symbolic Attributes to a Company's Attractiveness as an Employer, *Personnel Psychology*, vol. 56, no. 1, pp.75–

- 102, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 3 April 2018]
- Lievens, F. & Slaughter, J.E. (2016). Employer Image and Employer Branding: What we know and what we need to know. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, [e-journal] vol. 3, pp.407-440, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 April 2018]
- Lloyd, S. (2002). Branding From the Inside Out, *BRW*, vol. 24, no. 10, pp.64-66
- LundaEkonomerna (2018). KPMG International Case Competition. Available Online: <https://www.lundaekonomerna.se/committee/kicc/> [Accessed 19 February 2018]
- LUSEM (2018). Case Competitions. Available Online: <https://www.lusem.lu.se/networks/case/case-competitions> [Accessed 30 April 2018]
- ManpowerGroup (2016). 2016/2017 Talent Shortage Survey. Available Online: <https://www.manpowergroup.com/talent-shortage-2016> [accessed 25 March 2018]
- Martin, G. (2009). Employer Branding and Corporate Reputation Management: A model and some evidence, in C. Cooper and R. Burke (eds), *The Peak Performing Organization*, London: Routledge, pp.252-274
- McDonald, M.H.D., de Chernatony, L. & Harris, F. (2001). Corporate Marketing and Service Brands, *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 35, no. 3-4, pp.335-352, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 7 April 2018]
- McDonnell, A. (2011). Still Fighting the “War for Talent”? Bridging the science versus practice gap, *Journal of Business and Psychology*, [e-journal] vol. 26 no. 2, pp.169-173, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 21 March 2018]
- McKinsey & Company (2018). Interviewing. Available Online: <https://www.mckinsey.com/careers/interviewing> [Accessed 9 April 2014]
- Merriam, S.B. (2002). *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass
- Mesny, A. (2013). Taking Stock of the Century-long Utilization of the Case Method in Management Education, *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 30, pp.56-66
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1984). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M. & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 3rd edn, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

- Miller, K. (2018). Team Germany Wins the 2018 KICC. Available Online: <https://home.kpmg.com/xx/en/home/media/press-releases/2018/04/team-from-germany-wins-the-2018-kpmg-international-case-competition.html> [Accessed 17 April 2018]
- Moroko, L. & Uncles, M. D. (2008). Characteristics of Successful Employer Brands, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp.160-175. Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 21 March 2018]
- Morris, T. & Wood, S. (1991) Testing the Survey Methods: Continuity and change in British industrial relations, *Work Employment and Society*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp.259-82
- Mosley, R. (2014). Employer Brand Management: Practical lessons from the world's leading employers, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Myrden, S.E. & Kelloway, K. (2015). Young Workers' Perception of Brand Image: Main and moderating effects, *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, [e-journal] vol. 2, no. 3, pp.267-281, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 30 March 2018]
- M'zungu, S. D. M., Merrilees, B. & Miller, D. (2010). Brand Management to Protect Brand Equity: A conceptual model, *Brand Management*, vol. 17, no. 8, pp.605-617, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 27 March 2018]
- Park, C.W., Jaworski, B.J. & MacInnis, D.J. (1986). Strategic Brand Concept-image Management, *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 50, pp.135-45, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 8 April 2018]
- Patton, M.Q. (1987). How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Pingle, S. & Sharma, A. (2013). External Employer Attractiveness: A study of management students in India, *Journal of Contemporary Management Research*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp.78-95, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 March 2018]
- Potter, E. (2005). Changing Workforce Demographics and Management Challenges [pdf]. Available at: <https://mcgraw-hill.co.uk/tpr/chapters/1591395216.pdf> [Accessed 15 March 2018]
- Punch, K. (1998). Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Rampl, L. V. & Kenning P. (2012). Employer Brand Trust and Affect: Linking brand personality to employer brand attractiveness, *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 48, no .1, pp.218-236



