

Exploring Employee Engagement in a
Global Context
– The Example of Germany

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**Exploring Employee Engagement in a
Global Context
– The Example of Germany**

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of the requirements of Manchester
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Declaration

I, Andrea Wylegala, declare that the thesis "Exploring Employee Engagement in a Global Context – The Example of Germany" submitted is my own work, I have maintained professional integrity during all aspects of my research degree and I have complied with the Institutional Code of Practice and the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees.

Herewith, I confirm that neither this work nor parts of it have been submitted as part of another degree or qualification at Manchester Metropolitan University or any other institution.

The research has been conducted by me under the supervision of Dr. Andrew Rowe (Director of Studies) and Prof. Dr. Alberto Paucar-Caceres.

28th September 2020

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A. Wylegala". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrea Wylegala

“So, wie es ist, bleibt es nicht.”
(Brecht, 1967:895)

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Abbreviations

BAV	Betriebliche Altersvorsorge [Explanation: a type of private pension scheme which is financially supported by the employer]
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
EE	Employee Engagement
EMEA	Europe, Middle East and Africa
ELT	Executive Leadership Team
EOS	Employee Opinion Survey
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
KPI	Key Performance Index
MNC	Multinational Company

UWES Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

Abstract

This research aims to gain in-depth understanding of the views, conceptualisations, and adaptations of Employee Engagement in Germany. While the empirical study focuses on Germany, the literature review was based on the findings from rich Anglo-US sources and was drawn from Human Resource Management, Human Resource Development, and Employee Engagement literature. Here, the topic of Employee Engagement was of increasing interest in academia, and to practitioners. Moreover, the limited literature on Employee Engagement published in German and on Germany was also reviewed. The review considered different perspectives on the phenomenon as well as emerging frameworks, and revealed that there was no unified Employee Engagement definition, but rather different drivers and output factors associated with the phenomenon. Furthermore, the author also reflected on potential German equivalents of the untranslatable Employee Engagement term, including *Mitarbeitermotivation*, for example. The social construction of the phenomenon according to literature was reviewed and is presented along with its evolution and various measurement approaches. Finally, the author reflected on cross-cultural and generational differences, as well as on the impact of language on the term's meaning as well as its role in human resources.

The empirical study itself used a multiple method approach, combining in-depth interviews and a documentary method, to gather data on the understanding and establishment of Employee Engagement in organisations in Germany. A pilot interview was conducted, followed by 18 in-depth interviews with HR managers or equivalents from different industries, which contributed rich detail concerning the interviewees' understanding of the phenomenon and its adoption and establishment by organisations. The documentary analysis supported the findings from the primary research and provided additional insights into the organisational Employee Engagement conceptualisation, which was primarily based on the implementation of (ad hoc) initiatives to drive Employee Engagement. Nevertheless, the term itself was rarely used and of less importance when it came to the phenomenon's implementation. Instead, the interviews showed that the organisations' focus was on perceived drivers, such as development possibilities, recognition, and appreciation as well as communication and transparency. This was to ensure employees' trust, identification, and contribution into their employer, in order to achieve output factors including an increase in performance and loyalty as well as brand identification and involvement. Similarities and variance between the empirical findings and the literature review were presented and perspectives discussed. Here, definitional inconsistencies were found both in the findings and the existing literature, still parallels were identified with respect to an employee's willingness to contribute cognitively, emotionally, and physically. These findings were also underpinned and supported by the results of the author's documentary research. The organisations' Employee Engagement approaches, especially with respect to the implementation of benefits as a driver, were identified throughout the

documentary research. While the documentary analysis also revealed no consistent definition for Employee Engagement, alternative approaches such as organisational culture and a strong we-sentiment through associations with family and friends were shown to drive Employee Engagement.

Finally, the contribution of the research is presented together with its implications for theory and practice, but the study provides various insights, especially for practitioners of Employee Engagement in large organisations in Germany. The author identified that most organisations were using Employee Engagement in a piecemeal way and their individual reinventions of the phenomenon to tackle individual or common challenges, such as the fight for talents and loyalty, while only a few had established integrated Employee Engagement strategies which relied on different components. At the same time, the study provides national and international practitioners with insights into German-specific requirements and conditions, such as the involvement of workers' councils in ensuring safety and driving Employee Engagement. Additionally, it contributes due to its use of a multiple method approach, as it enables researchers to analyse both the espoused organisational viewpoint and the perceptions of practitioners at the same time. The documentary analysis provides a rich set of data. Finally, further research implications are outlined, emerging from limitations of the current study, especially with respect to the long-term establishment of Employee Engagement in the participating organisations, its measurability, and its adoption in German *Mittelstand* business [Engl. Small and medium-sized businesses].

To my family for all their support.
Thank you!

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When I decided to start my part-time PhD journey a few years ago, writing these words seemed so far away. Today, it is time to put these words to paper and what I have learnt since I started is the following: I want to thank my beloved family and boyfriend, my extended English family and my closest friends for always being there and supporting me through this journey. You have been there, all the way through these exciting and also challenging years. Thank you for everything!

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1. Introduction

The thesis “Exploring Employee Engagement in a Global Context – The Example of Germany” focuses on the meaning and understanding of the Employee Engagement phenomenon in corporate organisations in Germany. The author’s aim is to reveal the organisational views on the phenomenon to provide a useful perspective on the invention and implementation of Employee Engagement in Germany to practitioners.

The research was developed due to the lacking awareness of the Employee Engagement phenomenon in German literature as well as in the professional business environment. Therefore, the proposition was made that the Employee Engagement phenomenon is less known or even of less importance in Germany in comparison to Anglo-American countries. However, even though the Employee Engagement phenomenon has found its way into leadership strategies (Welch, 2011:241), it is facing on-going critique which might also be related to the lack of research (Baron, 2013).

Based on this first proposition, further research was carried out on the perception of Employee Engagement in the respected organisations, mainly through literature review and one-to-one discussions with national and international human resources managers and other professionals from related disciplines. As part of this exercise, a wide range of Anglo-American sources were identified and reviewed to gather insights into the different views concerning the phenomenon, alternative and associated inventions, its drivers as well as its invention and establishment in organisations.

In addition, case studies from industry and their establishment of the phenomenon in practice were reviewed as secondary data over the duration of the study. During the early stages of the literature review process, it became apparent that there was a wide range of Employee Engagement literature available as well as numerous sources with a strong business-orientation from and on Anglo-American literature. At the same time, the review showed a major lack of Employee Engagement literature from Germany and about German workforces. As part of this analysis, various related terminologies which are discussed in connection with the Employee Engagement phenomenon such as work commitment, job engagement and German equivalents such as “Mitarbeitermotivation” [Engl. ‘*employee motivation*’] were reviewed. Based on these findings, the further direction of the research was defined to ensure enhanced knowledge in the Employee Engagement field and to allow the contribution of knowledge on Employee Engagement in a global context with a focus on Germany.

The following section specifies further details on the research rationale.

1.1 Research rationale

The aim of this research is to analyse the understanding of the Employee Engagement phenomenon in Germany by reflecting on the Anglo-US understanding. In particular a focus is

placed upon how the phenomenon is presented in Anglo-US and British literature. Besides, the interest in the phenomenon's setup in Germany originated from the author's professional career in the field and her origin in Germany. During her work in the field, she identified a gap in knowledge and awareness within the German Human Resource Management field. When conducting further research, it was identified that this gap similarly challenged practitioners as well as academics. Therefore, the author's questions attempt to understand whether the construct of Employee Engagement does exist in German organisations in a similar way to the previously outlined setup, known from the UK and US, or whether the phenomenon's views, drivers and expected output factors exist, but a different term is used to name the emerging phenomenon. Besides, the author looks into the impact of culture and how the reconstruction of the phenomenon varies based on different nationalities and organisations.

However, before looking into the inventions of Employee Engagement in Germany, the author executes a holistic literature review of international and especially Anglo-American literature. The aim is to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and support the analysis of the research findings. This step of the study showed the inconsistency of some academic sources with respect to the definition of the phenomenon. Besides, the author also reflected on non-peer reviewed and mainly business-oriented literature, as she observed an emerging interest amongst practitioners, too. This study will help to fill this gap while also discussing whether the identified gap is related to the fact that Employee Engagement is culturally less important in Germany than it is in other countries. Therefore, the author discusses and reviews whether the phenomenon itself exists, without calling it Employee Engagement. Part of this reflection and discussion includes the investigation of the terminology used along with the missing German translation for Employee Engagement.

These topics and the resulting issues also shaped the research direction to provide in-depth knowledge on the definition, the understanding and meaning of the phenomenon in Germany while comparing it with international literature findings. Therefore, this research contributes to the field of German management and leadership studies by outlining cross-cultural insights on the understanding of the phenomenon in German human resource practices – independent from the name used.

In the next section, the author provides a high-level overview of the respective Employee Engagement literature which was reviewed for this study.

1.2 Overview of Employee Engagement literature

At the turn of the millennium and during the early years of the new century, the global economy went through significant change. According to Jackson (1997:3), "many people talk[ed] of a new paradigm of business, of new realities and new era. Much [was] changing, but not all that much [was] really new". At the same time, the concept of engagement moved away from

general or personal engagement and the first discussions about Employee Engagement by Buckingham and Coffman, Luthans and Peterson as well as by Harter et al. occurred (Welch, 2011). Therefore, the emerging Employee Engagement phenomenon could be seen as the answer to growing challenges which economies and organisations had to face, while at the same time it could be seen as one of the raising changes itself.

When reviewing the definition of Employee Engagement, it soon becomes clear that there was no single unified definition available. Instead, various different Employee Engagement definitions were presented in literature; MacLeod and Clarke (2011) even identified more than 50. In the following years, Purcell (2014:241) revised topic-related publications listed between 1990 and 2014:

3,058 items published in academic journals, 1,136 articles in magazines, 633 articles in trade magazines, 172 dissertations and 116 books published in English.

In this study, the author refers strongly to Welch's (2011) definition of Employee Engagement, which is further outlined in the *Literature Review Chapter*. Additionally, she considers also definitions by Schaufeli et al. (2002) and Kahn (1990) in her study. Furthermore, she includes additional references of outcome factors including research on emotional commitment (Kruse, 2012:online), pride (Smythe, 2013) and energy (MacLeod and Brady, 2008) which all lead to performance increases (Kumar and Pansari, 2015).

The afore mentioned study by Welch (2011) recaps on the phenomenon's evolutionary development throughout the centuries and presents various related concepts from which Employee Engagement has developed. Employee Engagement is a phenomenon which, at the time of research, had lately emerged and was of interest in human resources, consulting and management as a potential answer to the "war for talent" (Beechler and Woodward, 2009). This "war" had resulted from the emerging skill shortage and the growing economic requirements for qualified staff. The various different definitions of Employee Engagement discussed by the different parties and outlined in the *Literature Review Chapter* caused confusion, according to Cole et al. (2019b). Consequently, the interest in the phenomenon increased within academia, but also within the practitioners' community, which resulted in various publications by organisations such as Kenexa (2012a) and Ixaris (2013), amongst others. Still, most emerging studies and research on the Employee Engagement phenomenon had their origin in Anglo-US countries. Employee Engagement research on Germany and in German was still lacking. The identified sources on Germany are further outlined in the respective section of the *Literature Review Chapter*.

Gaining understanding of the Employee Engagement phenomenon, its conceptualisation and reconstruction as well as its invention in practice along with its establishment in organisations requires the review of related fields such as organisational culture, the impact of cross-cultural

aspects and other related theories which may influence Employee Engagement. Therefore, the detailed literature review on Employee Engagement, its drivers, output factors and its establishment as well as the different views from Anglo-US and international commentators as well as its invention in organisations is presented in great detail in the *Literature Review Chapter*.

In the next section, the author outlines the research questions and objectives.

1.3 Research questions and objectives

The research aim and purpose of the study support the developed research questions and the objectives. Reflecting on both led to the development of the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: How is Employee Engagement understood and established in large organisations in Germany with respect to its terminology, definition, drivers and expected output?

RQ2: How is the concept of Employee Engagement viewed as supporting German businesses in comparison to its origin in the Anglo-US context?

RQ3: How do cultural differences influence the Employee Engagement construct in Germany?

These three questions guide the reader through this research and its findings, before drawing the resulting conclusion on the three emerging research objectives. The objectives were developed based on the research questions and they support the review questions along with the research questions of the study. The objectives were introduced during the early stages of the research development. Following this, the objectives were further developed and specified, resulting in the following three research objectives:

RO1: To review the current adoption, understanding and conceptualisation of Employee Engagement in Germany;

RO2: To investigate the evolution of the Employee Engagement concept, by paying attention to its proliferation in the German context;

RO3: To examine the parallels of the Employee Engagement construct between Anglo-US countries and Germany.

After introducing the research questions and objectives, the author outlines the research design of the study in the next section.

1.4 Research design

Considering the challenges related to the definition of Employee Engagement and the various views on the phenomenon, the author reflects on the phenomenon as a social construct. This perspective also drives her discussion and resulting conclusion answering the previously introduced research questions and objectives. The ontological approach of the study reflects on Employee Engagement as a reality which was constructed socially – by society or an organisation depending on the current needs. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012:17-18) stated that

the paradigm creates “philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality” and focuses on the “nature of reality and existence”. To ensure that the presented research questions are discussed and answered, the research is designed to define “what [...] the nature of “reality” is (Guba, 1990:18) – in this case, the individual’s reality of the Employee Engagement construction.

The individual understanding of the Employee Engagement construction and the resulting reality were researched via in-depth interviews. These interviews were executed amongst human resource managers and equivalent Employee Engagement guarantors in large organisations in Germany. The group of organisations was identified as large organisations rather than small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are able to arrange their resources based on their requirements (Fink and Kessler, 2010) and therefore have the possibility to establish Employee Engagement strategies. As part of the research, one pilot interview was executed prior to the main study, which was based on 18 semi-structured interviews. The empirical data gathered provides in-depth insights in the Employee Engagement understanding, definition and meaning in Germany. These findings are supported with secondary data collected from social media, publications and the web presence of the same organisations. This documentary method supported the study with further insights and helped to reflect on the primary data discoveries.

The data collected was analysed followed by a thematic analysis, applying a template analysis which is “widely used in organizational and management research” (Brooks et al., 2015:203). It allows the generation of knowledge based on a step-by-step approach.

Next, the author outlines this study’s research contribution.

1.5 Research contribution

The study strongly focuses on the analysis of the German stakeholders’ understanding of Employee Engagement. It contributes to the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon and supports the practical implementation of Employee Engagement in Germany.

The author’s main focus is on the different views and the understanding of the phenomenon itself. Additionally, the expected output factors and the invention and establishment of the phenomenon in Germany are discussed. These insights help to fill the gap concerning Employee Engagement literature with a focus on Germany, while at the same time it supports the establishment of a foundation to implement Employee Engagement schemes in practice. Therefore, the study focuses strongly on the drivers and output factors along with the individual invention of the phenomenon in the participating organisations, without paying too much attention on the definition itself. Instead, the meaning of the phenomenon for organisations is a focal point, which supports the establishment of Employee Engagement solutions in companies.

As Bardwick (2008) stated, the need for something which drives employees' passion, commitment and performance emerged from the decreasing employee identification with their employers. After years of wellbeing and growth, massive economic problems followed resulting in layoffs. Employees' trust in their organisations decreased and remained low, even though the economic downturn came to a stop. While the damaged relationships between organisations and staff remained, new economic growth challenged organisations to recruit and retain the right staff, thus the "war for talent" was born (Beechler and Woodward, 2009) and with it, the need to Employee Engagement strategies in companies. In 2020, the latest global developments resulted in other challenges for organisations. The uncertainty of the upcoming Brexit and its consequences have been discussed in various forums and by different researchers such as Chang (2018) amongst many others, along with its reason as debated by Colantone and Stanig (2018). However, also the global Covid-19 pandemic which hit the world in the early days of the year and continues to have a significant impact on global economies, countries and the world population might influence phenomena such as Employee Engagement. Here, it can be argued that the "war for talent" might have decreased, but the need for Employee Engagement might move away from attracting and retaining talent towards ensuring performance when working isolated in a home office setup, cut off from colleagues and other factors which shape employees' work environment as we knew it. The consequences of these major global changes are not yet clear and may influence the way we work; how new generations redefine the work environment they want to work in and how organisations will engage employees over the upcoming years. In the end, only the future will show how our changing world will influence our societies, economies and every individual human being.

Before moving on to the *Literature Review Chapter*, the author outlines the structure of the research.

1.6 Research structure

The thesis is based on six chapters which are subdivided into sub-sections.

The *Introduction Chapter* outlines the purpose of the study. Furthermore, the author introduces the high-level overview of the identified literature, before introducing her research questions and objectives. Afterwards, she continues to outline her research design and the research contribution, before moving on to the next chapter, the *Literature Review Chapter*. Here, the different findings on the Employee Engagement phenomenon are presented. This chapter is split into sub-sections presenting the literature review approach including the research scope and resulting review questions. Next, it moves towards the evaluation of the different definitions and views on the phenomenon, its social construction, the drivers and output factors as well as its measurement, before looking back into its evolutionary development and other concepts which are discussed along with the phenomenon. The contradiction between academic- and

business-oriented sources is presented as well as the limited findings on German sources related to the phenomenon or its German equivalents. Finally, the author presents the findings of other factors which influence Employee Engagement, such as cross-cultural differences, variances between generations and the role of language.

After reviewing the literature, the author continues with the *Research Methodology Chapter* of this research. There, the author outlines her research methodology including its aim and purpose, the initial research position and the phenomenology approach which was applied. Next, the author looks into the multiple method applied, including the two data collection methods, the in-depth interviews and documentary method. Afterwards the author presents the primary data collection including the pilot interview and the main study as well as the documentary data collection. Furthermore, the author documents the data preparation and the coding framework. Finally, the author explains the data analysis and its interpretation before concluding with the research reflexivity and its limitations.

Next, the author presents the analysis of the in-depth interviews. The respective *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter* includes the research context, presents the primary research observations which hold essential findings concerning external factors including the employers who shape individuals' views on the Employee Engagement phenomenon. Afterwards, the author presents the findings on the interviewees' Employee Engagement perceptions and reflects on the influence of cultural and organisational differences according to the interviewees. The *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter* is followed by the *Documentary Analysis Chapter*. In this chapter, the author introduces the research context of the documentary analysis, followed by the documentary research observations before presenting the analysed details on the invention of Employee Engagement according to the documentary method.

In the *Discussion Chapter*, the author puts the in-depth interview data, the observations from the documentary research and the literature review findings into perspective. The author structures the chapter in accordance with the research questions and tackles each of the questions one-by-one.

In the final *Conclusion Chapter*, the author tackles the three research objectives and provides research implications for literature, the methodology as well as for Employee Engagement in general and in Germany. Besides, the author provides an overview on the limitations, the suggestions for further research and outlines her reflections on the research.

Next, the author continues with the *Literature Review Chapter*.

2. Literature review

2.1 Chapter introduction

The literature review builds the foundation of this research. Based on the literature review, the study itself was developed and further specifications of the research were shaped. This chapter focuses on the execution of the literature review, including an introduction of the developed topic mapping and the resulting review questions which were designed to support each step of the research. Furthermore, the author structured the respective literature review in line with the review questions.

During the early stages of the literature review, the author reviewed various sources from peer-reviewed literature (academic) and non-peer reviewed literature (non-academic) literature. In particular, the review of the academic sources showed that the Employee Engagement phenomenon has not just become a topic of interest to practitioners but also for academics, especially in Anglo-US countries (Saks and Gruman, 2014). Furthermore, the assessment showed that in the latest decades, Employee Engagement has become a “hot topic” (Purcell, 2014:241) especially in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Human Resource Development (HRD). Therefore, the author extended her review and also revised literature from the field of HRM and HRD in general and internationally, as well as their relationship to the Employee Engagement phenomenon.

When looking further into the Employee Engagement literature itself, Purcell (2014:241) stated that the number of publications on the topic increased between 1990 to 2014 and led to:

3,058 items published in academic journals, 1,136 articles in magazines, 633 articles in trade magazines, 172 dissertations and 116 books published in English.

Nevertheless, it can be observed that the phenomenon recorded a rising interest in business-oriented journals, too. While it has become a tool in leadership and management practice, some argue that it will face retrogression sooner or later (Guest, 2014a). However, at the same time it is argued by authors such as Welch (2011:33) that:

Employee engagement might not be a distinct construct but simply a new label attached to an older concept such as organisation commitment, repackaged as employee engagement.

Albrecht (2010:5) also addresses the question “whether engagement is nothing more than “old wine in new bottles” or “same lady – different dress”. Furthermore, he states:

To be of any practical value engagement needs to be shown to be different from other related organizational constructs such as job involvement, job satisfaction, commitment, discretionary effort, and turnover intention.

Therefore, this research also reflects on findings from the wider field of Human Resource Development, Employee Engagement and from related concepts and models to outline the differences, but also present overlaps which were identified and put into perspective.

Throughout the next sections, the author outlines the details of the literature review approach, including the resulting topic mapping and the emerging review questions.

2.2 The literature review approach

To ensure the identification of the most adequate literature for this study, the author applied various steps which are commonly known from systematic reviews. This is an approach mainly known in social care and management (Booth et al., 2016).

For the development and execution of this study's literature review, the author followed the guidelines of Booth et al. (2016:11) on systematic approaches, who specified a systematic review as follows:

Reviewing in this way is a search for the whole truth, rather than just one part of it, and is thus a 'fundamentally scientific activity'. The reviewer uses a specific and reproducible method to identify, select and appraise studies of a previous agreed level of quality (either including all studies or only those that pass a minimum quality threshold) that are relevant to particular question.