- Rennstam, J. (2018). Lecture 7: Interpreting qualitative data - sorting, reducing and arguing, BUSN31, powerpoint presentation, LUSEM Lund, 14 February 2018
- Richardson, S. (2007). What is A Skill Shortage? Adelaide: NCVER
- Roper, S. & Fill, C. (2012). Corporate Reputation, Brand and Communication, Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Ryan, G.W. & Bernard, H.R. (2003). Techniques to Identify Themes, *Field methods*, [e-journal] vol. 15, no. 1, pp.85-109, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 31 March 2018]
- Rynes, S.L. (1991). Recruitment, Job Choice, and Post-Hire Consequences: A call for new research directions, in M.D. Dunnette & L.M. Hough (eds), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press, pp.399-444
- Sadri, G. & Lees, B. (2001). Developing Corporate Culture as A Competitive Advantage, *Journal of Management Development*, [e-journal] vol. 20, no. 10, pp.853-859, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 28 March 2018]
- Saini, G.K., Rai, P. & Chaudhary, M.K. (2014). What Do Best Employer Surveys Reveal about Employer Branding and Intention to Apply? *Journal of Brand Management*, [e-journal] vol. 21, no. 2, pp.95-111, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 7 April 2018]
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2009). Research Methods for Business Students, Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Silverman, D. (2010). Doing Qualitative Research, 3rd edn, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Simmons, R. (2008). Questionnaires, in N. Gilbert (eds), *Researching Social Life*, 3rd edn, London: Sage Publications Ltd., pp.182-205
- Simoës, C. & Dibb, S. (2001). Rethinking the Brand Concept: New brand orientation. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, [e-journal] vol. 6, no. 4, pp.217-224, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 April 2018]
- Sivertzen, A.M., Nilsen, E.R. & Olafsen, A.H. (2013). Employer Branding: Employer attractiveness and the use of social media, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol. 22, no. 7, pp.473-483, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 27 March 2018]
- Smythe, J., Dorward, C. & Reback, J. (1992). Corporate Reputation: Managing the new strategic asset, London: Century Business Books

- Sparrow, P.R. (2007). Globalization of HR at Function Level: Four UK-based case studies of the international recruitment and selection process, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, [e-journal] vol. 18, no. 5, pp.845-867, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 18 April 2018]
- Tims, A. (2011). Graduate Employers Change Tack to Lure Top Talent in Tough Times. Available online: <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2011/jan/29/graduate-employers-lure-top-talent> [Accessed 2 April 2018]
- Universum (2017). World's Most Attractive Employers [pdf] Available at: <http://www2.universumglobal.com/most-attractive-employers-rankings-release-2017> [Accessed 27 March 2018]
- Universum (2018). KPMG Is Ranked as an Attractive Employer. Available Online: <https://universumglobal.com/rankings/company/kpmg/> [Accessed 29 March 2018]
- Urde, M. (1994). Brand Orientation – A Strategy for Survival, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, [e-journal] vol. 11, no. 3, pp.18-32, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 29 March 2018]
- Urde, M. (1999). Brand Orientation: A mindset for building brands into strategic resources, *Journal of Marketing Management*, [e-journal] vol. 15, no. 1-3, pp.117-133, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 25 March 2018]
- Urde, M. (2013). The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix, *Journal Of Brand Management*, [e-journal] vol. 26, no. 1-2, pp.56-73, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 4 May 2018]
- Urde, M., Baumgarth, C. & Merrilees, B. (2011). Brand Orientation and Market Orientation — From alternatives to synergy, *Journal of Business Research*, [e-journal] vol. 66, no. 1, pp.13-20, Available through: LUSEM University Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 26 March 2018]
- Urde, M. & Greyser, S.A. (2016). The Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix – The case of the Nobel Prize, *Journal of Brand Management*, [e-journal] vol. 23, no. 1, pp.89-112, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 27 March 2018]
- Wilden, R., Gudergan, S. & Lings, I. (2010). Employer Branding: Strategic implications for staff recruitment, *Journal of Marketing Management*, [e-journal] vol. 26, no. 1-2, pp.56-73, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 2 April 2018]

Wilson, R. (1997). Corporate Branding. *The Journal of Brand Management*, [e-journal] vol.4, no. 5, pp.303-310, Available through: LUSEM Library website: <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 10 April 2018]

Zhang, Y. & Wildemuth, B.M. (2009). Qualitative Analysis of Content, in B. Wildemuth (eds), *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*, Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, pp.308-319

# Appendix A

## Head of Employer Branding, e-mail interview

- Who participates the the KICC on behalf of KPMG and what are their roles/activities during the event?
- What do you think is the aim of organizing the case competition?
- Is there a specific target group you are trying to reach through the KICC?
- What is it that KPMG wants to be associated with having the competition?
- How is the competition linked to the overall employer branding strategy of KPMG?
- What is KPMG's employer value proposition (EVP)?
- Does KPMG try to communicate those EVP messages to the participants through KICC? If, how?
- Is KPMG's culture communicated in your employer branding activities and case events? If, how?
- Do you think that KPMG can differentiate itself as an employer with the help of case events? If, how?
- In terms of employer branding, how do you regard the success of the international case competition this year?