Originally, the author aimed to set a minimum quality threshold for literature which should be considered for the research. However, she soon realised that the number of sources containing new information and findings was rather limited on the one hand, while on the other hand academic sources from less highly rated journals for example also provided necessary insights required for this literature review. Even though the number of publications on the phenomenon itself increased, the contributed findings remained limited.

Independent from the selected literature, Booth et al. (2016:29) also pointed out that "all types of literature review should contain elements of systematicity". Furthermore, they added (Booth et al., 2016:21):

Many systematic reviews explicitly aim to monitor and capture incident (i.e. emerging) knowledge. Systematic reviews may be signed to be updated periodically to take into account the emergency of new evidence.

The author's Employee Engagement research also developed from the evidence the author collected during the literature review. Additionally, throughout the study she gathered different aspects of knowledge to develop the study further. Some of the commonly known characteristics of a systematic literature review include 'transparency', 'structured' and 'reproducible' (Booth et al., 2016:20). These characteristics are also presented in this study's literature review, as the author transparently provides an overview of the information that is

available while also pointing out identified lack of literature. Additionally, she applies a structure which is based on her review questions to the study and she targets sources whose findings are reproducible in future studies.

Furthermore, Booth et al. (2016:15) pointed out that “systematic methods” contributed a certain value as by “identifying, extracting and appraising information from individual studies as a protection against a biased interpretation of research”. Furthermore, Booth et al. (2016:23) stated that a systematic review was strongly driven by “exhaustive search of the literature, checklist-driven quality assessment, complex synthesis using textual, numerical, graphical and tabular methods and sophisticated analysis”. In case of this study, the author applied an ‘exhaustive search’ in particular, while still reflecting on its quality and positioning.

The nature of the author’s review is interpretive. Booth et al. (2016:22) see an interpretive approach in contrast to an aggregative one. By following an interpretive approach, the review “seeks to broaden our understanding of a particular intervention or phenomenon”. Here, the author aimed to understand the different commentators’ understanding of the phenomenon by seeking definitions and comparing these with other existing Employee Engagement definitions.

Even so, the author did not apply a complete systematic review, she aimed to ensure a lean and targeted literature review independent from the first very extensive results of the early stages of the literature review. The author applied different steps which, according to Booth et al. (2016), are commonly known in a systemic review and are further outlined in the following paragraphs. Therefore, the author followed Booth et al.’s (2016:57) approach, who based it on four stages known from project management: ‘Concept’, ‘planning and definition’, ‘implementation’ and ‘finalisation’. The different stages of the literature review are designed in accordance with the research duration and outline the research tasks and outcomes during each step of the study. The full overview of the four steps including how they were applied in practice are detailed in *Table 1: Literature review stages and resulting tasks and outcomes*. There, the author not only considered the literature review tasks and steps, but put them into an overall perspective by linking them to the three different phases of her research and the other research tasks which were executed throughout the duration of the study.

Table 1: Literature review stages and resulting tasks and outcomes

Phase	Overall research Tasks	Literature Review Stages (according to Booth et al. (2016))	Literature Review Tasks and Outcomes
Year 1 to 2	Develop literature review and methodology 1) Defining research scope, review questions and research questions 2) Developing literature review concept and planning 3) Executing broad literature review 4) Developing methodology	Developing the review Concept and Planning and Definition including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering 'time', 'resources', 'expertise', 'audience' and 'data' (Booth et al., 2016:36-39) • Planning key steps of the literature review (Booth et al., 2016:55) • Identifying potential main risks (Booth et al., 2016:58) • Starting analysis of literature review findings 	Developing the literature review concept: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting with broad scanning for available general Employee Engagement literature • Defining milestone plan including key steps throughout the research • Specifying sources based on research scope and review questions • Reflecting on <i>peer-reviewed literature and non-peer reviewed literature</i> to specify literature scope further • Assessing quality of literature • Identifying key risks which may occur • Developing memo with key findings
Year 3 to 4	<i>Primary research</i> including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Development of interview questions 2) Finding pilot interviewee 3) Execution of pilot interview 4) Review of interview questions 5) Identification of potential interviewees 6) Approaching potentials 7) Execution of interviews 	Implementation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating previous review including latest publications and findings in the field (Booth et al., 2016:59-60) • Enhancing review scope based on related concepts emerging from the interviews (Booth et al., 2016:60) • Writing literature review 	Continue to update the literature review, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Employee Engagement equivalents or related concepts mentioned by the interviewees (focus on terminologies, drivers etc.) • Latest publications on Employee Engagement and in related fields

Year 5 to 7	<p><i>Primary research</i> including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Transcription of interviews 2) Analysis of interviews 3) Thesis writing <p><i>Documentary research</i> including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Underpin/disprove primary findings with documentary data 2) Review Employee Engagement perception according to organisations' publications 3) Finalise thesis chapters and develop conclusion 	<p>Concluding Implementation and Finalisation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Identifying recommendations for actions" (Booth et al., 2016:273) • "Highlighting recommendations for future research" (Booth et al., 2016:273-274) 	<p>Ongoing updating of the literature review, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest publications • Literature connected with the findings of the analysis <p>Developing recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include these in implications for literature • Make suggestions to practitioners
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Source: Developed by the author

The research and the resulting thesis were developed over a duration of seven years (2013 to 2020). This period of time allowed the amount of Employee Engagement publications and the related research to grow further. When the author conceptualised her literature review, she started with a broad review to ensure she reflected on the different sources available and considered the input of different commentators. The main part of this exercise was the review of sources which were published in English. Here, the focus was on literature from Anglo-American countries, which means that it “refer[s] to something involving the U.K. and the U.S.” according to the Cambridge Dictionary (2020b:online). In addition, the author focused strongly on sources published in English and German – if available – due to her language barrier on sources published in other languages. As the number of German sources turned out to be very limited, the literature review focused on publications available in English in particular. A database search (last update: 10.08.2020) which combined the term Employee Engagement and the German equivalent *Mitarbeitemotivation* [Engl. ‘employee motivation’] in the search criteria, using the online Library Search of Manchester Metropolitan University resulted in a small number of publications including 13 journal articles and two books/ e-books mainly from the discipline of business (MMU Library, 2020:online). In *Table 3: Keyword research results based on Germany Employee Engagement literature* introduced later in this chapter, the author presents the full list of results of her database search for sources related to Employee Engagement and associated concepts in English and in German. The overview showed more results when the author searched for Employee Engagement in general or its definition. The number of results decreased strongly when additional German keywords were added.

During this time, the author went back to literature to reflect on new sources, studies and findings frequently. The plan matches the suggestions by Booth et al. (2016:57) on how to manage a literature review. The reviewed literature is primarily drawn from academic sources in the field of Employee Engagement, Human Resource Management, Human Resource Development and performance. Besides, the author reflected on literature that addresses practitioners in the field to provide an extensive review of the sources available.

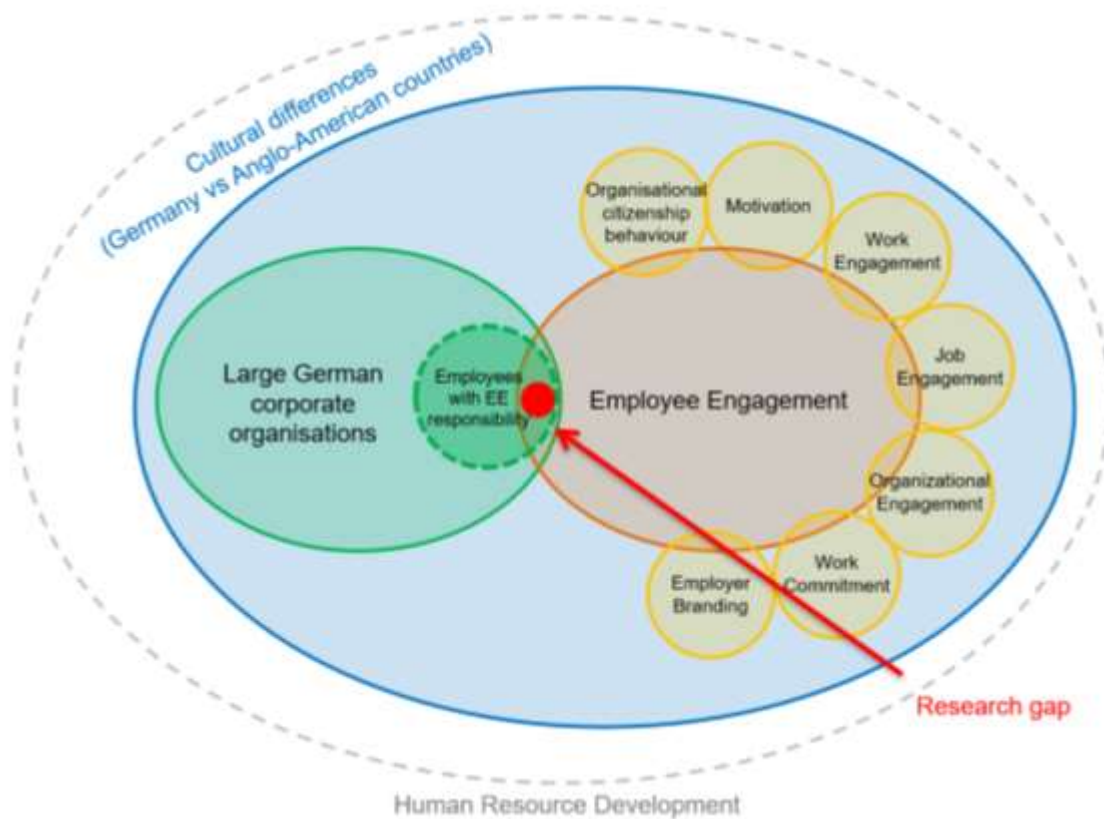
Based on the outlined steps, the author developed the topic mapping of the study and the resulting review questions. In the next section, the author presents the topic mapping used for this study.

2.2.1 Topic mapping

As an outcome of the extensive literature review, the author developed the topic mapping by reflecting on the research questions and by considering the early stage findings of the holistic literature review mentioned. The development of the topic mapping was further influenced by the author’s reflections on the research objective.

This topic mapping, which is illustrated in *Figure 1: Topic mapping of the conducted research*, shows the research gap which was identified during the development of the study and the progress of the literature review.

Figure 1: Topic mapping of the conducted research



Source: Based on Wylegala (2016:6)

It reflects on the management and leadership field which was researched. The particular focus is on the Employee Engagement phenomenon in large German corporate organisations. There, the author focused in particular on large organisations, as these companies have the size and the required resources to have Employee Engagement strategies or activities established. However, the preparation of the in-depth interviews showed that there are also mid-size companies with the required infrastructure to establish Employee Engagement strategies. Consequently, these evaluation criteria were applied individually on a case-by-case basis. This decision was also supported by the crossover between mid-size companies and large organisations which can be blurry in Germany. Consequently, a few of the employers can be categorised as mid-size or smaller large organisations.

Within the organisations, employees with Employee Engagement responsibility were identified as the main target group. Additionally, the topic mapping shows the various related Employee Engagement terms reviewed in connection with the phenomenon itself, such as work and *job engagement*, work and *organizational commitment* amongst the others presented. However,

throughout the literature review further matching concepts were identified which are introduced throughout the literature review and the further study.

The introduced topic mapping supports the development of the review questions which is described in the next section.

2.2.2 Review questions

Based on the research questions and objectives introduced earlier, the author developed the review questions of this research. These review questions supported the author's literature review and helped to develop a wider understanding of Employee Engagement-related topics which needed to be considered for this research.

The author developed the following three review questions:

1. How do commentators in Anglo-US countries define the phenomenon of Employee Engagement?

Question one was developed to evaluate the different theoretical Employee Engagement approaches discussed in Anglo-US literature. The main aim of this question is to ensure that the author reviews the various definitions of Employee Engagement and the respective views on the phenomenon available in literature. By doing so, she builds the foundation of the next steps of the research – particularly with respect to the key drivers, the expected output factors and companies' invention and establishment of Employee Engagement.

The second question tackled the evolution and construction as well as the reconstruction of the phenomenon according to Anglo-US literature:

2. How did the phenomenon of Employee Engagement develop in Anglo-US countries?

The last question leads to one of the main aims of this research. It allows a wider perspective on related terminologies, language barriers, missing conceptual design and even the potential lack of awareness in the German environment:

3. Why is the phenomenon of Employee Engagement less prominent in Germany in comparison to Anglo-US countries?

The resulting findings helped the author to develop the essential research questions which form the centre of the study.

In the next section, the author reflects on the literature review findings starting with the introduction and review of the wider field of Human Resource Management and Human Resource Development leading on to the Employee Engagement arena.

2.3 Human Resource Management, Human Resource Development and the Employee Engagement phenomenon

Before presenting the findings of the literature review on Employee Engagement, the author first outlines her observations on the superordinate fields of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Human Resource Development (HRD). The arenas of HRM and HRD are seen as the home of the Employee Engagement theory, as the phenomenon provides approaches or frameworks, which support organisations to drive the performance of their workforces.

According to Sisson and Storey (2000:10), employment has changed over the years, influenced by different factors such as the change from “manufacturing to service”, reduced number of jobs and the change in job types and also the increasing number of female workers. These changes also had an impact on the world of human resources, especially, as the above stated shift led to the need to retain and grow workforces (Chapman et al., 2018). As Wilkinson et al. (2017:5) pointed out, Human Resource Management was first established during the end of the 19th century by practitioners as a result of the “industrial welfare” at the time. They also reflected on the emerging change in the work environment at the time and its impact on the management of human resources:

Shift from direct systems of management (personal supervision, traditional paternalism and simple piecework systems) to more technical systems of management and bureaucratic forms of employment.

At the end of the 20th century, HRM saw its main presence and prominence increase dramatically, especially within the management community (Storey, 1991).

The term ‘Human Resource Development’, on the other hand, which is also introduced as part of the *Literature Review Chapter*, was established much later. According to Carbery (2015:2), it was first used by Harbison and Myers in 1964 and emerged from the discussion on human capital theory. Nevertheless, both practices are of high importance for “a firm’s strategic objectives” (Chapman et al., 2018:533) and allow HR to contribute to an organisation’s success (Sung and Choi, 2014).

With respect to the specifications of Human Resource Management, Thomas and Lazarova (2014:2) described it the follows:

HRM consists of the activities, policies, and practices of attracting, engaging, developing, and retaining the employees that an organization needs to accomplish its goals.

In addition, Keenoy (1990:3) added that earlier on Storey already differentiated between hard and soft HRM. While hard HRM focused on the “economic return”, soft HRM allowed “increasing employee participation, commitment and involvement”.

The change in human resources resulting in HRM first occurred in the US as Wilkinson et al. (2017) contributed, before it also transformed in the UK during the mid-1980s. At the time, roles such as personnel managers disappeared and were replaced by “HR manager and human resource developers” aiming to support a company’s organisational objectives, while at the same time ignite the debate whether it is just a “relabelling of personnel management” (Wilkinson et al., 2017:5).

Finally, it resulted in different HRM views including traditional HRM from whose perspective “personnel policies must be linked to strategic plans”, neo-pluralist Personnel Management/HRM which involved employees stronger in the organisational development and strategic HRM which is based on “the integration of human resources issues into the business plan”, as Kenney (1990:4-5) pointed out. Generally, it became clear that the coverage of HRM was much broader than the responsibilities of personnel management, as it included a direct link to the business itself and was less administrative-driven and, as Kenney (1990) stated, less “pragmatic” as its predecessor. Consequently, the resulting HR approach was more strongly driven by “individualism” than ever before (Storey, 1993:541). However, at the same time HRM faced a “lack of precise definitions” as Lähteenmäki et al. (2006:51) raised, which was also supported by other authors such as Keenoy (1990), Shuck et al. (2014) and Sung and Choi (2014). Keenoy (1997:825) even stated that throughout further research on the topic, HRM became “more elusive and obscure”.

Independent from these challenges, Wilkinson et al., (2017:6) specified that HRM, amongst other advantages, “gives [organisations] a competitive edge” via HR, which is also supported by Chapman et al. (2018). Lähteenmäki et al. (2006:51) specified that “in HRM thinking, human resources are viewed as an asset rather than merely a cost to be minimised”. The further literature review will show whether the value of an employee towards an organisation is one of the reasons why companies develop and establish Employee Engagement strategies.

Besides, HRM makes “HR decisions [...] of strategic importance”, drives “core activities of the business”, pays “greater attention [...] to the management of managers themselves”, “devolve[s] responsibility and empowerment”, “manag[es] culture” and “integrate[s] action on selection, communication, training, reward and development” (Wilkinson et al., 2017:6). This strategic role of HRM in organisations was also supported by Lähteenmäki et al. (2006), who discussed the more strategic descendant of HRM, called ‘strategic HRM’ and identified key variances between the introduced HRM and strategic HRM. They pointed out that new strategic HRM was more future-oriented and less based on short-term initiatives, which increased benefits for the organisation with respect to its performance while embedding HRM activities into the wider organisational strategies. Furthermore, they pointed out that strategic HRM aimed to integrate HR activities into the organisation, its surrounding and aims (Lähteenmäki et al., 2006). However, the results of the study executed by Lähteenmäki et al.

(2006) indicated that there was only a minor link between company results, but HRM initiatives resulted in a more positive outlook for the future of the business. During a study on HRM in British organisations, Storey (1993) observed that the expected change towards the HRM approach had been established quickly. He pointed out that managers and management teams also referred to terminologies and language originally known only by HR. Besides, line managers made use of staff recognition and joint problem solving and showed increasing confidence themselves.

With respect to the role of HRD, Carbery (2015:13) argued that HRM “enable[s] the organization to achieve its strategic objectives and to positively impact organizational effectiveness”, but it is not superior to Human Resource Development. Instead, HRM should be seen as a “partner” of HRD. Furthermore, Carbery (2015:2) added on its importance:

Human Resource Development (HRD) is essentially about facilitating learning that allows employees to fully develop and realize their potential in ways that benefits themselves, organizations and society.

Furthermore, he stated that HRD relied on a set of “policies and practices” which support organisations to develop their staff. He also added that HRD targeted the development of employees to achieve better organisational performance, yet HRD also faced a “lack of agreement” (Carbery, 2015:4), as many different activities emerged under its name. However, Shuck et al. (2014) flagged that the commonly discussed positive effect of HRD on Employee Engagement which results in decreasing employee turnover and better organisational performance was lacking validation in literature. However, the previously introduced improvements in performance and effectiveness by aligning organisational strategies and HR strategies which were criticised by Shuck et al. (2014) were also listed as an aim by Lähteenmäki et al. (2006). This was a challenge which the author of this research also faced with respect to the different views on Employee Engagement, which will be discussed further throughout this chapter.

HRD is influenced by different factors, which Carbery (2015:8-13) summarised as:

- “economic factors”, as there is usually a correlation between economic downturn and cuts on HRD activities;
- “technology”, which allows activities in the field to move away from classroom learning towards digital solutions;
- “globalization”, which causes more competition for employers in the job market;
- “corporate social responsibility (CSR) and business ethics”; and
- the “management of diversity”.

To tackle the previously introduced challenges and the outlined influencing factors, organisations need to develop their own Human Resource Development philosophy, which “focuses on the underpinning values and principles that drive the design, implementation and evaluation of HRD in organizations” according to McCracken and Garavan (2015:30). It is strongly linked to Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD), which developed from HRD, in a similar way to the aforementioned development of strategic HRM. This development was mainly caused by the extension of the described role of HRD by “strategies and practices that focus on enhancing individual, teamwork process and organizational system performance” (McCracken and Garavan, 2015:30). They presented and compared an early contribution by Garavan from 1991 and a newer approach by McCracken and Wallace from 2000. The key outcome of this review indicated that today’s Strategic HRD had become much more proactive which meant that SHRD “shap[ed] organizational mission and goals” and required “top management leadership” as well as the “ability to influence culture” amongst other characteristics (McCracken and Garavan, 2015:32). The comparison of the two perspectives and the proactive role of SHRD and its characteristics are included in *Appendix 1: Key SHRD characteristics – Garavan (1991) versus McCracken and Wallace (2000)*.

The important role of HRM and HRD was supported by Rigg’s (2015:198) statement on the value of staff:

Most organizations will claim that people are their greatest asset and many recognize that the bigger influence on their success whether it be in customer relations, rates of innovation, service provision or other measures, is the extent to which they are able to attract, develop and keep ‘good’ people.

Furthermore, she added, “organizations have increasingly recognized the idea of people as a source of competitive advantage”, which leads back to the previously introduced competitive edge of HRM and HRD. Therefore, HRD managers needed to be able to look ahead and reflect on a talent not only in its current role, but also consider the resource’s way forward within the organisation, as Rigg (2015) pointed out. To achieve this task, HRD needed to focus on ensuring particular aspects which Rigg (2015:199) further outlined, including the need to “develop[...] a high performance workforce”, “diversity management, ensuring a diverse pool for succession planning” and “contribute[...] to employer branding to assist the organization to be an employer of choice”. Still, criticism was also identified with respect to both areas. Chapman et al. (2018) questioned organisations’ intentions to implement HRM and HRD activities. From their perspective, it could be argued that organisations perceive both concepts as chic and initiate them due their popularity.

As this study is based on the understanding of a phenomenon in an international surrounding (to be specific: Germany), the review in the field of HRM is extended by reflection on the key

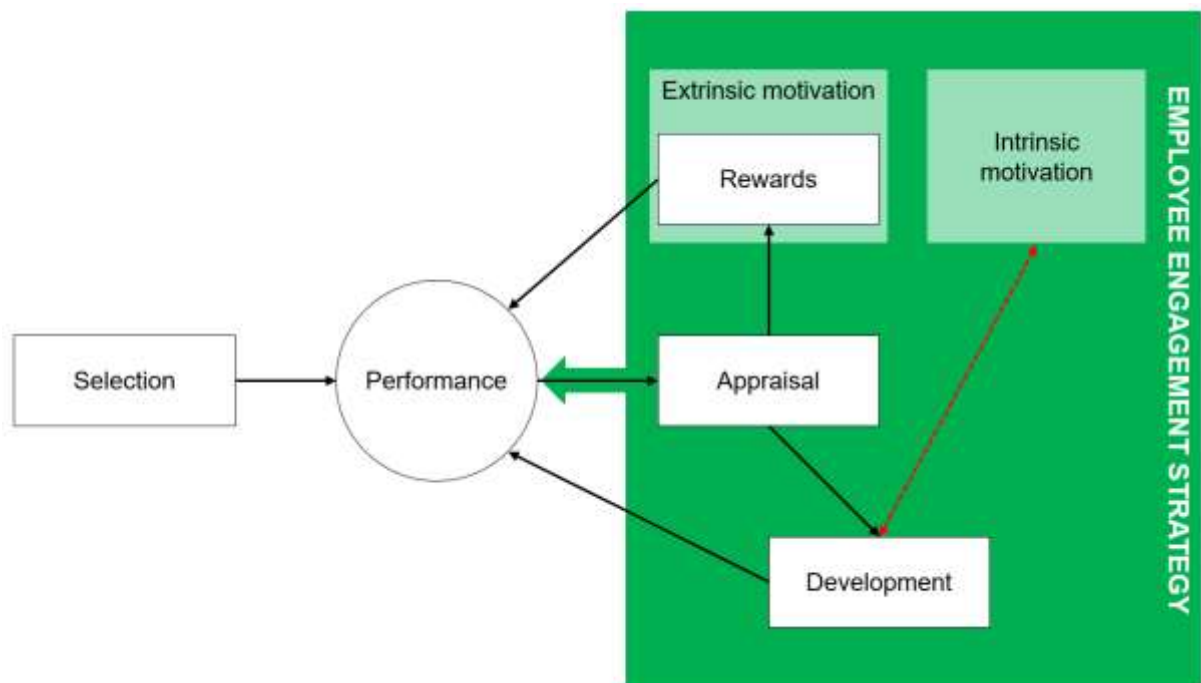
comments on international Human Resource Management, too. This especially applies, as multinational organisations are facing even more challenges and require the elaboration of HRM and HRD even more than organisations operating only in a single market, which was also supported by Hannon (2017). The literature review showed that at the time of research, more and more organisations were operating internationally and the globalization has strongly increased throughout the years. It was a result of their “search for new markets” (Ditta, 2020:30) and expected business growth as a result of this internationalisation. As a consequence, “new parameters [were] added to management decisions calling for a rethinking of organizational strategies and planning procedures”, as Wind et al. (1973:14) stated.

On the one hand, Almond (2006:432) pointed out that the field was still unresearched, while Perlmutter (1972:140), on the other hand, stated that a “multinational corporate firm is an adaptive-learning system”. However, according to Geber (1989) organisations were challenged by a long list of questions about the right approach for the execution of global trainings as part of HRD. Practices which were identified as suitable for one country were unacceptable in another one. The increase of global workforces in organisations brought these challenges further into organisations, including debates about the right format and language of HRD activities amongst others. However, Almond and González Menéndez (2013) shared a different perspective in a much later publication on international Human Resource Management. Amongst other tools, they named international management teams as key components in the effective management of international workforces, as well as the benefit of the establishment of uniform HR systems amongst all markets if local legislation allows this. An example they shared was based on non-union approaches, which worked in the US, but were unsuitable for some European countries due to their local laws. This was supported by Ditta (2020:32), who still saw the need for the establishment of “a cross-border development strategy” to ensure targeted success. The key role of unions and workers’ councils in organisational decision-making and their influence on the voice of the employees in Germany was also discussed by Hannon (2017:260). She named Germany, along with other European countries, in her discussion on “mandatory employee voice systems”, but also pointed out that the systems themselves vary. “The German system of employee voice” is regulated by the government including “compulsory rules and regulations for German companies” (Hannon, 2017:261), which allows employees to get involved in management decisions through the elected members of their designated union or council.

After looking into international HRM, the focus is now on Employee Engagement in the context of HRM and HRD. Even so, the outlined benefits for organisations have resulted in growing anticipation of HRD. The concept and its activities need to tackle these various challenges. Consequently, frameworks and approaches are needed to help organisations to address these issues. As introduced previously, an Employee Engagement strategy is a potential approach

or framework focused on tackling these issues. It aims to support organisations to drive the performance of their workforces by retaining qualified staff, increasing employees' commitment towards the organisation and the tasks and attracting new talents within a highly competitive market situation. A rather traditional overview of “*the human resource management cycle*” by Storey (1991:7), presented in *Figure 2*, showed the most important steps in the HR process including the selection of staff, performance evaluation, respective rewarding and resulting development. As an addition to the existing concept, the author highlighted in green the fields which were positively influenced by Employee Engagement initiatives. Positive impact on development and rewards were identified in particular as the main areas which increase the performance of staff and are further discussed throughout this literature review.

Figure 2: Extension of “The human resource management cycle”



Based on Storey (1991:7)

With respect to the implementation of rewards as shown in the original figure of the HRD cycle, the main influence of Employee Engagement strategies was on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which is discussed further at a later stage. Rewards were identified as a driver of the extrinsic motivation, while intrinsic motivation is a result of the employee's self, but is positively influenced by the chance to develop further and the natural need to grow (highlighted in red). By reflecting further on the role of Employee Engagement within the wider HR context, it becomes clear that HRM plays a strategic role in today's organisations, while HRD ensures the right skilling and development of staff to retain and grow employees further. Considering both – HRM and HRD – as *pari passu*, Employee Engagement can support both concepts as shown in the figure above. This is supported by the “significant effect on employee outcomes, such as motivation, commitment, knowledge, and skills” through HRD (Sung and Choi,

2014:854) and engagement as an important output factor of successful HRD as stated by Fairlie (2011). Benefer (2007) stated that work-based learning had a positive effect on Employee Engagement and a workforce's motivational level. Both statements show different outcomes of Employee Engagement initiatives such as *motivation*, *commitment* and *engagement* itself. However, according to Shuck et al. (2014:240), "the connection between HRD practices and employee engagement remains decidedly unclear despite casual and relational claims" which results in the requirement of further investigation. Still, according to Truss et al. (2013) earlier research on HRM performance improvement was identified as a result of respective initiatives. Furthermore, they (Truss et al., 2013:2658) stated:

With the development of the SHRM field, researchers in psychology and social psychology have been concerned with exploring how the attitudinal construct of employee engagement could help explain individual performance outcomes.

Their discussion of Employee Engagement in positive psychology matched the idea of positive HRM and it was even discussed as being the "new best practice" of HRM (Truss et al., 2013:2661). Chapman et al. (2018:539) also discussed the positive relationship between HRD and Employee Engagement, "result[ing] in high productivity, shareholder returns, and overall satisfaction". Additionally, they stated that it built a competitive advantage and came to the conclusion that lacking engagement led to "higher level of negative financial performance due to a loss of productivity". Additionally, Truss et al. (2013:2664) identified that most research concerned being engaged, but focused less on the establishment of engagement initiated by "senior managers and HRM professionals".

The strong link between Employee Engagement and HRM and HRD was further supported by Shuck et al. (2014) who referred to an Employee Engagement framework which was proposed by Shuck and Reio in 2011 aiming for the integration of HRD theory into practice. This framework was built upon cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement, which will be further discussed in the upcoming sections along with its origin.

After outlining the findings on Human Resource Management and Human Resource Development and their link to Employee Engagement, the next sections will focus mainly on the literature review findings of the phenomenon itself.

2.4 The Employee Engagement concept according to literature

2.4.1 The definition of Employee Engagement

This section was developed to answer the first review question of this study: "*How do commentators in Anglo-US countries define the phenomenon of Employee Engagement?*" It reflects on different Anglo-American publications and commentators of Employee Engagement.

As mentioned in the *Introduction Chapter*, Purcell (2014) identified a long list of publications in the field of Employee Engagement. This goes along with a statement by Truss et al. (2013:2666) on the numerous amounts of research conducted on engagement:

A significant body of research has emerged on the topic of engagement within the psychology field over the past 20 years whose relevance to HRM is only now starting to be acknowledged.

Furthermore, Shuck et al. (2014:244) added that Employee Engagement “generated much excitement and attention”. However, most of the definitions of the phenomenon faced one common challenge, which was also identified during the literature review of this study: the number of different definitions. MacLeod and Clarke (2011:11) stated that more than 50 definitions for the phenomenon were available while Guest (2014b:224) added that the “[engagement] term also lacks precision”. Besides, Truss et al. (2014) recognised a difference in the academic understanding of Employee Engagement in comparison to its interpretation and implementation in practice. The lack of definition was also identified and previously introduced with respect to the superior HRM phenomenon.

Independent from the number of definitions, MacLeod and Clarke (2011:11) introduced their own definition of the phenomenon, according to which Employee Engagement is:

An employee’s willingness to put discretionary effort into their work in the form of time, brainpower and energy, above and beyond what is considered adequate.

Besides, Busse and Weidner (2020:541) underpinned MacLeod and Clarke’s statement on the number of Employee Engagement definitions by emphasising the increasing amount of literature related to the phenomenon. According to them, Employee Engagement:

Is considered as a beneficial way of thinking and behaving in terms of business operations, which enable employees to dedicate themselves to perform, or even outperform, often intrinsically motivated with the aim of creating a win-win situation for both the employee and his or her leader, as well as employer.

Busse and Weidner’s definition contained more details than the previously introduced statement made by MacLeod and Clarke and links back to the previously introduced aims of Human Resource Development. However, the key statements of both definitions are identical, especially with respect to an employee’s intrinsic willingness to achieve a performance increase. The concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was previously introduced as part of HRM and Employee Engagement in *Figure 2: “The human resource management cycle”*. Besides, the overall idea of Employee Engagement is strongly linked to the theory of motivation in general and how humans and other animal species are triggered by different factors to be motivated (Laming, 2008).

However, other commentators in the field, such as Kumar and Pansari (2015) and Holbeche and Matthews (2012), also referred to the increasing number of definitions. Furthermore, Kumar and Pansari (2015:68) reflected on discussions whether engagement was seen as the counterpart to burnout and the necessity of meaningfulness, safety and availability as well as a “comprehensive definition that focused on the cognitive, emotional and behavioral components associated with an individual’s performance”. Besides, Holbeche and Matthews (2012:11) added that “engagement is both a cause and effect. It involves a relationship between the organization and the employee.” Still, according to Fairlie (2011:520) “meaningful work characteristics are an overlooked source of employee motivation and engagement within organizations”.

Further research on the definition of Employee Engagement revealed additional details on the numerous definitions. For example, Bakker et al.’s (2008) definition relied on similar attributes to MacLeod and Clarke’s. According to Bakker et al. (2008:188), employee engagement is shown by employees’ “high level of energy”, them being “enthusiastic about their work” as well as “fully immersed in their job so that time flies”. This was underpinned by Kahn (1990:694) who points out that engaged people “employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance” while disengaged employees “withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performance”. According to Guest (2014b:224), “academic approaches to engagement are usually traced to the work of Kahn and to an article published in 1990”. Kahn’s work was mentioned by many researchers whose studies and publications were reviewed for this literature review, including Bailey (2017), Busse and Weidner (2020), Chapman et al. (2018), Fairlie (2011), Kumar and Pansari (2015), Purcell (2014), Rich (2010) and Shuck et al. (2014) to only name a few. This study also relies on Kahn’s ground building perspective, but also takes other and later views of commentators into consideration, which are also introduced through this chapter.

De Mello e Souza Wildemuth et al. (2013:18) stated that “Employee Engagement is a deep connection between the self and the role”, which is also reflected in Welch’s (2011:335) Employee Engagement discussion. She focused on a similar perspective, reflecting on an employee’s “attitude” and the “psychological state”. The resulting definition by Welch (2011:335) was used as a foundation of this research:

Employee engagement can be understood as cognitive, emotional and physical role performance characterised by absorption, dedication and vigour and dependent upon the psychological condition of meaningfulness, safety and availability.

This triad was originally introduced by Kahn (1990:694), as he was one of the first to discuss Employee Engagement by stating that engaged workforces “employ and express themselves psychically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance”. Besides, in his paper

“Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at work” from 1990, Kahn had already referred to the psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability which Welch (2011) picked up on, too.

Schaufeli et al. (2002:74) added to the discussion that:

Engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) and Welch's (2011) views and emerging definitions referred to engagement characteristics such as *vigour, dedication* and *absorption*, which the author also reflects on in the findings of the primary data in this study. As mentioned previously, the further review showed that many other commentators referred to Kahn's view. However, there are various others besides Welch (2011), who referred particularly to Kahn's (1990) cognitive, emotional and physical roles, including Kumar and Pansari (2015), MacLeod and Brady (2008) and Truss et al. (2014) amongst others. These three characteristics build the basis of various Employee Engagement definitions.

However, Dalal et al. (2012) based their Employee Engagement ancestor “organizational citizenship behavior” on the cognitive role and employees' willingness to increase their contribution to improve the organisation and its performance. Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) also discussed related models from the field of organizational research, such as *job involvement, work engagement* and *organizational commitment*. They belong to related views and are therefore also reviewed in this research. This is especially the case, as they rely on similar output factors such as *involvement, commitment, absorption in* and *work enthusiasm* which are commonly discussed in the Employee Engagement context.

Furthermore, the emotional role mentioned is represented in an employee's pride to be part of an organisation (Smythe, 2013), which is underpinned by Kruse's (2012:online) statement: “Employee Engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals”. The physical role, on the other hand, is directly linked to the two other roles and results in energy, according to MacLeod and Brady (2008). This energy can lead to a reduced number of absence days and resulting financial losses for an organisation (Kalliath and Kalliath, 2012). It can be argued that the particular interest of practitioners in the phenomenon is driven by these output factors. Erickson (2005, cited in Macey and Schneider (2008:7)) stated that “engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer” – a statement which also influenced this research. Additionally, Erickson stated that Employee Engagement meant that an employee was contributing more than requested in his/her work contract and therefore went beyond what

was expected of this person. These targeted output factors are further reviewed in the respective section “The expected output factors of Employee Engagement” of this chapter.

Moving back to the various different definitions, Mills et al. (2012) assumed that the growing number of definitions indicated the rising interest in the topic; but at the same time, the discussion and also criticism on Employee Engagement increased alike, as Guest (2014a) and Purcell (2014) pointed out. This criticism might also be a result of the lacking research (Baron, 2013) which Employee Engagement has faced, independent from its long list of definitions. Still, according to Welch (2011), the phenomenon itself found its way into leadership strategies in various countries.

The latest literature does not only cover the definition of Employee Engagement. Authors such as Rich (2010), Welch (2011), Weyland (2011), Baron (2013) and Purcell (2014) wrote about the topic and discussed the definition of the phenomenon along with its drivers, its measurement and challenges as well as its limitations. Besides, more rudimentary definitions are also available, which explain the Employee Engagement concept. Smythe (2013) stated that Employee Engagement was indicated by an employee’s interest, passion and motivation in activity.

All in all, when reflecting on the various Employee Engagement definitions, it can be determined that they showed many parallels, but at the same time also many differences. This causes challenges concerning the accuracy of one single definition. This again, leads to uncertainty with respect to the phenomenon’s definition. Still, as pointed out before, most of these definitions have a similar origin. Thus, it is essential to understand the different views, interpretations and the resulting definitions of Employee Engagement provided by commentators from the field to ensure in-depth understanding of the phenomenon’s construction. This perception resulting from the author’s literature review in the Employee Engagement field is supported by Cole et al. (2012:1551), who stated that “the conceptualization and interpretation of employee engagement have elicited a great deal of confusion”. Furthermore, they argued that this confusion was also linked to the differentiation between Employee Engagement and other concepts “such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement”.

Appendix 2: Summary of Employee Engagement findings shows an early-stage overview of relevant definitions identified for this study along with a summary of the drivers, indicators, output factors, the phenomenon’s evolution and its implementation. This high-level review was used as the foundation for further research. However, before presenting the results of the other Employee Engagement fields reviewed, the author reflects on the social construction of Employee Engagement which shaped the further research elementarily.

2.4.2 The social construct of Employee Engagement

After presenting the diverse definitions of Employee Engagement and the resulting challenges, this section reflects on the social construction of the phenomenon.

The previously mentioned increasing interest in Employee Engagement by practitioners also resulted in a raising interest in the phenomenon by academic commentators. To understand the different views of the phenomenon in greater detail, the construction of Employee Engagement requires in-depth research. The importance of a detailed understanding was also underpinned by Blaikie (1993:20), who stated that “social phenomena [are] more complex than natural phenomena”. According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), a phenomenon’s trueness defines knowledge. This knowledge the author aims to analyse in this study by considering the individual reconstructions of the phenomenon by the different participants in the research.

For this research, two aspects of constructivism were considered, which were presented by Edmonds (1999:324): first, the development of Employee Engagement is based on the “needs and goals” and second its “models are build up as a result of active interaction”. With respect to this statement, the assumption is that organisations establish activities which should result in Employee Engagement based on the organisation’s “needs and goals”. It can be argued that they establish the phenomenon as a whole or only partly depending on the needs which it should satisfy. The individual need of an organisation might also cause the on-demand reconstruction of the phenomenon. The second aspect of Edmond’s statement was investigated in great detail by the analysis of the interviewees’ relationship with their individual employer and this interaction shapes the individual reality of the Employee Engagement perception. The findings on the interaction between the interviewee and the organisation are fully outlined in the “Primary research observations” section of the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter*.

Besides, external factors were also identified as aspects with an impact on how businesses construct or even reconstruct the phenomenon based on their purposes. Amongst others, Fox (2001:24) stated that it was part of an active process where the following realities apply (extraction):

- (2) *Knowledge is constructed, rather than innate, or passively absorbed.*
- (3) *Knowledge is invented not discovered.*
- (4b) *All knowledge is socially constructed.*
- (5) *[...] a process of making sense of the world.*

With respect to the findings from the field of Human Resource Development, the increase in engagement through HRD was in line with the “models of human meaning” which “add[ed] to current theory building” (Fairlie, 2011:509). Furthermore, Fairlie (2011:509) stated that from the discussion on the meaning dimension, the “concept of self-transcendence” arose, which

reflected on humans' needs to grow and ensure achievements. Therefore, he (Fairlie, 2011:509-510) saw the positive influence of "meaningful work" on engagement which led back to theories by Maslow (1965) as well as McGregor and Locke (1976), before being picked up by Kahn (1990) again. The strong relationship between meaningful work and engagement, amongst others, was supported by the findings of his survey-based study, which he undertook to research the correlation between meaningful work, engagement and other characteristics.

As introduced earlier, the author's perception is that Employee Engagement and knowledge on the phenomenon is constructed by society and Human Resource Management stakeholders. The various definitions and approaches of Employee Engagement identified throughout the literature review, underpin the assumption of a constructed phenomenon as each commentator created his or her own reality of it. Furthermore, it can be argued that the evolutionary development of Employee Engagement and its takers underpinned the social construction of the phenomenon. As Employee Engagement has emerged from other constructs and still shows many parallels to existing concepts such as *personal engagement* (Kahn, 1990), *work engagement* and *job engagement* (Welch, 2011) as well as *organisational citizenship behaviour* (Dalal et al., 2012), the Employee Engagement concept has been constructed and reconstructed based on the needs of the individual commentator or the inventing company at the time in history. This is also supported by different commentators, such as Smythe (2013). They adjusted their views on the phenomenon by adding, for example, additional indicators of Employee Engagement to the dialogue, including work enthusiasm and commitment but also satisfaction, pride, goal alignment and the willingness to deliver additional effort, for example. Also, other authors such as Finney (2008), Chughtai and Buckley (2011) and Welch (2011) began to refer to these indicators. Therefore, it can be argued that during this period in the evolutionary development of the phenomenon, the needs and demands of society changed and therefore the required outcomes of Employee Engagement shifted to ensure that these requirements were also tackled by the reconstruction of the phenomenon. At the same time, its construction differs not just within the business environment - the various definitions could or even should also be seen as labels of the phenomenon which again can be identified through various signs such as "the extra mile" (MacLeod and Brady, 2008). Furthermore, similar terminologies were also used by Kenexa (Kenexa, 2012a) in a more business-oriented context. This observation from literature is further outlined along with the results of the analysis of the in-depth interviews and the documentary analysis in the *Discussion Chapter*.