# Appendix B

## **KICC Project Leader, Skype interview**

### **Purpose and organization of case events**

- What are the key benefits of organizing a case competition on an international level for KPMG?
- How do they differ with national level competitions?
- What do you think are the challenges of delivering a successful case competition?

### **Differentiation**

- Compared to the other ‘big four’ companies, how does KPMG specifically want to differentiate as an employer?
- Does having a case competition differentiate you in a meaningful way? If so, how?

### **Stakeholders**

- Beyond university students, are there any other audiences that you want to engage through case events? Are there any differences across levels of events?
- What are the values of building connections with these audiences?
- What is the top management’s support for the case competition?

### **Sum up**

- What do you think is the most important factor to communicate about employer brand through the KICC?

# Appendix C

## Recruiter, Skype interview

### Background information

- Could you tell us more about your role as a Recruiter at KPMG?
- How long have you worked with the company?
- What has been your role and main duties with the KICC? How many times have you participated the competition?

### Recruitment

- How is recruitment arranged at KPMG?
- How is junior recruitment planned and arranged at KPMG?
- What is the role of case events (KICC / Ace the Case) in KPMG's recruiting strategy?
- What kind talent and characteristics you are looking for?
- Do you evaluate case competition participants' performances?
- Are the possible recruitment objectives of case events measured? If, how?

### Employer branding

- How are recruiters involved in employer brand building at KPMG?
- What are the main messages KPMG aims to convey through its employer brand communications?
- What are the main challenges in terms of KPMG's employer branding communications?

### Stakeholders

- Could you describe what kind of relationships you want to shape with students?
- What are the values of shaping such relationships?

### Culture, mission, vision and values

- How do you regard the corporate culture of KPMG?
- Is there a fit between KPMG corporate culture and case events?
- Would a KICC contestant get a fair view of the actual corporate culture at KPMG?
- Are KPMG's mission, vision and values communicated through case events? If, how?

### Differentiation

- Compared to the other 'big four' companies, how does KPMG specifically want to differentiate as an employer?
- Does having a case competition differentiate you in a meaningful way?

### Sum up

- To sum up, what are the key benefits of having case events in terms of recruitment and employer branding?

# Appendix D

## **Student Representative, Face-to-face interview**

### **Background information:**

- Could you tell us more about your role as a Student Representative at KPMG?
- What has been your role and main duties with case events?

### **Case events - general**

- What is the overall purpose of the case events in general?
- What do you consider as the main differences between Ace the Case and the KICC?
- Could you give an example of a very successful case event?

### **Employer branding initiatives**

- How would you describe the term ‘employer branding’?
- Are the KICC and Ace the Case regarded as employer branding initiatives at KPMG?
- What kind of talent and characteristics you are looking for?
- How would you describe case event participants?
- How would you describe the characteristics of KPMG employees?

### **Stakeholders**

- Could you describe what kind of relationship you want to shape with students? What are the values of shaping such relationships?
- Beyond university students, are there any other audiences that you want to engage with through case events? What are the values of building connections with these audiences?
- How are case events regarded internally at KPMG?

### **Culture, mission, vision and values**

- How do you regard the corporate culture of KPMG?
- Is there a fit between KPMG corporate culture and case events?
- Are case events important for the KPMG’s corporate culture? If so, could you elaborate on this?
- Is KPMG’s corporate culture expressed through case events? If, in which way?
- Would a KICC contestant get a fair view of the actual corporate culture at KPMG?
- You have been involved in KPMG’s case events as a student, did the experience influence your perceptions and associations towards KPMG as a potential employer? If, how?
- What is the top management’s support for the case competition?
- Are KPMG’s mission, vision and values communicated through case events? If, how?

### **Differentiation**

- Compared to the other ‘big four’ companies, how does KPMG specifically want to differentiate as an employer?
- Does having a case competition differentiate you in a meaningful way?

### **Communications**

- Who do you communicate with internally concerning employer branding topics?
- Have you been guided how to represent KPMG as an employer?