Moreover, Employee Engagement has already been reconstructed in different cultures, organisations and times. According to Jackson (1997:4), "change comes in waves", referring to the change in organisations. The four-wave-based evolutionary change of Employee Engagement was summarised by Welch (2011:330-331) and is further outlined in one of the

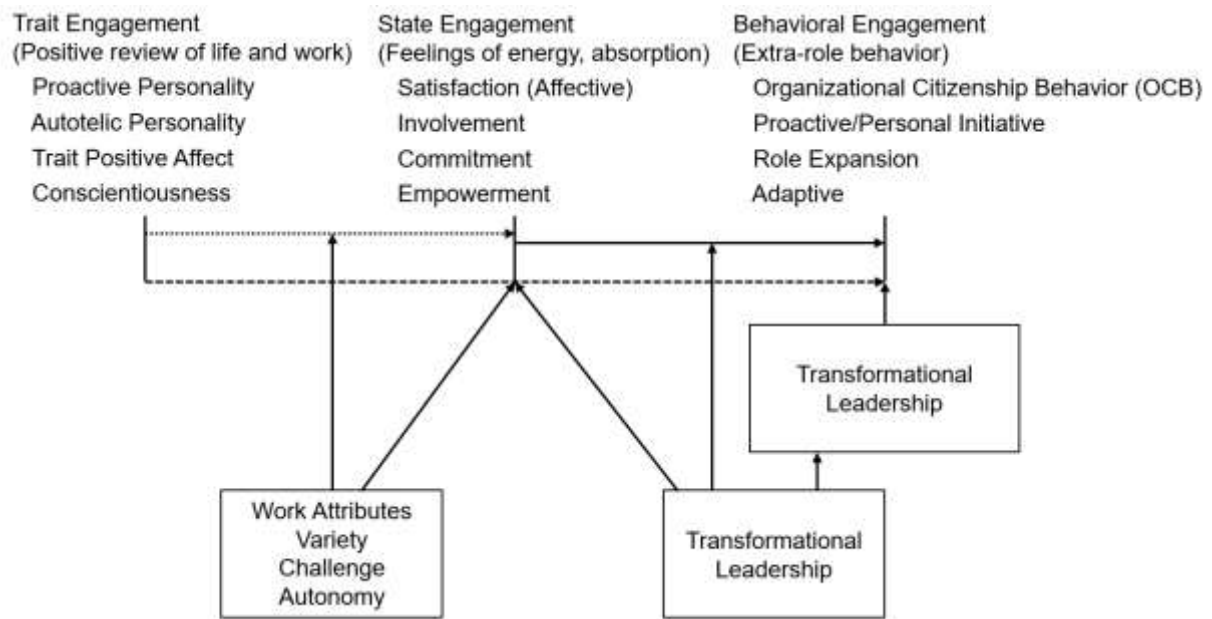
upcoming sections. During these waves, the phenomenon was modified depending on the requirements of employment and work during the respective period. Therefore, the further evolution of the phenomenon depended on its invention and implementation in organisations on the one hand, but on the other hand was also affected by external aspects such as the “war for talent”, which describes organisations’ challenges and resulting efforts to acquire skilled staff when “the global economy expanded dramatically between 2002 through 2007” (Beechler and Woodward, 2009:273). Looking back at the wider picture of HRD, Rigg (2015) pointed out that talent management ensured by HRD responsible parties was also one of the ways to address the challenges of the “war for talent”.

One example for the individual reconstruction of the phenomenon is the case of KIA UK: The organisation implemented a Wave 3-based strategy which was strongly based on the organisational goals and behaviours, aiming to improve communication, reducing fluctuation and costs to improve business performance (Tomlinson, 2010). Consequently, KIA’s invention of the phenomenon was not based on a predefined and universal guideline for an Employee Engagement strategy. Instead, it was customised based on the requirements of the inventing organisation. Considering Vygotsky’s approach as outlined by Liu and Chen (2010), the individual (here: the organisation) constructed the reality and did not apply the reality of the environment. Another popular example, shared by MacLeod and Brady (2008), was the modernisation of the British Royal Mail which also encouraged two-way communication for staff and resulted an increase in performance. In line with the examples of KIA and the British Royal Mail, the author also reflected on the organisational construction of the Employee Engagement phenomenon in this study. It needs to be pointed out that in certain cultures the Employee Engagement construct showed similarities while others differed. This may also impact the validation of the reviewed literature from Anglo-American sources. However, the review of Anglo-American literature showed that the terminology was defined and understood as well as executed similarly in markets such as the US and the UK. It is therefore possible that knowledge could be objective across markets even when the construct has the overall tendency to be modified based on different realities. As Morgan and Smircich (1980:497) stated:

The task of epistemology here is to demonstrate the methods used in everyday life to create subjectively an agreed or negotiated social order.

To understand Employee Engagement even better, Macey and Schneider (2008:6) developed a “Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement” (shown in *Figure 3: “Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement”*). This framework relied on three engagement types – called “Trait Engagement”, “State Engagement” and “Behavioral Engagement”. The framework showed the relation between a person’s “positive views of life and work”, this person’s “feelings of energy, absorption” and the “extra-role behavior”.

Figure 3: “Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement”



Source: Macey and Schneider (2008:6)

Along with the three states of engagement, the overview shows the drivers and characteristics which are reflected in an employee's activities, behaviour and attitude. They link back to the previously introduced Employee Engagement definitions and its drivers (introduced in the upcoming section), which combine different elements of the three different engagement types.

Still, the author's literature review shows that the construction of the phenomenon, according to literature, also mainly relies on Anglo-US sources. Therefore, further findings on Employee Engagement in Germany needed to be gathered separately.

Before presenting the findings of the literature review business-related sources as well as German sources, the author reflects on the drivers and expected output factors of Employee Engagement, as well as the measurement of the phenomenon, its evolution and accompanying concepts.

2.4.3 The drivers of Employee Engagement

Along with the definitions and construction of Employee Engagement, its different drivers also need to be reviewed further. In the previously introduced *Appendix 2: Summary of Employee Engagement findings*, the author summarises an extract of different Employee Engagement definitions and also presents some of the drivers of the phenomenon according to literature. In this section, the drivers mentioned are further investigated and additional factors according to literature are introduced.

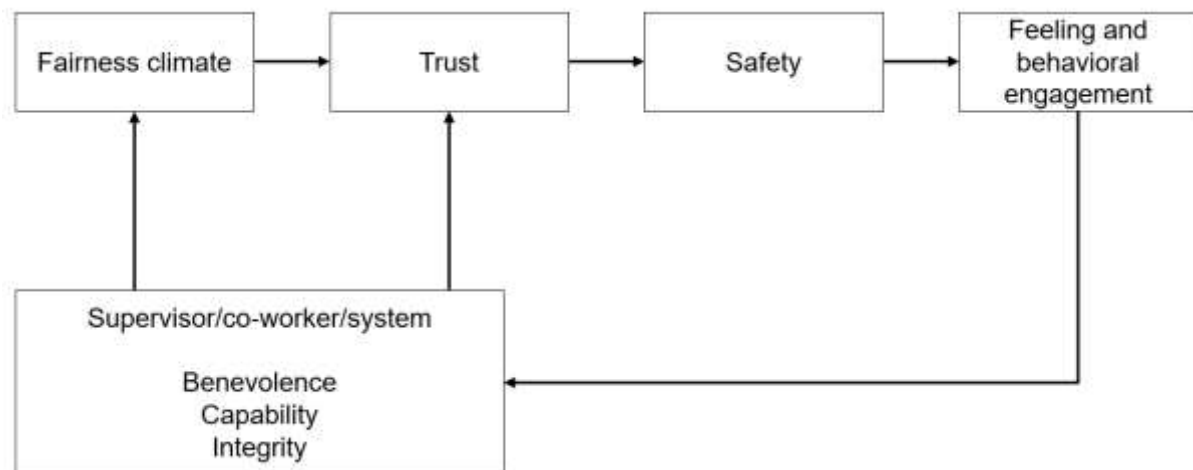
Before the author outlines these findings, it needs to be specified what a driver of Employee Engagement is and how to differentiate it from output factors of the phenomenon. As identified throughout the literature review, it is essential to distinguish between a driver of Employee

Engagement and its conceptualisation (Albrecht, 2010). According to Scherbaum et al. (2010:182), drivers are “the factors in [...] organizations that can produce high levels of employee engagement”. Furthermore, it needs to be pointed out that there is a difference between “extrinsic motivators” and “intrinsic motivators” (Bardwick, 2008:99) which both have an impact on Employee Engagement and also drive an individual's level of engagement. Extrinsic motivation is created by “a motivational pattern directed by goals such as material gain or resource acquisition” (Ford, 1992:103) while intrinsic motivation results from “self-determination and perceived competence” (Ford, 1992:190). According to Guest (2014b:224) engagement is also influenced by different “external factors, including short-term work experiences and personal mood”. Therefore, the drivers of Employee Engagement need to be differentiated into two categories: first, motivation and engagement employees develop by themselves in their roles, and second, external physical factors such as financial benefits or rewards driving employees' performance. Additionally, it needs to be considered that an organisation's recruitment approach might also impact an organisation's culture and Employee Engagement, as it depends on the recruit's intrinsic motivation, too. Rugimbana and Nwankwo (2003) pointed out that an organisation's reasons to recruit a ‘collaborator’ based on a person's competencies versus intrinsic qualities need to be considered as well. Consequently, these different factors also impact the organisational culture of a company, the resulting symbiosis between the different drivers and outcomes.

With respect to the role of Employee Engagement in the HRM context, Valentin (2014:480) pointed out in her critical review that there were two different models in HRM. She referred to the soft model, “which is underpinned by a development humanism, where employees are treated as valuable assets and a source of competitive advantage”. According to her, the soft model's focus is on trust, training and development. The counterpart, the hard model, is based on control and performance evaluation. Depending on the initiated drivers, a company's Employee Engagement is directed by one of the models. Moreover, Fairlie (2011) outlined the positive link and influence of HRD on engagement which leads to development. Besides he (Fairlie, 2011:509) added that it was key to “satisfy the fundamental developments needs of employees”.

The role of trust within the Employee Engagement construct was also discussed by Schneider et al. (2010). Their trust concept is based on three key stakeholders: “leaders/supervisors, co-workers, and the company as a whole” (Schneider et al., 2010:163). Their concept of Employee Engagement and trust “*Antecedents and consequences of experienced trust in work organizations*” (Figure 4) outlined the role of employee trust in management, co-workers and the organisation and the resulting engagement.

Figure 4: "Antecedents and consequences of experienced trust in work organizations"



Source: Schneider et al. (2010:160)

Furthermore, they (Schneider et al., 2010) pointed out that employees' trust develops when they perceive trust, but the speed in which it is developed depends strongly on the employee and the relationship of the individual to the organisation. Besides, their approach also included the factor "safety" which was also discussed by other commentators in the Employee Engagement arena. As mentioned earlier, Welch (2011:335) stated that Employee Engagement was "dependent upon the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability". This was originally introduced by Kahn (1990:693) who added that "individual differences and situational factors [...] influence the psychological importance of work to people's identifies or self-esteem". Furthermore, he (Kahn, 1990:693) also declared that "jobs, roles, and work contexts" influenced an individual's engagement level. According to Kahn (1990), the psychological meaningfulness is influenced by a task's and a role's characteristics, as well as the interaction an employee experiences as part of his or her role. The safety aspect is "experienced as feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990:708). The third influential factor, psychological availability, "is the sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resource to personally engage at a particular moment" (Kahn, 1990:714). Based on Kahn's approach, Crawford et al. (2014:58) added that:

Those who display the self in the role show what they think and feel, their creativity, their beliefs and values, and their personal connections to others.

Bardwick (2008) specified that there were six characteristics of a person which determine if the individual will be an engaged employee. She (Bardwick, 2008:68) stated:

They are emotionally mature, flexible, and highly motivated to achieve; they have positive attitudes, hold themselves to internal criteria of performance, and feel passionately about their work.

Kahn and Bardwick limited the pool of potentially engaged employees to those candidates who complied with these characteristics naturally. As Kahn stated, the job nature also influences whether an employee is engaged. Besides, it needs to be understood how much influence an organisation has on the increase of engagement in less secure or meaningful jobs. Independent from the organisation's role, similar characteristics are named by Smythe (2013), who added work enthusiasm, commitment, satisfaction, pride of being part of the organisation as well as the alignment with its goals and values and finally the willingness to put additional effort in being indicators of Employee Engagement. The different characteristics mentioned stay in direct relationship to the drivers of Employee Engagement. Even though Kahn and Barwick saw the necessity that employees referred to the required mindset to create these different characteristics, it can be argued that organisations have the possibility to influence them, which allows employees to build these characteristics. As Kahn (1990) stated, people are challenged to deal with multiple influence levels, which also includes the organisational influence itself. Furthermore, Smythe (2013) and McCarthy (2005) pointed out that leadership and leadership styles had an impact on Employee Engagement, too. The impact of leadership and proactivity of leaders was previously outlined as part of the findings on HRD and Strategic HRD. There, the advancement of SHRD had shown that leadership held a key role in the "shaping of organizational missions and goals" and the "understanding the external environment" (McCracken and Garavan, 2015:32). When focusing further on Employee Engagement, Valentine (2014) also presented the strong influence of managers in her critical research on Employee Engagement. Furthermore, this perspective was supported by Bardwick (2008:80-81) who saw employees' "trust [in] the organization, its leadership, and their boss" as a key driver of Employee Engagement, as it allowed staff to be "physically free to concentrate and collaborate". She also mentioned recognition by leaders to be a driver of Employee Engagement and stated "the recognition that is savored and remembered rarely involves a lot of money" (Bardwick, 2008:102). Also, MacLeod and Brady (2008) put extra focus on the importance of leaders and their leadership. According to them (MacLeod and Brady, 2008:74), "a good leader is good at providing success – the 'doing' of leadership". The impact of leadership on the different areas within organisations is also supported by publications in the field of organisational leadership. Yukl (2019:336), for example, reflected on the impact of leaders on the superior human resources topic:

Leaders can influence organizational performance in several ways, including decisions about the competitive strategy, human resources, and the management programs, systems, and organization structure.

Bardwick (2008) identified a positive correlation between engaged supervisors and the engagement level of their teams, including a decrease in their willingness to leave. Additionally,

Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) stated that a strong bonding between a company and its employees led to higher motivation on the employees' side.

However, other factors along with the drivers of Employee Engagement also influence an individual's Employee Engagement level. For example, Weyland (2011) pointed out that the difference between target groups with respect to the generation they belong to also need to be considered. According to Hofstede (1982) and Venaik et al. (2013), cultural and organisational differences also have an impact on the phenomenon and need to be further considered with respect to the factors influencing of Employee Engagement. These different influencing topics are discussed further in this chapter.

On the one hand, these factors are Employee Engagement drivers, while on the other hand, some of them also represent the expected outcome of Employee Engagement, which is further discussed in the next section.

2.4.4 The expected output factors of Employee Engagement

This section outlines the expected outcomes of Employee Engagement and therefore underpins why organisations seek to implement it. First of all, it needs to be pointed out that the output factors of Employee Engagement are commonly named as part of the Employee Engagement definition. This observation was also supported by Valentin (2014:477) who stated that "definitions of EE generally refer to employee attitudes and behaviours and their impact on work outcomes".

According to Bardwick (2008), there was a straight answer to the question of how a higher Employee Engagement level pays off for organisations. She stated (Bardwick, 2008:75):

- *High levels of employee commitment and engagement*
- *Lead to high levels of employee retention*
- *Which leads to high levels of customer enthusiasm*
- *And [a] high levels of customer retention and sales*
- *Which leads to higher profits and share price.*

The idea of an engaged workforce as a driver of business success is also supported by Finney (2008) and fits in with previously introduced findings on Human Resource Management and its strategic approach to improve business performance. However, also others, such as Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006:120), stated that "employees who feel engaged are more than willing to stay on the job", supporting the aspect of retention. This reduces effort and costs for human resources to recruit and on-board new staff. According to Holbeche and Matthews (2012:7), "employee engagement is characterized as a feeling of commitment, passion and energy". On the importance of an engaged workforce, Yee et al. (2010:109) added:

The service-profit chain (S-PC) notion [...] highlights the importance of employee attributes to deliver high levels of service quality to satisfy customers in order to enhance business performance.

Kahn (1990), one of the first researchers who studied Employee Engagement, states that the personal engagement and disengagement of an employee is a result of the individual's calibration of the self-in-role reflection. Consequently, the individual's perception of the self-in-role outcome strongly influences the engagement level of a person. Furthermore, Kumar and Pansari (2015:72) added that "keeping employees engaged can have a major impact on an organization's success, whether the organization is for-profit or not-for profit." In their qualitative study on Employee Engagement's impact on profitability they stated further:

Engaged employees will pass on their enthusiasm to customers, and they will develop and deliver better products and service – thereby positively impacting sales and profit.

On the other hand, according to de Mello e Souza Wildermuth et al. (2013), disengagement is caused by employees feeling worthless and experiencing missing recognition and lacking safety. Therefore, the positive outcomes of an engaged workforce help organisations to improve their organisational performance and create a competitive advantage through human resources as stated by Guest (2014a). Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) reflect on the related construct of work engagement in a similar way and argue in addition that it is a positive psychological concept against burnout. Besides, Cole et al. (2012:1551-1552) also discussed whether "burnout and engagement are distinct psychological states" and if "burnout is an erosion of engagement" which means they are located at "opposite ends of a common continuum". Considering Employee Engagement as the antagonist of Job Burnout supports the presumption of why the topic records certain interest in organisations. However, the lacking conceptualisation and the "no standard, accepted definition of Employee Engagement" (Cole et al., 2012:1553) limited the evidence of the positive impact on Employee Engagement.

Kalliath and Kalliath (2012:730) research focused on how the work environment as well as development opportunities could influence employees' wellbeing, linking back to the previously introduced findings on Human Resource Management and Human Resource Development. To be precise, they stated:

Fostering a work culture that is mindful of the importance of work-life balance, employee growth and development, health and safety, and employee engagement can be the key to achieving sustainable employee well-being and organizational performance.

According to Fisher (2005), integrated approaches help to ensure the successful implementation of Employee Engagement solutions. Sauter and Staudt (2016) added that "Emotionen und Motivation" [Engl. 'emotions and motivation'] are essential to develop a competent employee who has the knowledge and capabilities to fulfil the task on the one hand

and also shows the willingness to do so on the other. However, they also reflected on different studies which indicate that work ethics, attitude towards authorities, career success and work-life balance are understood differently by different generations. Cultural and generational differences and how they may influence the Employee Engagement phenomenon are discussed at a later stage in this chapter.

Overall, the different output factors of Employee Engagement link back to the strategic tasks which are tackled by HRM and HRD, which aim for competitive edge through human resources. Employee Engagement as a framework and established strategy can support the achievement of the different business requirements.

After looking into the expected outcomes of Employee Engagement, the following section reflects on the measurement of Employee Engagement and its output factors.

2.4.5 The measurement of Employee Engagement according to literature

In this section, the author addresses the commonly discussed topic of the measurement of Employee Engagement. Here, one needs to clearly differentiate between the qualitative measurability of Employee Engagement as a phenomenon and the quantitative measurement of Employee Engagement as an output factor. While this study focuses on the qualitative understanding of the phenomenon and its social construct in German organisations, this section of the literature review outlines the author's findings on the measurability of the level of Employee Engagement according to literature.

According to Fletcher and Robinson (2014:273), the increasing interest in Employee Engagement also resulted in "the desire to measure, evaluate, and benchmark levels of engagement within and between organisations". Especially in non-peer reviewed literature, the Employee Engagement level is often measured and presented based on quantitative results. These sources mainly reflect upon generalised approaches, which aim to measure the level of Employee Engagement within an organisation or a society. Many of these approaches are based on academic measurement approaches such as the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, which was developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) as a response to the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). This scale was seen as one of the most commonly used measurement approaches for engagement (Guest, 2014a). According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2003:4), the MBI measured burnout and as a result "implies work engagement" which was seen by its developers as the "opposite of burnout". However, according to Fletcher and Robinson (2014:273), other measurement approaches are also commonly known. They referred to a review by Shuck, who identified "four main approaches to defining engagement, which can also be utilized when exploring measures of engagement" and listed the following:

1. "The Burnout-Antithesis Approach" according to which engagement was also seen as the "polar opposite construct of burnout" (Fletcher and Robinson, 2014:274),

2. "The Needs-Satisfying Approach" which resulted in different sub-approaches, but was generally based on the satisfaction of Kahn's concept of "physical, cognitive and emotional aspects" (Fletcher and Robinson, 2014:275),
3. most commonly applied by practitioners is the "Satisfaction-Engagement Approach" to which the Gallup approach belongs (Fletcher and Robinson, 2014:277),
4. and "The Multidimensional Approach" which according to (Fletcher and Robinson, 2014:279) was based on latest research by Saks and which combined the measurement of "job engagement and organizational engagement".

Still, the two authors also pointed out that these approaches faced similar issues, especially with respect to their validity caused by the issues with the differentiation between the phenomenon and other related concepts, its reliability with respect to "the measure being stable and consistent" and also with the response format which may cause big differences in the results (Fletcher and Robinson, 2014:279-282).

More recent studies by researchers such as Kumar and Pansari (2015) have developed new scorecards to measure Employee Engagement and its impact on profitability. This scorecard reflects on commonly known drivers of Employee Engagement amongst others such as *recognition* and *security* which leads to 'employee satisfaction', *pride* which indicates 'employee identification', 'employee commitment' and 'employee loyalty' which are reflected in the *intention to stay* in the organisation as well as *exceeding expectations* influencing 'employee performance'.

In comparison, Bardwick (2008) criticised the common standards on the measurement of Employee Engagement. According to her (Bardwick, 2008:69), organisations "generally miss the emotional essence" of Employee Engagement. Furthermore, she stated:

Standardized questions too often suggest the "right" answer, and they don't provide any way for the person to describe the emotional component.