### **Sum up**

- To sum up, what are the key benefits of having case events in terms of employer branding?



# Appendix E

## Management Consultant, Skype interview

### Background information:

- Could you tell us briefly about your role as a Management Consultant at KPMG?
- When did you participate in the KICC? National / international level?
- Have you also participated in Ace the Case -event?

### KICC – perceptions and experiences

- Why did you decide to take part in the case competition?
- What do you think the contest is all about?
- Could you share your overall experience with the case competition?
  
- Before taking part in the KICC, what was your perception of KPMG?
- Did the possible perceptions and associations change after your experiences at the KICC? Did they impact on your choice of employer?
- Were you informed on the job opportunities at KPMG during the case competition? If, by whom and how?
- Were you personally approached regarding job opportunities during or after the KICC? If, by whom and how?

### Communications

- Who were the key people that you engaged with during the contest?
- What sort of interaction was there between you and them? How would you describe these interactions?

### Culture and differentiation

- How do you regard the corporate culture of KPMG?
- As a participant in the KICC, did you get a realistic view of KPMG's corporate culture?
  
- Compared to the other 'big four' companies, how do you think KPMG specifically wants to differentiate as an employer?
- Did taking part in a case competition make you think that KPMG was different from the other consultancy companies? If, how?

### Value Proposition

- What do you think were the key values that KPMG wanted to communicate to you in the KICC?

### **Personality**

- How would you describe case event participants?
- How would you describe the characteristics of KPMG employees?
- Do you think there is any connection between the two groups?

### **Sum up**

- To reflect: do you think taking part in the KICC had an influence on your choice of joining KPMG? How?

# Appendix F

## **International KICC participant, Face-to-face interview**

### **Case events - KICC**

- What do you think the whole case competition is all about? Is there any distinction between national and international levels?
- Could you share your overall experience about the event, particularly on an international level?
- Did the international competition experience make any difference to your initial perception of KPMG? If, in which way?
- What were the new aspects you observed in the international case competition?
- Were you informed on the job opportunities at KPMG during international case competition? If, by whom and how?

### **Case events - Ace the Case**

- Have you also participated in Ace the Case? If, when?
- What was your main motivation to participate the event?
- How was your overall experience in Ace the Case?

### **Communications**

- Who are the key people that you were engaged with during the KICC?
- What sort of relationship do you think KPMG wants to build with the participants?

### **Culture, differentiation and competence**

- How do you regard the corporate culture of KPMG?
- What is it that you think KPMG did well in the KICC?
- Compared to the other 'big four' companies, do you think KPMG differentiates itself with the KICC? If, how?
- Did taking part in company's case events make you think that it was different from the other 'big four' firms? If, how?

### **Value Proposition**

- What do you think were the key benefits you gained through participating in the KICC?

### **Personality**

- How would you describe the characteristics of KPMG employees and other participants?
- How did you come to that conclusion?

**Sum up**

- Do you think KPMG succeeded at communicating its employer brand to you through the KICC?
- What would you say is the most important factor for the KICC to succeed at communicating KPMG's employer brand?
- After taking part in the international contest, has the level that you regard KPMG as potential employer increased?

# Appendix G

## **National KICC participant, Face-to-face interview**

### **Case events - Ace the Case**

- Why did you participate in Ace the Case?
- What do you think the occasion is all about?
- Could you share your overall experience with the event?
- Before taking part in Ace the Case, what was your perception of KPMG?
- Did the experience you had make any difference to your initial perception? If, in which way?
- Were you informed on the job opportunities at KPMG during the case event? If, by whom and how?

### **Communications**

- Who are the key people that you were engaged with during the KICC?
- What sort of relationship do you think KPMG wants to build with the participants?

### **Culture and differentiation**

- How do you regard the corporate culture of KPMG?
- Compared to the other 'big four' companies, how do you regard KPMG?
- Did taking part in a case event make you think that KPMG was different from the other consultancy firms? If, in which way?

### **Value Proposition**

- What do you think were the key benefits you gained through participating in case events?

### **Personality**

- How would you describe the characteristics of KPMG employees and other participants?
- How did you come to that conclusion?

### **Sum up**

- Did you consider KPMG as a potential employer before taking part in the events?
- After your experiences gained through the events, has the level that you regard KPMG as potential employer increased?