From her point of view, organisations need to establish open-ended questions to measure "employees' emotional temperatures" (Bardwick, 2008:69). To gather rich data, her suggestion was to ask employees about their feeling of a particular aspect, for example their superior and how they would describe their relationship with their boss instead of asking for a rating of the respective manager.

Furthermore, research has shown that many of the approaches to measuring Employee Engagement have been developed by non-academic sources, as outlined in one of the upcoming sections on "The Employee Engagement discussion in business literature".

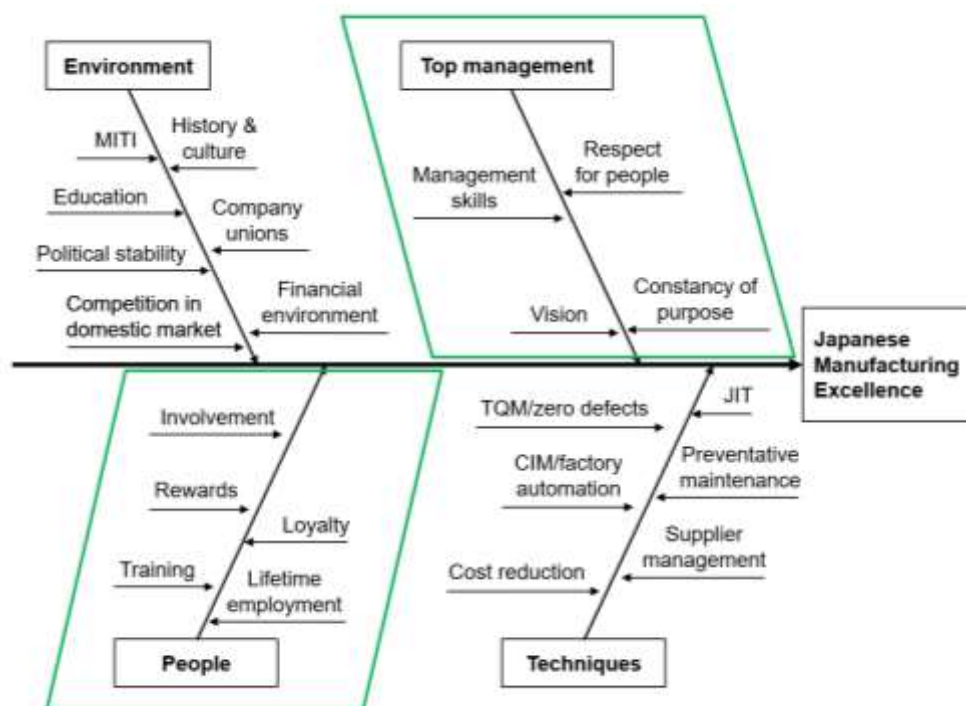
Next, the author reflects on the evolutionary development of Employee Engagement.

2.4.6 The evolution of Employee Engagement

This section describes how Employee Engagement has emerged from other concepts and developed into the concept discussed in the latest HRM and HRD literature. It also reflects on different terminologies used throughout the phenomenon's evolution. This section is designed to tackle the second review question of the study, which questions *“How did the phenomenon of Employee Engagement develop in Anglo-American countries?”*

As outlined before, the author also reflected on HRM and HRD. Furthermore, organisational research was also identified and reviewed, especially with respect to people, management and loyalty amongst others. Here, different terminologies were used as the example of Jackson (1997:xvii) showed. Jackson researched the “Japanese manufacturing excellence”, which is detailed in *Figure 5: “Ishikawa (fishbone) diagram of Japanese manufacturing excellence”*. It outlines the different aspects that lead to success. According to him, this was a process which was Japan-specific and impossible to transfer to Western management styles. However, as the lower left side of the figure (highlighted in green) indicates, *people* are one of the four aspects which were identified. This section of the figure shows different factors, which are also named in the previously outlined HRM, HRD and Employee Engagement literature. Besides, Jackson (1997) also reflected on the role of the top management and their management skills as well as their respect for people (top right-hand side of the figure also highlighted in green). Both highlighted areas are also discussed by other authors as part of the importance of leadership with respect to the drivers of Employee Engagement.

Figure 5: “Ishikawa (fishbone) diagram of Japanese manufacturing excellence”



Source: Jackson (1997:xvii)

Recent publications in the field have discussed the change in employees' relationships with their jobs and employers as well as the resulting decrease in Employee Engagement. This change in employee relations and the physical contract between employees and their employers was also discussed by Lewis et al. (2003). According to Bardwick (2008:13), the decrease was caused by the following:

After years of downsizing, outsourcing, and a cavalier corporate attitude that treats employees as costs rather than assets, most of today's workers have concluded that the company no longer values them.

However, the phenomenon itself might have appeared much earlier in a slightly different concept. As mentioned previously, many of the well-known authors of the last few years, such as Guest (2014b), stated that Employee Engagement was first mentioned in academia by William A. Kahn. In Kahn's research from 1990, he discusses different roles at work. Nevertheless, as part of his research he also focused on the "individual difference and situational factors that influence the psychological importance of work to people's identities or self-esteem" (Kahn, 1990:693). As underpinned in newer publications by other authors, the topic of identities and self-esteem strongly reflect on the drivers of Employee Engagement presented earlier in this chapter.

In his work on roles at work, William A. Kahn (1990:694) differentiated engaged people from disengaged people by arguing that engaged individuals "employ and express themselves psychically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance", while on the other hand disengaged people "withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performance". Additionally, Kahn also evaluated the role and effect of organisational influences on people and their engagement. While Kahn's research on the early stages of Employee Engagement started during the 1990s, Welch (2011) went one step back into the past and added an earlier stage of Engagement research to the discussion. According to her, during the "pre-wave", so the time prior to the 1990s, the topic of engagement was already touched upon. This pre-wave was dominated by work from Katz and Robert Louis Kahn published in 1966 on engagement in a more general way. Holbeche and Matthews (2012) also referred to this pre-wave. They stated that the first studies on the topic occurred after World War II and "found links between employee morale and worker speed and reliability in the mass-production economy" (Holbeche and Matthews, 2012:11).

While engagement was discussed in a more general setup during this early stage, the following waves (Wave 1 to 3) defined by Welch (2011), touched on the topic of personal engagement and emerged as part of the precursor of Employee Engagement: *Job* and *organisation engagement*. This finally resulted in Employee Engagement during Wave 3. Welch's findings

on the development of Employee Engagement throughout the centuries are summarised in *Table 2: Employee Engagement evolution waves*.

Table 2: Employee Engagement evolution waves

Evolutionary stage	Date	Indicative publications	Engagement concepts
Pre-wave	Pre 1990	Katz and Kahn (1966)	Engagement in general
Wave 1	1990-1999	Kahn (1990, 1992)	Personal engagement
		Buckingham and Coffman (1999)	Employee engagement
Wave 2	2000-2005	Maslach <i>et al.</i> (2001)	Job burnout/job engagement
		Luthans and Peterson (2002)	Employee engagement
		Harter <i>et al.</i> (2002)	Employee engagement
		Schaufeli <i>et al.</i> (2002) and Schufeli and Bakker (2004)	Job engagement
		May <i>et al.</i> (2004)	Work and employee engagement
		Hewitt Associates LLC (2004)	Employee engagement
Wave 3	2006-2010	Saks (2006)	Employee engagement Job engagement Organisation engagement
		Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2004)	Employee engagement
		Truss <i>et al.</i> (2006)	Employee engagement
		Fleming and Asplund (2007)	Employee engagement
		Macey and Schneider (2008)	Employee engagement
		Schaufeli and Bakker (2010)	Work engagement
		Albrecht (2010)	Employee engagement

Source: Welch (2011:330-331)

By reviewing the details of these waves, it came clear that according to Welch (2011), Employee Engagement was first addressed during the pre-wave, while during Wave 1 the phenomenon's foundation itself was built, including the establishment of further terminologies such as *personal engagement* and finally the term itself. Still, during this wave, Employee Engagement was described by Buckingham and Coffman (1999) for the first time as an independent concept as Welch (2011) pointed out. Nevertheless, it can also be questioned whether it was a new name for the already existing concept of *organisational commitment* (Welch, 2011). However, during this phase the concept itself was still developing, yet it also strongly influenced today's concept of the phenomenon.

While Wave 1 strongly built the foundation of engagement and also Employee Engagement, Wave 2 contained various concepts and theories on engagement in general. The field became broader and the discussion touched on various Employee Engagement related topics such as

job engagement – covering a person's engagement with a particular job, less the engagement with an organisation itself – researched by Maslack et al, Schaufeli and others (Welch, 2011). Besides, *job engagement* and also *work engagement* found their ways into the discussion. Even though *work engagement* forced a more holistic discussion than *job engagement* and thereby became closer to the Employee Engagement discussion, it still described the wider concept of engagement, which also touched upon the employee's organisation as it is known from the emerging Employee Engagement concept. Contrary to *job engagement* and partly to *work engagement*, *organisational engagement* became more prominent during Wave 3, as discussed by authors such as Saks (2006). However, also this discussion did not cover the comprehensive concept of Employee Engagement, as the main focus only covered a person's engagement with the organisation, less so with the job the employee fulfilled. Nevertheless, between 2000 and 2005, the number of contributions to the Employee Engagement discussion increased, too. In 2002, Luthans and Peterson, Harter et al. and May et al. picked up on the topic and enriched the growing discussion amongst others (Welch, 2011).

Finally, from 2006 to 2010, during Wave 3, the Employee Engagement discussion reached full pace and the term's hit rate in literature increased further. It can be argued that the previous century, as a post-World War II century, was still strongly influenced and driven by a much more military leadership style, which Smythe (2013) reflected on. As this leadership style, which was driven by a commanding and controlling way without recognition or rewards towards employees, was out-aged, a style based on motivation and engagement became more prominent. This obsolete leadership construct was finally replaced by a positive approach during Wave 2 (Welch, 2011), which is still found in most concepts of today's Employee Engagement views. Additionally, it was seen as the "positive antithesis to burnout" (Welch, 2011:333) and stated by authors such as Saks to underpin the phenomenon's reliability and meaningfulness. Lately, Wilkinson et al. (2017:432) raised with a focus on the wider perspective on engagement theories "that one type of engagement may be used to reinforce another, or they may occur independently".

At the end of Welch's Wave 3, other stakeholders found interest in the phenomenon itself. In the United Kingdom, the *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development* (CIPD) used Kahn's three dimensions of Employee Engagement: "emotional engagement [...]; cognitive engagement [...]; and physical engagement" (Welch, 2011:333-335) to measure the country's Engagement level. However, also in academia, the topic attracted further interest, while more and more large companies in particular, defined it as a topic of interest. Nowadays, "academics, [...] business and management, psychology and organisational behaviour disciplines" (Welch, 2011:329) are interested in the topic.

In comparison to Welch, Guest (2014a) focused more on the latest development of Employee Engagement and today's discussion on the phenomenon. On the topic of today's Employee Engagement, Cole et al. (2012:1551) stated that lately the:

Interest in employee engagement has grown along with the mounting popularity of the 'positive movement' in organizational behaviour and its emphasis on promoting affirmative rather than merely preventing negative psychological states.

Finally, in recent years, the importance of Employee Engagement has increased dramatically again. According to Bardwick (2008:13), it is a result of organisational decisions, which caused the following:

The reality of mutual codependence between employees and organizations, and the advantages gained from long-term mutual commitment and engagement, have been lost.

Lately, Chapman et al. (2018:539) stated that the positive effects of Employee Engagement lead to further interest in practices. Besides, they assumed that "organizations are likely to mimic the successful employee engagement practices of competing firms", caused by "increasing standardization of HRD practices concerning employee engagement". This perspective will further be discussed as part of the *Discussion Chapter*, in order to reflect on the establishment of Employee Engagement in the participating organisations.

It can be argued that from this growing popularity, additional terminologies emerged which again led to the current confusion caused by the various terminologies which are discussed in connection with Employee Engagement. Therefore, the author discusses the different terminologies mentioned and used connected to Employee Engagement in the upcoming section.

2.4.7 Concepts discussed along Employee Engagement in English literature

As introduced in the previous section, historically various concepts were mentioned from which the Employee Engagement phenomenon has emerged. Many of these concepts are not just a primary stage of Employee Engagement, but also counterparts of the phenomenon with smooth transitions between the different concepts. As presented previously, the definitions of these concepts and the output factors show many similarities, which aggravate a differentiation between the different concepts. It needs to be pointed out that even though these concepts and related terminologies were presented primarily as part of the evolution of Employee Engagement, they are still valid in today's discussion on Employee Engagement and its companions.

Some of these terms were introduced as part of the topic mapping of this chapter and were further outlined in the previous section about the evolution of Employee Engagement, including

job and work engagement, work, job and organisational commitment, job involvement and organizational citizenship behaviour.

As previously stated, work or *job engagement* referred to a person's engagement with his or her job. According to Purcell (2014), it is essential to differentiate between *job engagement* and *organisational engagement*. With respect to *job engagement*, he (Purcell, 2014:239) specified:

Measures used to rate job engagement are remarkably similar to those used to assess job satisfaction, job involvement and job challenge.

Furthermore, he pointed out that none of the related definitions "make[...] any reference to voice, voice systems or voice outcomes" (Purcell, 2014:239), which from his perspective is essential to define *job engagement*. In comparison to *job engagement*, *organisational commitment* is much more well-known and also researched. The idea of *organisational commitment* is that an employee feels strongly linked to his or her organisation and feels part of this organisation. Consequently, an employee with strong *organisational commitment* identifies him/herself with the company's goals, mission and vision, as Purcell (2014) stated in addition.

However, other related concepts such as *employee loyalty* and *employer branding* are also named within the Employee Engagement discussion. While *employee loyalty* is discussed as a partial replication of the phenomenon, *employer branding* seemed to feed Employee Engagement. According to Theurer et al. (2018:155), *employer branding*:

Has been proposed as an effective organizational strategy to differentiate from competitors and gain a competitive advantage in the labor market.

As discussed before, Employee Engagement was used as a tool to retain staff and to ensure a competitive advantage through improved staff performance, which matched Theurer et al.'s view on employer branding. Furthermore, they pointed out that the *employer branding* phenomenon faced a similar challenge as the Employee Engagement phenomenon with respect to the differentiations of the researched phenomenon and its link to other concepts and terminologies.

Meanwhile, *employee loyalty* was discussed within a triangle with service quality and customer satisfaction (Yee et al., 2010), leading to a similar expected outcome as Employee Engagement with respect to the benefits of a higher Employee Engagement level of the workforce. According to Yee et al. (2010:116), "the results lend strong support for the assertion that employee loyalty is an important determinant of firm profitability". Allen and Tüselmann (2009) discussed the link between an employee's voice and the resulting empowerment leading to loyalty. Furthermore, they deliberated on dependencies between employees and

employers and how the voice of the employee varied in its significance depending on the company's reliance on the human resources.

Looking at the various definitions, concepts and terminologies used, it can be argued that the different constructs and phenomena are not just linked, as they refer back to similar demands leading to their constructions thus also aiming for the same outcomes with respect to loyalty, commitment, involvement and willingness or at least similar outcomes.

The next section presents how Employee Engagement is discussed in non-peer reviewed literature.

2.5 The Employee Engagement discussion in business literature

As the previous sections focused on the Employee Engagement phenomenon from an academic perspective, this section presents the author's review of business-related sources. The sources reviewed here targeted practitioners. Concerning the different views of academics and practitioners, Truss et al. (2014:1) stated:

There is an emerging disconnect between the way 'engagement' is regarded within the academic world, where it is broadly viewed as a psychological state, as compared with the practitioner sphere, where engagement is conceptualized as a workforce strategy.

Furthermore, Valentin (2014:476) added that "EE has become big business for consultancies and is promoted by professional bodies and governments". The previously introduced CIPD (2019a:online) provided concepts, strategy development, Employee Engagement measurement and other related topics for practitioners and HR community members on its website, linking back to the previously introduced governmental interest in the phenomenon.

Kenexa (2012b), an IBM company, referred to the following drivers of Employee Engagement: the employee him or herself, the team and the direct manager, the current year and the country, but also the industry and the organisation itself and finally the senior leads of the organisation and the job itself. As the previous literature review of academic publications showed, the drivers of engagement stated by Kenexa (2012b) were also listed by the different commentators from academia. Furthermore, Kenexa and IBM (Weiner et al., 2016:14) link their Employee Engagement approach to their product range, which includes "talent management and social collaboration tools". In addition to the previously stated drivers mentioned by Kenexa (2012b), Ixaris (2013) added that the economic situation of a country also has an impact on Employee Engagement while Kenexa (2012a) stated that the industry sector influences the phenomenon, too.

With respect to the measurement of Employee Engagement, a commonly known and widely used measurement approach for Employee Engagement amongst practitioners was developed by Gallup. However, there are also others, such as the approach of Towers Watson,

which gained the interest of practitioners (Guest, 2014a). Gallup's approach was based on 12 elements, which were defined to measure Employee Engagement (Gallup Inc., 2020a). Willis Towers Watson's (2020:online) focus was also on an Employee Engagement survey, which they sell to organisations to measure the "insights [...] need[ed] to build a high performance culture and exceptional employee experience that drives business results". This increasing number of non-academic sources such as the publications which mainly focused on Employee Engagement measurement, such as Ixaris (2013), Kenexa (2012b) and Gallup (Nink, 2013), underpinned that the topic was also of interest to industry. The willingness of large corporate firms to adjust their product portfolios by Employee Engagement survey and talent management solutions showed that more and more companies sought support, solutions and tools to tackle the Employee Engagement phenomenon.

Kalliath and Kalliath (2012) reflected in their paper on the financial impact of a disengaged workforce and they referred to the Gallup studies amongst others, to outline the costs incurred due to a loss of productivity caused by a disengaged workforce. According to them the lost was "for Australia [...] \$39 billion, for the USA \$350 billion, and for Germany 133.6 billion euros" (Kalliath and Kalliath, 2012:733). The impact on productivity was also underpinned by Busse and Weidner (2020) and according to Chapman et al. (2018:539) "employee engagement initiatives increase motivation by creating a sense of importance and providing voice for the employee".

Additionally, the ongoing discussion about the lack of qualified staff enlivened the importance of Employee Engagement for the industry. The need for trained and motivated employees in a highly competitive environment for organisations was also underpinned by the previously introduced "War for Talent". Welch (2011:328) supported this by stating that "employee engagement is a matter of concern for leaders and managers in organisations across the globe". This growing non-academic interest was also deliberated by Saks and Gruman (2014:155), who stated at the time that Employee Engagement was "one of the most popular topics in management". The different facets of Employee Engagement and the various discussions on the phenomenon itself also show that there are various thoughts surrounding the topic of Employee Engagement related to other fields such as HRM and HRD. As an example, for this cross-topic research, Benefer (2007) discussed the link between human resources, its development and employer branding as well as psychological topics such as motivation and resulting performance. Besides, also the principles of how people engage were discussed by CIPD advisors in the field of engagement and organisational development, such as Baron (2013) and contributed to the field of Employee Engagement literature.

While the number of publications in the field of academia as well as in business is increasing, the level of quality varies strongly. This diversity of sources and the challenge of definition resulted in statements such as Wylegala and Rowe (2017:1) who stated "it could be argued

that the growing Employee Engagement ‘bubble’ may burst due to missing academic foundation.”

The author’s research has also shown that Anglo-US publications related to Employee Engagement partially lack in quality and miss a holistic perspective, while publications on Employee Engagement from and on the German market barely exist.

While the literature review had shown that academic publications strongly focus on the current state of Employee Engagement and its development, some non-peer reviewed literature sources such as WorldatWork (2013) and Ixaris (2013) also reflect on the trends of Employee Engagement and its development in future. They build their arguments on the rising interest in Employee Engagement upon the number of launched recognition programmes in companies, comparing 2011 and 2013 (WorldatWork, 2013).

The following section outlines the literature review findings of Employee Engagement in Germany.

2.6 Literature findings on Employee Engagement in Germany

This section focuses on the establishment of Employee Engagement in Germany. It is designed to tackle the third and final review question *“Why is the phenomenon of Employee Engagement less prominent in Germany in comparison to Anglo-US countries?”*

While the number of English language publications on Employee Engagement is constantly increasing, there is still a lack of literature on Employee Engagement in Germany. This limitation is underpinned by the results of a keyword research on Manchester Metropolitan University’s library website. The aim was to identify publications and material on Employee Engagement in general, as well as publications on Employee Engagement in Germany. *Table 3: Keyword research results based on German Employee Engagement literature* shows the results of the different keyword searches and combinations of keywords. As this study was undertaken over a period of seven years (2013-2020), the author constantly reviewed new literature in the field to reflect on the assumption that the Employee Engagement concept was entering the German market at a later point in time after its appearance and rising interest in Anglo-American countries. Going back to literature “to be updated periodically to take into account the emergence of new evidence” (Booth et al., 2016:21) is very common in systematic review. This ongoing review showed that the number of results continues to grow including international studies on related fields such as work engagement and employee wellbeing in China (Yang et al., 2019), the impact of digital leadership on Employee Engagement (Busse and Weidner, 2020) amongst others. At the same time, the number of studies on Germany with respect to Employee Engagement increased less strongly.

Table 3: Keyword research results based on Germany Employee Engagement literature

Key words	Top results	Access date
Employee Engagement	197,739 journal articles 42,074 magazine articles 41,725 transcriptions 22,426 trade publication articles 837 books & ebooks	24.06.2020
Employee Engagement Definition	73,085 journal articles 5,654 transcriptions 4,790 publications 3,952 magazine articles 326 books & ebooks	24.06.2020
Definition Mitarbeitemotivation Deutschland	36 journal articles 2 magazine articles	25.08.2020
Definition Employee Engagement Deutschland	1,294 books / ebooks 538 journal articles 27 publications	06.02.2020
Employee Engagement Germany	25,184 journal articles 13,399 transcripts 2,182 magazine articles 1,794 publications 50 books & ebooks	23.06.2020
Mitarbeitemotivation Deutschland	97 journal articles 11 magazine articles 6 book reviews 1 publication	24.06.2020
Mitarbeiterengagement Deutschland	8 journal articles 1 magazine article 1 newspaper article	24.06.2020

Source: Developed by the author

The overview confirms Purcell's (2014) statement on the number of definitions published on the Employee Engagement phenomenon. Additionally, it supports the previous comments that the phenomenon has been less discussed with respect to Germany. The publications identified by searching for *Employee Engagement Germany* often referred to a particular industry or a target group from a specific sector or industry.

However, some findings did refer to Germany with a wider view. McCarthy (2005) discussed the German leadership practices in her publication. As part of this discussion, she also referred to Employee Engagement. Besides, Scholz and Böhm (2008) also focused on German Human Resource Management and the post-war development of leadership in Germany. Here, the author identified some areas which Employee Engagement can have an influence upon according to the Anglo-American perspective introduced earlier in this chapter. Besides 'technological environment' and 'political environment', the areas upon which Employee Engagement has a positive impact also include 'sociological environment' and 'market and competitive environment' (Scholz and Böhm, 2008:165-166). However, the authors did not refer to the phenomenon by name. Nevertheless, according to Scholz and Böhm (2008), the

German HR professionals moved from fulfilling an administrative role towards a function driven by management responsibilities. As presented in the *Research Methodology Chapter*, Scholz and Böhm's (2008:167) concept on "Areas of HR management" did not only influence the selection of the interviewees, it also summarised the new responsibilities of HRM, the "Designer" for the internal social partnership", which also links to the key factors of Employee Engagement.

Nevertheless, even though a number of publications on Employee Engagement in Germany were identified, the literature review indicated that there was no historical indication of Employee Engagement in Germany to date. Some studies were identified due to their link to Employee Engagement with respect to topics such as well-being and work engagement (Sonnentag et al., 2010), but the number of sources stays limited.

This lack could be explained by the origin of many leadership theories. Commonly, they have their origin in the United Kingdom or the United States, as McCarthy (2005) stated. The Employee Engagement phenomenon also has its roots in these countries. Therefore, it can be argued that during the early days of Employee Engagement research, a strong focus was on the measurement of work conditions and employees' perception in those countries (Saks and Gruman, 2014), while the work conditions and perception by staff are seen as sensitive topics in Germany. These topics are often even entrusted to workers' councils and unions, making employees less approachable or even shielded from researchers. The *Research Methodology Chapter* outlines how the limitations with respect to access to the required audience influence the research of this study.

Still, some non-academic sources were identified, which referred to the phenomenon in Germany, too. Some non-peer reviewed literature from Ixaris (2013) and Kenexa (2012a) was identified when it comes to Employee Engagement. Besides, also the Gallup Organization (Nink, 2016) discussed the Employee Engagement establishment in Germany. They reflected upon the impact of managers on the Employee Engagement level in Germany in one of their non-peer reviewed literature publications. This interest might be caused by the fact that the German economy is a key financial driver within Europe. According to Eurostat (2013), the German economy is an even more important driver within Europe than the British and French economies. This was also stated by Moran et al. (2011). Nevertheless, this lack of literature left open the question of why there is such a small amount of literature related to Employee Engagement in and from Germany.

Therefore, it needs to be discussed whether German organisations do not require a phenomenon or – practically and more widely spoken – a tool to drive their national economy, or if this assumed lack of interest in Employee Engagement is caused by another bias. One reason could be the missing translation of Employee Engagement into German. Another

assumption is that the Employee Engagement phenomenon has not yet arrived in German organisations. A third reason could be that Employee Engagement is actually already established in Germany, but is referred to by a different name. These different assumptions will be further discussed throughout the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter*, the *Documentary Analysis Chapter* and the *Discussion Chapter*.

Next, the findings on German constructions and views are presented.

2.6.1 Equivalent German constructions and views in Germany

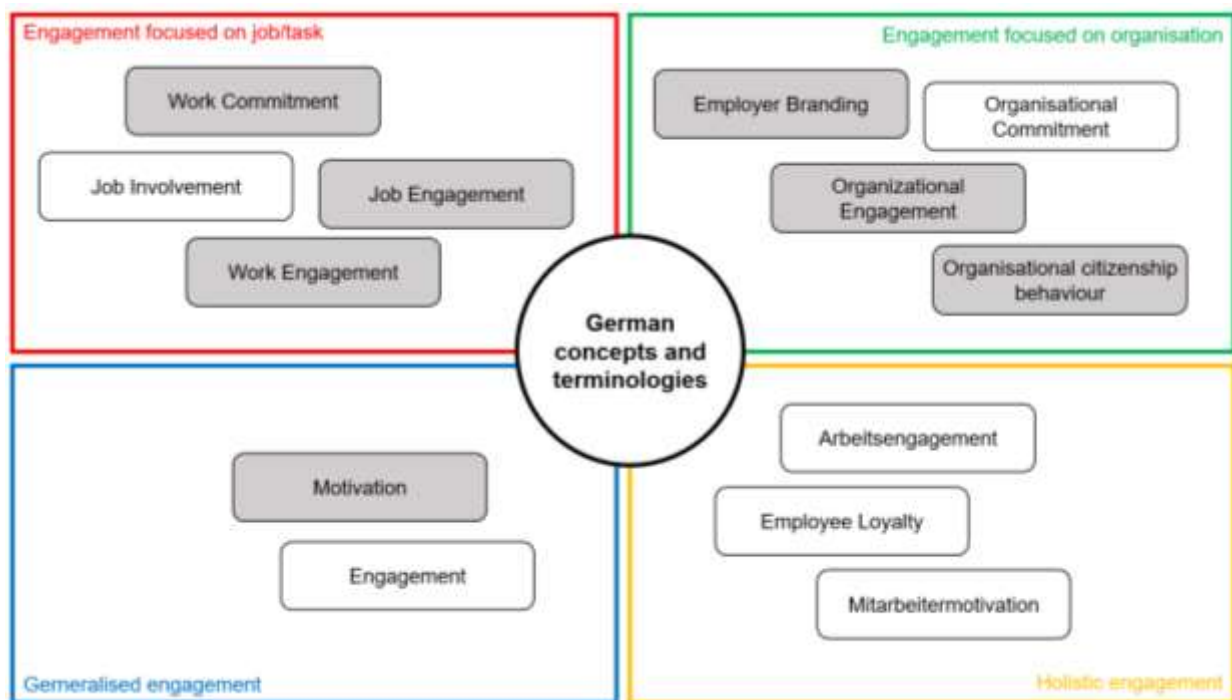
The evaluation of the different Employee Engagement references and the related concepts in English has shown that many different concepts are mentioned in connection with the researched phenomenon. Commonly, they refer to similar drivers and outcomes.

However, besides the missing translation of the phenomenon itself, a certain confusion and misunderstanding might exist with respect to the meaning of *Engagement* in German. Amongst other meanings, *Engagement* stands in English for “the fact of being involved with something” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020a:online), while according to Pons (2020a:online), *Engagement* (French pronunciation) as it is used in Germany, refers to an engagement to get married, an appointment (e.g. “I have a previous engagement”), an act of war or an obligation (e.g. “to break an engagement to do something”). Considering the different meanings of *Engagement* in both languages might also affect the understanding and establishment of Employee Engagement in German organisations. Consequently, it could be argued that Employee Engagement exists in Germany, but is simply constructed or reconstructed in a way which fits the German market and is therefore referred to using a different name.

Along with the review of the conceptualisation and establishment of Employee Engagement in Germany, the author reviewed the different terminologies mentioned in connection with Employee Engagement. The next section presents the different terminologies used and how they are constructed according to literature.

In *Figure 6: German concepts and terminologies*, the author presents the different terminologies which were identified during the first literature review and are therefore included in the previously introduced topic mapping (highlighted in grey).

Figure 6: German concepts and terminologies



Source: Developed by the author

The additional terminologies in English and German were added throughout the progress of the literature review (highlighted in white). As the concepts with English names were already reviewed in the previous sections of this chapter, the next part of this section focuses on the presented German terminologies.

Mitarbeitermotivation

Mitarbeitermotivation is the most commonly used German equivalent of Employee Engagement. Still, the concept of *Mitarbeitermotivation* is rarely discussed. Most sources addressed the need of practitioners by suggesting the implementation of matching activities. Bechtel (2012) reflected on the needs of staff in health-care. He referred to drivers such as appreciation, better work conditions, development possibilities and salaries. Furthermore, he discussed the importance of holistic approaches and the consideration of employees' individual requirements. However, there are publications by Schmidt et al. (2011) on performance-related pay and how it influences the engagement level on an employee. In this case, the focus is on employees in the public sector. Overall, the number of academic publications with less practitioner orientation are not discussed.

Arbeitsengagement

Another Employee Engagement related concept identified during the literature review was Schaufeli and Bakker's (2003:4) *Arbeitsengagement*. It was named as part of their Employee Engagement measurement approach, called the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. As part of their work, they provided a German version of the developed questionnaire, which referred to

the term *Arbeitsengagement*. Their development of the UWES had its origin in the derivative of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, but they concluded that “when an employee is not burned-out, this doesn’t necessarily mean that he or she is engaged in his or her work”.

The next section presents different factors which influence Employee Engagement according to the literature review.

2.7 The influence of other factors on Employee Engagement according to literature

2.7.1 The influence of cross-cultural differences and organisational culture

This section focuses on one of the potential influencing factors on Employee Engagement: cross-cultural differences and organisational culture. As the literature review has shown, various publications are available on the topic of culture and its influence on management and leadership, but also on employees’ behaviour. As Ditta (2020:33) stated, are “cultural risk [...] the most important of all” which organisations need to consider. The meaning and influence of cross-cultural difference on the Employee Engagement phenomenon is also discussed in non-peer reviewed literature, as by Kenexa (2012a) and (2013).

First of all, it needs to be pointed out that the author reflects on two different types of culture: cross-cultural differences and organisational culture and how these two factors influences Employee Engagement according to literature.

The necessity to reflect on culture with respect to the development of Employee Engagement in organisations and societies is supported by Rothmann (2014:171) who stated:

Employee engagement might take different forms around the world. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach will be doomed to failure. It becomes increasingly difficult to determine what the causes of employee engagement are as workforces become more culturally diverse.

However, before reviewing the influence of cross-cultural differences and organisational culture on Employee Engagement in academic literature and with a particular focus on Germany, both influencing factors need to be explained.

Morrison (2006:168) referred to a definition of culture by Terpstra and David:

Culture can be broadly defined as, ‘a learned, shared, compelling, interrelated set of symbols whose meanings provide a set of orientations for members of a society’.

It can be argued that Morrison’s definition applies for both a nation’s culture as well as an organisational culture. Brown (1998:90) added more specification to the meaning of organisational culture and its role with respect to the level of motivation of an employee:

Organisational culture can be an important source of motivation for employees, and thus a significant influence on the efficiency and effectiveness of organisations.

Brown (1998:90) further specified that an organisation's culture allows employees "identification and loyalty, foster beliefs and values than encourage employees to think of themselves as high performers doing worthwhile jobs". This addition already indicated a strong link to Employee Engagement, especially by referring to identification and loyalty, but also by reflecting on performance outcome and the idea of encouragement to go the extra mile. Besides, Huczynski and Buchanan (2007:623) specified the meaning of organisational culture further by putting particular focus on the uniformity and the "values, beliefs, customs, traditions and practices that are shared by an organization's members" and which generations hand over to their successors. Their statement underpinned that culture and Employee Engagement are strongly interlinked and the researched phenomenon also strongly reflects an organisation's values and beliefs. The consideration of organisational culture as one of the influencing factors of Employee Engagement was also supported by Finney (2008).

When reflecting on the German market in particular, McCarty (2005) pointed out that German organisations are embossed by different working styles, less rotation amongst staff and a highly specialised workforce. The difficulties multinational companies face when aiming to establish HRM strategies from British or US companies into German subsidiaries due to local law was also pointed out and discussed by Jain et al. (2010). It can be argued that these factors might be the reason why Employee Engagement is of less interest in Germany, at least until now. Historically, Germany was more fragmented and faced a "lack of central authority" (Scarborough, 1998:211), which might still have an effect on today's management styles. Furthermore, McCarthy (2005) reviewed different leadership styles in Germany and the United Kingdom, focusing in particular on factors such as learning and coaching, subject matter experience and recognition. She identified a limited amount of leadership literature available in Germany. However, according to McCarthy (2005), there are a few key differences which stand out when comparing management styles:

1. German managers are more involved in the day-to-day business, while their UK counterparts are more strategy-oriented,
2. UK managers have a wider view on the industry, which is due to more frequent movement between firms, while German managers have more in-depth knowledge about one industry – learning from other industries is therefore more difficult for German managers,
3. German managers desire control, while UK managers are fine with uncertainty.

These cross-cultural differences between Germany and the United Kingdom also influence an organisation's culture as organisational culture is strongly influenced by its leadership, which has been discussed previously.

When focusing further on the impact of German culture on organisations and their strategies, additional findings were identified. Harris et al. (1999:361) began their reflection on the profile of the Germans from a more generalised perspective. They stated that "Germans have a reputation for being industrious, hard working, reserved, and perhaps even cold" when it comes to attitudes within the work environment. Additional characteristics were added by Scarborough (1998:213) stating "Germans value security, order, structure, and predictability". Nevertheless, in the 8th edition of their book from 2011, the author (Moran et al., 2011:420) relativised these statements by adding: "Germans today are a more diverse people as a result of its immigrants". This change also needs to be considered when reflecting on cultural influence on Employee Engagement. Furthermore, Moran et al. (2011:420) pointed out that "Germans seem[ed] to live to work" and "they are perceived as meticulous and methodical, and precise in their actions (linear thinking)". Besides, Moran et al. (2011:420) also stated that "Germans are not a spontaneous people. Their attitude is to organize the time allotted to its greatest efficiency, rather than wait and see what happens." These different topics also influence an organisation's culture.

Another influence on the direction of human resources and consequently also on Employee Engagement was the establishment and involvement of workers' councils and unions. Hübler (2003) stated that they are a typical 'institution' in most large German organisations. The workers' councils and unions are not only an influential factor on particular topics such as Employee Engagement. They can also influence the nature and direction of an organisation's culture. Traditionally, workers' councils have had a direct influence on the selection of new employees, paid wages, working conditions as well as working time. However, a workers' council, in German "Betriebrat", is at the same time legally obliged to ensure the wellbeing of the organisation at the same time, as Allen (2002) pointed out. It can be argued that their involvement also reaches the setup und establishment of Employee Engagement in organisations. Moran et al. (2011:421) also discussed the involvement of works' councils and their role in organisational management. They state, "the principle of collective good is important in the idea of codetermination (Mitbestimmung [sic])". In addition, they stated (Moran et al., 2011:421):

Codetermination allows for worker input into the management of the firm. Any firm with more than five employees should have a workers' council (Betriebsrat) that represents the employees and help them solve various grievances with the firm's management. There is also a specially chosen labor representative on the management board of the company. All these illustrate an attempt to include a most important part of the

economic structure, the worker. However, in the postindustrial work environment, such approaches are questionable.

Furthermore, they pointed out that workers' unions and councils are strong stakeholder in German organisations with certain power and not comparable with similar concepts in other countries. While unions and works' councils have a direct influence on organisations, Moran et al. (2011:421) also see an advantage in unions' involvement as "codetermination gives management and workers the opportunity to work together to shape or define the firm's goals, objectives, and responsibilities". The resulting impact needs to be considered when looking into the development and the execution of management and leadership styles in Germany. As Storey (1993) pointed out, the influence of trade unions was drastically reduced in British companies after HRM was established and practiced in organisations. According to Allen (2002), the British works' councils rely on less possibilities to codetermine. British works' councils have the possibility to consult and are therefore much more limited in their influence in comparison to their German counterparts. In their discussion on employee voice, Allen and Tüselmann (2009) stated that employees can either share their voice individually or as a collective. Here it can be argued that this leads back to the concept of the German workers' councils, which represent the voice of the workforces.

When looking further into the comparison of the United Kingdom and Germany, Simons (2002:39) explained the difference between both countries historically:

An Englishman once explained differing attitudes between English and Germans in that Germany has historically been surrounded by threatening states, whereas the United Kingdom is surrounded by water. In addition, Germany's centre of gravity has been swinging back and forth from west to east every hundred years or so. The swing is going eastward at the moment. This makes Germans stiff competitors in Central Europe and in many of the potential new entry states to the European Union. Non-German competitors for business in this region may find that success depends on their ability to transact business in German as well as or in preference to English.

Furthermore, Simons (2002:40) also referred to a difference between western and eastern Germany and how the two groups perceive themselves and the other group. Furthermore, he adds, "we must ask if such positive stereotypes, like negative ones, do not get in the way of seeing and profiting from the human resources we actually have at hand." When looking into later literature on the difference between East and West, Moran et al.'s (2011:419) reflected on this partly outdated perspective, stating:

After 40 years of being apart, the two Germanys had developed differing cultural values, mindsets, and customs, in addition to opposing economic and political systems.

However, by the twenty-first century, such divisions have been largely overcome in a united Germany.

Besides, they added that “modern Germans are allergic to militarism, anxious for positive international relations, and willing to aid other people in need” (Moran et al., 2011:419).

When looking into cultural difference and how phenomena such as Employee Engagement can be affected by it, the topic of relationships needs to be considered, too. Hoecklin (1994:44) presented the “cultural differences in the relative size of people’s public and private space”. These two named spaces indicate a person’s willingness to share those with others. According to Hoecklin (1994), Germans are much more private than North Americans, for example. Furthermore, she stated that “globally operating organizations are no longer able to be conditioned by the advantage or limitations of one cultural orientation” (Hoecklin, 1994:77). Today, organisations need to look into a wider range of cultures represented in their companies, which leads to the advantage of gathering “the best from those who are best at it” (Hoecklin, 1994:77).

With respect to certain drivers of Employee Engagement such as recognition, McCarthy (2005) stated that individual recognition is very uncommon in Germany. On the other hand, team recognition is more commonly established. Besides, also concepts such as ‘the open door policy’ are much more widely used by UK employees, while German employees except the approach, but still need defined open door hours to see their responsible manager. Additionally, coaching is also more common in the UK than it is in Germany. This also applies for job rotation. There is also a difference in mentoring approaches. In the UK, mentoring focused much more strongly on the person than on the task as it does in Germany. Besides, Baron (2013) added that training and an improved understanding between managers and employees is less developed in Germany, too. Considering the age of some of the sources, it needs to be discussed if these characteristics still apply to German managers and their workforces and if so, how this affects Employee Engagement in Germany.

Finally, the legal allowance with respect to taxation needs to be mentioned in this discussion. If Employee Engagement includes rewards or incentive elements, the German taxation of benefits in kind applies. Consequently, it increases the level of complexity when it comes to the development and implementation of Employee Engagement solutions. According to Liebig (2013), the application of taxation law is rather complicated, as it includes taxation levels and specific regulations for smaller monthly rewards of less than 44 Euros in value per month. The taxation impact would also need to be analysed to understand whether or not the environment in Germany supports Employee Engagement solutions which include potential costs in any way and if there are any differences to other countries with a more advanced Employee Engagement establishment such as the United Kingdom and the USA.

These different environmental factors indicate how complex the influential factors on Employee Engagement are. Still, there are also other factors, such as different generations at work and how they influence the establishment of Employee Engagement. The findings on their influence are presented in the next section.

2.7.2 How different generations at work view Employee Engagement

Before the author presents the role of language in this study, she summarises her findings on the different generations working in organisation these days. Their views on work and their expectations may influence the social construct of Employee Engagement, too.

In 2020, the internet is full of articles, blogs and all kinds of sources on how to manage the different generations, including Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, also known as Millennials, which companies employ these days. Here, employers and human resources managers may find suggestions how the new generation of employees entering the market is motivated differently. Additionally, readers find, for example, comparisons on how the engagement level of previous generations was increased with financial rewards or other benefits such as a company car, while the new generation of employees values a better work-life-balance instead (Lorenz, 2019:online). About a century ago, Bardwick (2008:67) also reflected on the new workforce which organisations had to face:

Many of our young people are significantly different from their elders. Young boomers (aged 43 to 52 in 2007), GenerationX (25-42), and GenerationY (seven to 26) are different because they were not affected by the great economic depression.

Even though Bardwick's statement has already aged, the important point made in the last part of the statement is still valid. Today, her statement could even be extended to include the youngest group of employees: Generation Z, whose eldest have already joined working live or will do so soon. This new generation seeks knowledge and interactions with their superiors (McDaniel, 2018:online), which at the time was also supported by Bardwick (2008:68), who referred to the "new views" of younger generations on their superiors and pointed out that "younger employees view managers largely as mentors rather than as bosses". Again, this will influence the way in which leadership is established in organisations. Still, with their previously introduced definition of organisational culture, Huczynski and Buchanan (2007) also referred to the heritage of culture, which is passed from one generation to the next. Even though a company's culture is passed on, new employees will also bring in new ideas and cause change. This idea is also supported by Bardwick (2008:67-68), who reflected on the "new views" brought into an organisation seeking organisations' understanding for their non-work commitments, request flexibility and the anticipation of a better work-life-balance.

In his book "Practices for engaging the 21st century workforce: challenges of talent management in a changing workplace", William G. Castellano (2013) reflected on the

evolutional changes in work environment as well. According to him (Castellano, 2013:52), today's employees differ from former generations:

The 21st century workforce is older, more diverse, more technologically savvy, and more mobile than ever before. Organizations are faced with managing multiple generations of workers who have different values and needs. In addition, there are more dual-income couples and working parents who pose many unique challenges for companies. And though there are many highly talented workers, there are huge disparities in educational attainment at a time when the demand for human intellectual capital is outpacing the supply. Lastly, there is a growing number of nontraditional workers – contract human capital – which includes temporary employees, consultants, independent contractors, as well as employees of outsource and offshore businesses and strategic partnerships.

Bardwick (2008) suggested that organisations should address their employees individually to increase Employee Engagement. She saw an advantage in this targeted approach while she also stated that for younger generations individualism is crucial and they expect to be treated individually. Furthermore, she (Bardwick, 2008:100) stated:

Every organization needs to customize its offerings according to its values and the values of the workers it wants to hire and retain.

This change in workforces retrieves different challenges for a phenomenon such as Employee Engagement, as it even further increases the level of complexity. The missing consistency in the definition leads to a lack of orientation, while at the same time it allows organisations to reconstruct the phenomenon in a way which suits their company and its employees in the best possible way. Consequently, organisations need to adjust their approaches to ensure that they address the different employee groups in the best possible way and ensure the most possible coverage for their diverse workforce, by not only considering cultural differences, but also generational differences.

Before providing an overview of the literature review findings, the author reflects on the impact of language in the next section.

2.7.3 The role of language

When referring to the establishment of Employee Engagement in cross-cultural studies, language and its role as well as its potential influence also needs to be considered. Therefore, the author reflects on this essential factor in this section.

On the topic of language in cross-cultural studies, Ciuk et al. (2019:927) stated:

Translation not only enables communication and knowledge flows across language barriers, but is a culturally and politically significant activity, which involved the enactment of power and a channel of control.

Considering this statement with respect to the Employee Engagement phenomenon, the question occurs how something such as Employee Engagement with no direct translation into the target language, here German, can be established in a mature country with respect to its economic role and social setup within the country but also within the world? Edwards and Fuchs (2018:654) discussed the “inundation of English” in Germany, which has been criticised in various forums. The results of their quantitative study showed that the “the threat and infiltration of English often heard in the media are not necessarily shared by large swathes of the general public” (Edwards and Fuchs, 2018:664). Furthermore, the study indicated that the national language was still weighted as more important by the participants. It needs to be pointed out that the mass media in Germany also publish in German and may influence participants’ perception, in comparison to other countries (here the Netherlands), where English is of more importance within “education, business and the media than in Germany” (Edwards and Fuchs, 2018:665). This finding indicates that Germans might be less willing or even less dependent on a concept such as Employee Engagement, when focusing only on its English name. Therefore, this study will also reflect on the reconstruction of the phenomenon itself in German organisations, but also on the terminologies and wordings used within the participating organisations.

Furthermore, Rugimbana and Nwankwo (2003) reflected on the ‘language of trust’, which is used as an example here to outline the differences in language which may also affect this study. When reflecting on ‘trust’, the consideration of its meaning varies in different languages. Such variances in the language also need to be considered when looking into the different Employee Engagement terminologies and their meanings, but also with respect to its conceptualisation. As previously presented, Schneider et al. (2010) saw a strong influence of trust upon Employee Engagement. Considering the different understandings of trust caused by the use of different languages means that its conceptualisation by different target groups also varies. Therefore, the notions used by the participants to describe Employee Engagement, its drivers and outcomes as well as their meaning in German, but also in English need to be analysed in detail. One very prominent example from the interviews was the usage of the German word “binden”. According to Pons (2020b:online), there are different meanings for this German word. In the context of the interviews, the word could have been used in two ways: first, emotionally “to tie sb to sth”, for example an employee to the company or, second, physically “to bind sth [with/by means of sth]”. While in German both usages would be acceptable to refer to a similar meaning, the translation into English could either indicate a positive or a negative perception.

As outlined previously, this study follows a qualitative approach. However, independent from the research approach, the author looked into the effects of cultural differences on research. A publication by Hoecklin from 1994 was reviewed, even though her work was based on quantitative research, less on qualitative research. Nevertheless, some of the statements do also apply for qualitative research. Hoecklin (1994:105) states “people from different cultures tend to answer in consistently different ways on standardized questionnaires”. The author of this study executed in-depth interviews, which were based on an interview guideline including a list of German questions addressed to German-speaking participants. This applied to all but two participants, who requested to conduct the interviews in English as they were non-German speaking.

According to Hoecklin (1994:105):

Germans tend to be overly conservative, marking average or below average even if they have high opinions of a product or think favourably about a particular question.

It needs to be considered that this German habit may also influence the interviewees’ answers and the comparison between the major group of German participants and the two English interviews.

At the same time, it needs to be taken into account that HRM language itself, to which Employee Engagement belongs, has also changed. As Keenoy (1997:835) stated:

In the subsequent attempts to identify the facticity of HRM, our understanding of the ‘language’ of HRMism seems to have been confounded by the ideological reconfiguration of the employment relationship and the conceptual revisioning of work relations.

Therefore, the linguistic challenge needs to be considered throughout the different steps of the study.

Before continuing with the *Research Methodology Chapter*, the key findings of the literature review are presented.

2.8 Overview of the chapter and the need for this study

This chapter summarises the key findings in connection with the three review questions developed for this research:

1. How do commentators in Anglo-US countries define the phenomenon of Employee Engagement?
2. How did the phenomenon of Employee Engagement develop in Anglo-American countries?
3. Why is the phenomenon of Employee Engagement less prominent in Germany in comparison to Anglo-US countries?”

The review of the Anglo-US commentators' definition of Employee Engagement has shown that most researchers refer to the same sources when it comes to the defining the phenomenon. The definition most commonly used is Kahn's (1990) view on Employee Engagement. Most of the reviewed sources did not refer to one standardised definition of Employee Engagement, but instead established their own definition of the phenomenon, which results in confusion and missing preciseness. This leads to a gap in the foundation of some studies, which focused on elements of Employee Engagement, which were too specific, such as its impact on performance and financial output, national engagement levels etc., instead of the understanding and definition itself. At the same time, the literature review showed that many of the introduced drivers and output factors of Employee Engagement are used to define the phenomenon. This causes further issues with respect to the precision of it. Besides, other concepts which are commonly mentioned in connection with Employee Engagement were reviewed such as work or job engagement, organisational citizenship behaviour, as well as German equivalents such as *Mitarbeitermotivation*. At the same time, these concepts were also discussed as the ancestors of the phenomenon.

The phenomenon developed from the need to tackle the emerging challenges at work. It has its origin the field of Human Resource Management and Human Resource Development and is discussed as one of the initiatives to reinforce the more complex and strategic tasks of the new HRM and HRD. This change is historically driven by globalisation, international competition and other factors that have influenced organisations' operations and consequently affected people's relationship to their employers due to dismissals and more competitive environment. It finally resulted in an overall lack of engagement. Furthermore, the review showed that there are many different ancestors or Employee Engagement, which were discussed amongst the different decades and were developed to tackle the particular challenges of those decades. The reconstruction of the phenomenon throughout the centuries, the various definitions and the different views identified in literature indicate that the construction of the phenomenon is strongly driven by individuals' views and the current requirements that economies, organisations and employers have to face.

Finally, different factors were considered to identify why the phenomenon itself is less prominent in Germany. As shown, the number of publications on Employee Engagement in German is limited. Most sources identified referred to particular industries or sectors and provided approaches and activities to increase Employee Engagement within a specific target group. Language and the maturity of the German economy were identified as two of the reasons why the phenomenon is less prominent in Germany. In particular, the missing translation was identified as one reason why it is less prominent in Germany. The review of the German equivalents such as *Mitarbeitermotivation* provided additional insights on the establishment of the concept within Germany. Still, the findings were rather limited.

Additionally, other factors such as the workers' councils, job security and economic differences were presented, which might also have an effect on Employee Engagement and the need to establish it in German organisations. However, the incomplete literature in the field still leaves a gap with respect to the phenomenon's understanding and establishment within German organisations.

This study continues with the *Research Methodology Chapter*.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Aim and purpose of the chapter

As the literature review shows, the number of academic German sources is limited. Consequently, an in-depth analysis of the Employee Engagement phenomenon in Germany, in particular, how it is defined, established and driven, is required. The resulting empirical research will help to tackle the research objectives.

This chapter outlines the philosophical approach initiated to respond to the research questions as well as to its objectives. Therefore, the epistemological and ontological approaches taken are discussed in this chapter. Besides, it reflects on the social constructionist approach applied in this study.

Along with outlining the initial research position and the discussion of the ontological and epistemological approaches, the chapter reflects on the applied qualitative research which combines in-depth interviews with secondary data from textual analysis, making it a multiple method approach. In addition, it outlines the analysis techniques which were applied step by step. Finally, the chapter considers data quality and the linguistic impact before reflecting on reliability, validity and ethics and lastly reviewing the limitations of the research.

3.2 Initial research position

Originally, a quantitative research was identified to tackle the research gap on Employee Engagement in Germany. Throughout the early stages of the research, the author developed the idea further, combining a quantitative and qualitative study, which resulted in a mixed method approach.

When the mixed method approach was further developed, issues with respect to access to the required audiences for the research came up and caused significant limitations. At the time, the author wanted to combine in-depth interviews with human resources (HR) managers and quantitative data gathered by means of a survey executed amongst the workforces of the respective managers' employers. To gather feedback on the research design, the author addressed various HR decision makers in organisations to discuss the intension of executing a mixed method approach. As the mixed method approach combines qualitative and quantitative research throughout the entire research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998) and therefore also links the advantages of both approaches, the author expected in-depth findings from the combination. However, the challenges faced were predominantly related to the required approval of the workers' council or unions which are usually established in larger organisations. The discussion also showed that only internal survey tools, which were already approved by the workers' council, would be allowed to execute a survey amongst the workforce. The access to these internal tools is prohibited for external parties including researchers. Executing the survey on a paper-pencil-basis would not only have increased the

length of the study, but would also have resulted in huge costs and was therefore not manageable for the author. Therefore, the encapsulated workers' council, the organisational requirements and the sensitivity of the topic would have caused too many limitations and created effort with respect to time and cost without any guarantee of gaining individual employees' commitment to participate.

Additionally, the author executed a first pilot study including a quantitative survey within the workforce to test her questionnaire design. The findings from this research showed unexpected results which might have been caused by the sample size or the complexity of the research topic.

As Hines (2000:7) stated:

It is essential to have a clear understanding of the philosophical basis for the research strategy selected and this helps to provide the researcher with clarification, focus and consistency of research design.

Both of the issues described above caused that the author to re-develop her research approach. In the result was today's qualitative approach including the execution of in-depth semi-structured interviews. Additional insights were added through a textual analysis of related webpages, publications and online information. The chosen qualitative approach ensures that the Employee Engagement phenomenon is explored and analysed in detail. This process was crucial for the development process of the research and helped to identify the most appropriate direction for this study.

The importance of this step is underpinned by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) stating that the analysis of different philosophies is necessary to identify the right approach for a research, thus helping to design the further research strategy.

The next section will provide further insights into qualitative research, its foundation and advantages.

3.3 Research method: The foundation of qualitative research

Lately, qualitative research has become more important in academia. According to Blaikie (1993:19), qualitative research is often found today "in social theories" and "presents a statement about reality and social life" (Holliday, 2008:1). Originally, anthropology and sociology established the foundation of qualitative research. It "works through ongoing dialogue with different social worlds" (Holliday, 2008:7), which matches Kuhn's original development purpose of qualitative research in 1962: to discover the scientific process in practice (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

Qualitative research is driven by "how" and "what" questions (Creswell, 2013:17). It is "an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and [...] counter disciplinary [sic] field" (Joubish et al.,

2011:2083). Furthermore, review of relevant literature shows that it is frequently presented in contrast to quantitative research.

According to Bryman and Bell (2003:280), qualitative research has the following features:

An epistemological position described as interpretivist, meaning that, in contrast to the adoption of a natural scientific model in quantitative research, the stress is on the understanding of the social world by its participants; and

an ontological position described as constructionist, which implies that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena 'out there' and separate from those involved in its construction.

These features are also reflected in this study, as the author is seeking to understand the phenomenon of Employee Engagement within a certain social group. Furthermore, the author reflects on Employee Engagement as a social construction created by society.

Table 4: Comparing quantitative and qualitative research provides an overview of qualitative and quantitative approaches, comparing their key elements and philosophies. The table shows the interpretive approach, indicated through the attitude of exploring and combining to generate meaningful results, which is a typical qualitative approach (Holliday, 2008).

Table 4: Comparing quantitative and qualitative research

	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Activities	<p>Counts occurrences across a large population</p> <p>Uses statistics and replicability to validate generalisation from survey samples and experiments</p> <p>Attempts to reduce contaminating social variables</p>	<p>Looks deep into the quality of social life</p> <p>Locates the study within particular settings which: provide opportunities for exploring all possible social variables and setting manageable boundaries</p> <p>Initial foray into the social setting leads to further, more informed exploration as themes and focuses emerge</p>
Beliefs	<p>Conviction about what it is important to look for</p> <p>Confidence in established research instruments</p> <p>Reality is not so problematic if the research instruments are adequate and conclusive results are feasible</p>	<p>Conviction that what it is important to look for will emerge</p> <p>Confidence in an ability to devise research procedures to fit the situation and the nature of the people in it, as they are revealed</p> <p>Reality contains mysteries to which the research must submit, and can do no more than interpret</p>

Steps	<p>First decide the research focus (e.g. testing a specific hypothesis)</p> <p>Then devise and pilot research instruments (e.g. survey questionnaire or experiment)</p> <p>Then go into the field</p>	<p>Decide the subject is interesting (e.g. in its own right, or because it represents an area of interest)</p> <p>Go into the field to see what is going on</p> <p>Let focus and themes emerge</p> <p>Devise research instruments during process (e.g. observation or interview)</p>
Rigour	Disciplines application of established rules for statistics, experiment and survey design	Principled development of research strategy to suit the scenario being studied as it is revealed

Source: Holliday (2008:6)

According to Holliday (2008), the qualitative approach has a high level of acceptance, as it is less 'misused' in mainstream media. As Hammersley (2013) states, qualitative research is enhanced and complex, thus common definitions consequently vary. Nevertheless, they all refer to certain characteristics of the term. Joubish et al. (2011:2082) adds that qualitative research methods follow a holistic approach. This is also underpinned by Creswell's (2013:15) definition:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

At the same time, other terminology is available to define qualitative research. Historically, qualitative research became popular during the strongly quantitative dominated 1960s and the research approach itself was founded. It focuses on observing and interpretation of real-life cases and their audiences (Hammersley, 2013).

To identify the most adequate qualitative research approach for this study, different qualitative approaches were reviewed. *Table 5: Overview of qualitative approaches* describes the core characteristics as well as advantages and disadvantages of four qualitative approaches. These four approaches were defined by the author as the most relevant approaches. Additional styles such as narrative studies, interpretivism and sense making were not included.

Table 5: Overview of qualitative approaches

Qualitative approach	Description	In practice	Advantages
Case study research	"Is an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case (or multiple cases) over time through	Explores "a program, an event, an activity, or individuals" and can be applied on different formats	"Allow investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-

	detailed, in-depth collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context.” (Creswell, 1997:61).	“observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports” (Creswell, 1997:61). Choose cases which can enlighten the research project (Yin, 2009).	life events” (Yin, 2009:4).
Ethno-graphic	According to Van Maanen (1988:1) it is “written representation of a culture” and involves the study of “values, behaviors, beliefs, and language” (Creswell, 2013:90).	Is based on “snap-shot observations and limited participatory interaction” (Goulding, 2005:295). It involves more participants than the 20 participants in grounded theory study (Creswell, 2013).	It includes the evaluation of day-to-day live (Creswell, 2013).
Pheno-menology	“Phenomenological approach offers researchers’ a repertoire of possibilities with potential to understand information systems” (Hines, 2012:253).	It describes participants’ experience with a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).	It reflects on a cluster of summaries and feedback based on participants’ experience (Creswell, 2013), which provides real-life insights into the phenomenon.
Grounded theory study	“Is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory” and creates a theory of a “process, an action, or an interaction” (Creswell, 2013:83).	Commonly known for its large number of interviews (Creswell, 2013).	It allows the research to develop “appropriate extant theories” (Goulding, 2005:296).

Source: Developed by the author

The review shows that authors such as Denzin and Lincoln as well as Miles and Huberman used qualitative approaches including case studies, ethnography, phenomenology, interpretivism and grounded theory in social sciences for their research (Creswell, 2013). To explore the most suitable qualitative research approach from this range, the author reviewed various frameworks for this study and discussed ideas and beliefs by applying philosophical approaches (Creswell, 2013). At that time, the author looked into *Grounded Theory* and *Phenomenology* which were considered as a potential approach for this study. These qualitative approaches are well known in human sciences. According to Moustakas, “the focus initially is on unravelling the elements of experience” (Moustakas, 2011:4). The main characteristic of the grounded theory approach is that the theory is developed during the research itself, including the data collection process. This finally results in propositions and concepts (Moustakas, 2011:4). Grounded theory was finally dismissed as the author did not develop a new theory from scratch and did not start from a blank page perspective due to the existing knowledge level and her reflection on the existing Employee Engagement frameworks.

During this step, the author moved on to a phenomenological study. She identified that phenomenology would be most adequate and significant for this organisational and management study. This was also influenced by the author's experience with the phenomenon and the extensive literature review findings. Based on the findings collected during the early stage of the literature review, the research concept was developed. This process is commonly known in the empirical phenomenological approach. Moustakas (2011:9) states:

The human scientist determines the underlying structures of an experience by interpreting the originally given descriptions of the situation in which the experience occurs.

Additionally, the analysis of the findings was mainly based on individual and clustered real-life insights concerning the phenomenon.

The next section outlines how phenomenology is applied.

3.4 Research philosophy: Applying phenomenology

When referring to Employee Engagement in this research, the author refers to the term as a phenomenon. However, before applying the term *phenomenology* to this study, it needs to be defined.

As Creswell (2013:76) states:

Phenomenologists [are] focus[ed] on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (e.g., grief is universally experienced).

Lewis and Staehler (2010) describe phenomenology as the science or biology of a phenomenon. "Van Manen defines a phenomenon according to (Creswell, 2013) as a human experience, which researchers tackle and analyse with "what" and "how" people experience. It is often applied in social sciences, was established by Edmund Husserl and has been influenced by others such as Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty (Creswell, 2013). Blaikie (1993:20) adds that "social phenomena are more complex than natural phenomena" and points out (Blaikie, 1993:36):

The study of social phenomena, on the other hand, requires an understanding of the social world which people have constructed and which they reproduce through their continuing activities.

For his phenomenology, Husserl created the "notion of epochē" (M. Lewis and Staehler, 2010:11), but he redefined his misleading approach again and again which was designed to allow different world perspectives. Still, according to Hines (2012:255) the establishment of phenomenology is also influenced by Aristotle's 'posterior analytics, Bacon, Hume and Hegel and also by "Marx's false consciousness action, [and] Brentano's psychology". Additionally, Blaikie (1993:180) refers to the "difference between first- and second-order constructs". In this

study, the author looks into the explanation of social phenomena, which is defined as a second-order construct according to Blaikie (1993:180), as the author has “taken-for-granted social scientific stock of knowledge”.

It is pointed out that the field of social sciences is one in which phenomenology is commonly used (Creswell, 2013), for example within educational research. It can be argued that the establishment of Employee Engagement is linked to educational research along with management and leadership. There are different types of phenomenology which can be applied:

- *Hermeneutic phenomenology*: based on life experience;
- *Empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology*: based on the researcher's interpretations.

Empirically, the purpose of this work is to comprehend the understanding of Employee Engagement in large organisations in Germany. As a result of the lack of German literature and the given number of English definitions, the research will be based on English-speaking literature and applied to Germany. Throughout the development of the research, the author evaluated different approaches regarding their suitability for this work.

According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological approach requires a sample of three or four to ten or 15 individuals who have had experience with the phenomenon. The author approached decision makers who were mainly working in human resources or had been closely involved in HR topics such as consultants or general managers.

This hermeneutic approach focussed on real life experience, was adopted to help the author to gather detailed insights on the understanding of Employee Engagement. As Little (1991:69) states:

To improve a satisfactory analysis of a given social phenomenon, it is necessary to arrive at an interpretation of the meanings that agents within that culture assign to their actions and social relations. Social science is therefore unavoidably hermeneutical, and those social sciences that fail to provide such understanding are fundamentally misdirected.

Von Wright (1993:11) adds that this perspective is strongly driven by German philosophers, rejecting “methodological monism of positivism and refuse to view the pattern set by the exact natural sciences”. Besides, von Wright (1993:11) states that hermeneutical approaches “want to grasp the individual and unique features of their objects”.

These insights are relevant to fulfil the overall research aim of understanding the role and establishment of the Employee Engagement phenomenon or one of its counterparts in Germany. In addition, the research will contribute further knowledge to the German

management and leadership arena. As Hines (2000) stated, data gathering is an advantage of the phenomenological paradigm.

The following section outlines the position of a social constructivist.

3.4.1 Social constructionism

During the development of the research, the author reflected on the study mainly from an ontological “what is the nature of “reality”?” and epistemological perspective “what is the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)?” (Guba, 1990:18). While epistemology is “the study of knowledge and justified belief” (Steup, 2013:online) which questions the world’s nature (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012), ontology, in comparison, focuses on the “nature of reality and existence” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012:17) and social work (Hammersley, 2013:21). Both perspectives impacted the study and led to the adoption of a social constructionist approach.

(Social) constructionism is a framework which has recently been developed. It was established during the second half of the 1900s by Berger and Luckman, Watzlawick and Shotter. According to Gergen and Gergen (2004:8) it focus on the general idea of the world’s construction. The framework was mainly established as a reaction to the social sciences positivism, as it argues that reality is a “social constructed and given meaning by people” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012:23).

From the author’s perspective, the Employee Engagement phenomenon is a constructed reality. It was built by humans, naming an expected output in work performance and thereby creating a social construct and finally a phenomenon. This research helps to review the Employee Engagement phenomenon’s establishment in different contexts, including the more advanced establishment in an Anglo-American surrounding, mostly presented by the findings of the literature review, while the study itself presents the social construction of Employee Engagement in German organisations – independent from the terminology used.

The interviewees outlined how they defined Employee Engagement with respect to their individual perception, but also how their employers’ own construction of the Employee Engagement phenomenon influenced the individual’s perception and definition. Besides, the interviewees reflected on the different drivers which influence Employee Engagement such as management teams, direct managers and company culture and its industry. Additionally, the author presents how the establishment of Employee Engagement in organisations can be designed and how it will influence the behaviour of an individual employee.

Previous research, in particular on the level of Employee Engagement in countries or organisations, was strongly impacted by evitable output factors without considering in detail how the understanding of Employee Engagement and missing translations might influence the

significance of these studies. Additionally, most of these studies were executed in a business environment, not considering the significant influence of linguistics.

Nevertheless, the author's research also includes elements of an interpretivist approach which is typical for qualitative research. For example, Husserl applied a phenomenology approach which also followed a strong interpretivist approach (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2011).

In the following section the applied multiple method approach as a data collection method is introduced.

3.5 Data collection method: Multiple method approach

To underpin the primary data findings gathered through in-depth interviews, the author added insights collected from the review of different online channels and publications. This documentary data collection is used to underpin the primary findings.

The aim of the multiple method approach was to gather detailed insights in order to answer the previously introduced research questions of the study:

RQ 1: How is Employee Engagement understood and established in large organisations in Germany with respect to its terminology, definition, drivers and expected output?

RQ 2: How is the concept of Employee Engagement viewed as supporting German businesses in comparison to its origin in the Anglo-US context?

RQ 3: How do cultural differences influence the Employee Engagement construct in Germany?

In the following sections, the primary and secondary data collections are presented, starting with in-depth interviews.

3.5.1 In-depth interviews

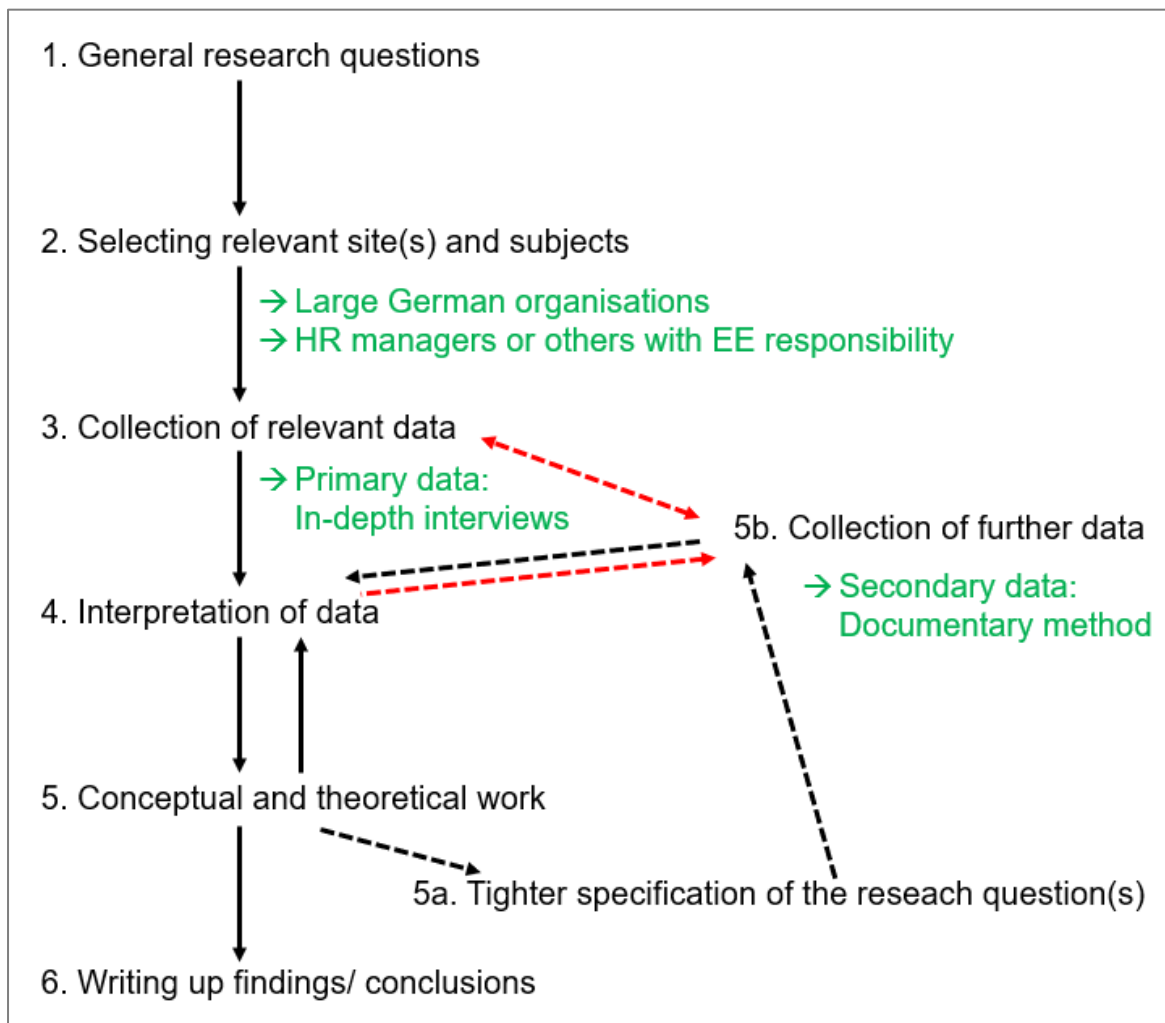
In this section, the author presents how she made use of in-depth interviews as a source of qualitative data.

According to Silverman (2014:169), "one of the strengths of qualitative research is its ability to access directly what happens in the world". Furthermore, he points out that it "examine[s] what people actually do in real life rather than asking them to comment upon it". Interviews are one tool to examine people's real lives.

For the implementation of qualitative research, the author followed Bryman and Bell's (2003:283) approach which is shown in *Figure 7: "An outline of the main steps of qualitative research"*. In addition, the author added details of the execution of her study to the figure, highlighted in green, including the primary data collection via in-depth interviews and the collection of further data, here secondary data, analysed using a documentary method. Besides, as she had already started with the 'collection of further data' during the third step

and went back and forth between the two data sources during Steps 3 and 4, she outlined this accordingly in the overview. The resulting new links are marked in red.

Figure 7: “An outline of the main steps of qualitative research”



Source: Based on Bryman and Bell's (2003:283)

Furthermore, in this section, the author reflects particularly on the use of in-depth interviews to collect the primary data for this study ("3. Collection of relevant data"). According to Bryman and Bell (2003:343) semi-structured interviews are commonly used when a researcher aims to understand "events, patterns, and forms of behaviour" from an interviewee's point of view. Denscombe (1998:113) adds that semi-structured interviews allow the research to make use of the following advantages:

To be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interview develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher.

Furthermore, Denscombe (1998) states that semi-structured interview questions, which were mainly applied by the author, are open ended. Only the questions on the impact of country of

origin and establishment of an Employee Engagement strategy within the interviewee's organisation were closed questions. This data was analysed as part of the demographic information concerning the interviewees' organisations.

When carrying out semi-structured interviews, the interviewer followed Bryman and Bell's (2003:343) approach by relying on "a list of questions on fairly specific topics". Furthermore, the order of questions can be addressed flexibly during the interview and the interviewer has the possibility to go back and "pick[...] up on things said by interviewees", still aiming to address all questions previously defined (Bryman and Bell, 2003:343). The interviews in this study followed this approach, too. However, in most cases, the researcher kept the interview questions in the order she had predefined. In some cases, interviewees already answered the next questions when they were answering the previous question.

According to Bryman and Bell (2003:346), researchers in the field of business and management are facing particular challenges when it comes to qualitative interviews:

Interviewing managers often raises specific issues; the status and power held, particularly at a senior level, mean that gaining access to this group of people can be extremely difficult, and arranging a mutually convenient time in which to conduct an interview, which may last several hours, even more so. Given the number of outside requests for information and assistance that most managers receive, it is particularly important to structure a request for interview in a way that is most likely to lead to a favourable response.

These challenges were also experienced by the researcher of this study and are further addressed in the 'primary data collection' section of the *Research Methodology Chapter* including the pilot study and a detailed overview on the sample selection, how the author approached the interviewees and the interview conduction itself. Nevertheless, interviews are the most commonly used method in qualitative research (Silverman, 2014).

Next, the author presents the importance of an interview guide.

3.5.1.1 The interview guide

Semi-structured interviews are executed by using a predefined interview guide. Instead of a set list of questions, the interview guide includes a range of questions which the author asked during the interviews without sticking to a predefined list of questions.

When developing the interview guide, the author followed Bryman and Bell's (2003) preparation guidelines:

- Predefining the "order on the topic questions" (Bryman and Bell, 2003:349), but keep it flexible to adjust the order in case needed
- Developing the interview questions to tackle the research question

- Phrasing the questions so they match the target group
- Avoiding creating questions which influence the interviewee
- Including demographic questions concerning the interviewee and his/her organisation to ensure better classification of the statements made during the interview

The author considered these recommendations when developing the questions and the interview guide for this study. Besides a good interview guide, the interviewer effect also needs to be considered and is presented in the next section.

3.5.1.2 Interviewer Effect

Previously, the author referred to the topic of 'status and power' when it comes to the interviewees. In this section, the author will reflect on the influence of the interviewer on the study.

According to Denscombe (1998:116), "people respond differently depending on how they perceive the person asking the questions". This interviewer effect can be influenced by the interviewer's 'sex', 'age' and 'ethnic origins'. Consequently, "the data, in other words, are affected by the personal identity of the researcher" (Denscombe, 1998:116).

Denscombe's (1998:116) identified factors on 'age gap' between interviewee and interviewer and the 'educational qualification' as well as the 'professional expertise' needed to be considered in particular. However, during the interviews the author identified that due to the interviewee's reactions the 'educational qualification' with respect to language skills might cause some issues with I05, I16 and I17. However, the researcher reacted to this by staying neutral, but encouraging towards the participants to ensure their willingness to share their perspective without feeling intimidated by the aspect of language. At the same time, she avoided any personal involvement to prevent a negative effect on the data quality, which an important task to the interviewer according to Denscombe (1998).

Bryman and Bell (2003:120) point out that telephone interviews are "less common in business research". However, telephone interviews may influence the interviewer effect less strongly than personal interviews. In the case of personal interviews, "respondents' replies are sometimes affected by characteristics of the interviewer" (Bryman and Bell, 2003:120).

Therefore, it is important that the interviewer stays 'neutral' and 'non-committal', remaining passive during the interviews (Denscombe, 1998).

In the next section, the author introduces the documentary method which was used along with the in-depth interviews as part of this study.

3.5.2 Documentary method

During the interviews, some of the participants referred to their internal communication channels and how their organisations had established Employee Engagement instruments.

Furthermore, their feedback indicated that there was a lot of rich data available, which had been published by the interviewees' employers on their own Employee Engagement strategy. This data would provide additional knowledge on the understanding of Employee Engagement in Germany, especially when it comes to the social construction of the phenomenon and the role of the organisation within its construction. To support the data gathered from the interviews, the author decided that further data would be beneficial to underpin the findings with additional insights coming from secondary research. By doing so, the author applied "triangulation with other methods" as Denscombe (1998:112) states, which means the author added findings gathered from another method – here the documentary analysis – to the research. Guba (1981:85) refers to Denzin when explaining data triangulation and adds the following definition:

Triangulation, whereby a variety of data sources, different investigators, different perspective (theories), and different methods are pitted against one another in order to cross-check data and interpretations.

The documentary method used is introduced in this section.

The researcher identified different sources including employees' feedback indicating how Employee Engagement was driven in the organisations, which she also considered as an essential source for the study. As Denscombe (1998:170) points out documentary research relies on sources which have been produced for a different purpose and are less "an objective picture of reality".

While Grant et al. (2012) state that the documentary method is mainly used in education studies, Bryman and Bell (2003:297) point out that this qualitative approach is predominantly "within management and business". Consequently, it matches the author's study. Furthermore, they state that "it broadly falls within a social constructionist perspective" (Bryman and Bell, 2003:831). Denscombe (1998:10) points out that the advantage of using existing documents as part of the research is that it allows the researcher to "get[...] the panoramic view of the landscape". Furthermore, Denscombe (1998:167) adds that it is key to reflect on 'authenticity', 'credibility', 'representativeness' and 'meaning' when it comes to the evaluation of these sources. Bryman and Bell (2003:297) explain that documentary analysis "involve[s] systematically gathering a set of documents". Commonly, they add that this analysis includes 'personal documents', 'public documents', 'official documents', 'mass media outputs' and 'virtual outputs' (Bryman and Bell, 2003:403).

In this study the author relies mainly on material coming from public domain which Bryman and Bell (2003:411) define as 'public documents' as well as 'organizational documents'. According to them (Bryman and Bell, 2003:413), organisational documents are "a very heterogeneous

group of sources” while public documents are commonly used in business and management studies. Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2003:413) add concerning public documents:

The issue of representativeness is complicated in that materials like these are in a sense unique and it is precisely their official or quasi-official character that makes them interesting in their own right. There is also, of course, the question of whether the case itself is representative, but the context of qualitative research this is not a meaningful question, because no case can be representative in a statistical sense.

Besides, the author also relies on ‘mass media outputs’ which, according to Bryman and Bell (2003), might challenge the author when it comes to reliability of the sources. Finally, the author considered ‘virtual outputs’ for the documentary analysis. This is a source with “clearly huge potential”, as Bryman and Bell (2003:415) point out.

The search for sources and the data collection using a documentary method can be, according to Bryman and Bell (2003:404), a challenging exercise and the resulting analysis requires “considerable interpretative skill”. Therefore, they recommend four criteria based on John Scott, which help to reflect on the quality of sources (Bryman and Bell, 2003:404):

- *Authenticity. Is the evidence genuine and of unquestionable origin?*
- *Credibility. Is the evidence free from error and distortion?*
- *Representativeness. Is the evidence typical of its kin, and, if not, is the extent of its untypicality known?*
- *Meaning. Is the evidence clear and comprehensible?*

The application of these four aspects in the evaluation of documentary sources is also suggested by Denscombe (1998).

The author further reflects on the quality evaluation of the sources in the ‘documentary data collection’ section of this chapter. However, before moving on with documentary data collection, the author will now outline the primary data collection.

3.6 Primary data collection

3.6.1 Pilot study

After looking into interviews as a tool, this section now outlines the steps undertaken for the primary research.

The pilot interview was executed with the Chief People Officer of a British professional services company with a mid-size subsidiary in Germany. It was executed on 14 September 2015. The interviewee was chosen as the pilot interviewee, as she matched the sample identified for this research (Oppenheim, 1992). Even though the interviewee was not directly employed by the

German subsidiary of the British company, she was in charge of the HRM and HRD topics at the German division, which made her an ideal candidate for the pilot interview.

Due to the locations of the participants, the interview was executed via Google Hangout. The interview was tape recorded and the full transcription of the English pilot interview is presented in *Appendix 3: Pilot Interview*. As Bryman and Bell (2003) outlined, tape recording supports the researcher in drawing-attention to additional factors in connection with the spoken word and simplifies the transcription process. The author created the transcript based on a one-to-one transcription of the sound file to ensure that the content was completely equal to the spoken word. Consequently, grammatical incorrectness, repetitions and incomplete sentences were transcribed as they were stated by the interviewee.

During the interview the author made use of the advantages of a semi-structured interview and slightly adjusted the interview where needed. In particular, the section on the terminology and the organisational aims of the Employee Engagement strategy were adjusted.

The first analysis of the interview was conducted in MS Excel. For the final in-depth analysis, the author coded the pilot interview along with the 18 interviews in Nvivo. The findings are part of the analysis presented in *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter* and *the Documentary Analysis Chapter*.

The next section outlines the implemented in-depth interviews and adjusted interview questions which were initiated after the pilot study.

3.6.2 In-depth interviews

The author developed the interview questions in two main steps. During the first step, she established an initial version of the survey, which was tested during the pilot interview.

To gather as much feedback as possible from the interview, the author started to draft the different questions which she would need to ask in order to answer the research questions. During this step, it was identified that question four was no longer relevant for the study as its main focus was on the understanding and meaning of Employee Engagement and less so on the establishment of Employee Engagement solutions in the country.

After the questions were developed, the author started to cluster the questions into categories. The clusters reflected upon the different fields of interests such as company demographics, terminology and challenges. In total, the author defined 20 questions and six categories plus the researcher's introduction to the interviewees. *Appendix 4: Original interview questions and their aims* shows the categories and questions along with the related aims.

After the execution of the pilot interview, the author started to review the prepared interview questions and the version she used during the pilot. As part of the review, additional questions were added. This included, in particular, questions related to the interviewee's understanding

and definition of Employee Engagement, its meaning and challenges related to the implementation of Employee Engagement in organisations and a final part to give the interviewee the chance to add any additional information with respect to Employee Engagement. Furthermore, the author deleted the link to the professional aspect with respect to her employer at the time. *Table 6: Interview guide including adjusted and extended interview questions* outlines the adjustments made. When developing the interview questions, the author reflected on Welch's (2011) Employee Engagement definition, which was introduced in the *Literature Review Chapter*. Therefore, the author put particular focus on their understanding of the phenomenon and the interviewees' perceptions on the behaviours associated with Employee Engagement. The author did not use terminologies as used by Welch (2011) or others in order to avoid influencing the interviewees.

Table 6: Interview guide including adjusted and extended interview questions

Category	Original Interview Questions	Modified and Extended Interview Questions
Introduction	<p>Thank you very much for participating in this interview. Within the next 60 minutes I will ask you a couple of questions on the Employee Engagement strategy in your organisation. The questions and answers will be recorded. If you want the transcription to be anonymous, please say so before we start with the interview.</p> <p>For your information: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am a part-time student at the Manchester Metropolitan University's faculty of Business and Law. My PhD "Understanding Employee Engagement" focuses on the Employee Engagement strategy of large organisations in Germany.</p> <p>When I am not engaged with my PhD, I work full-time for Grass Roots Germany, the world's leading provider of Employee- and Customer Engagement solutions. I am in charge of the Customer and Employee Engagement division. Together with my team, we help clients to inspire their employees and customers.</p>	<p>Thank you very much for participating in this interview. Within the next 45 minutes, I will ask you a couple of questions on Employee Engagement. The questions and answers will be recorded. If you want me to make the transcription anonymous, please say so before we start with the interview.</p> <p>For your information: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am a part-time student at the Manchester Metropolitan University's faculty of Business and Law. My PhD "Understanding Employee Engagement" focuses on the Employee Engagement strategy of large organisations in Germany.</p>
Interviewee	<p>What is your name?</p> <p>What is your role in your organisation?</p>	<p>What's your name?</p> <p>What is your role in your organisation?</p>

Organisation	Which industry does your employer operate in?	Which industry are you currently working in?
	How many employees does your organisation employ globally?	How many employees does your current employer employ globally?
	How many employees does your organisation employ in Germany?	And how many employees does your organisation employ just in Germany?
	Where is your organisation originally from?	Where is the organisation originally from?
	Does the British influence have a strong effect on your organisational culture?	From your point of view, does the international background have an impact or effect on the organisational culture of the company?
Employee engagement strategy	NEW	Have you heard about the term Employee Engagement?
	NEW	In which context have you heard about Employee Engagement?
	NEW	What have you heard about the term Employee Engagement?
	NEW	How would you define Employee Engagement?
	NEW	What does Employee Engagement mean to you with respect to the behaviour of an employee?
	Does your organisation have an overall employee engagement strategy?	Are you aware of an overall employee engagement strategy within your organisation?
	Who designed this strategy?	In which department of your company is the Employee Engagement topic positioned? (e.g. HR, internal communications, marketing)
	Where was the strategy designed	Was the strategy designed in a particular country?
	Is it modified locally?	Is the strategy modified within local markets or countries based on the requirements of the local organisation and its employees?
	Do you think the origin of the organisation (the UK) has an impact on the strategy?	Do you think the origin of an organisation has an impact on the strategy?
Defining the strategy	Can you describe the Employee Engagement strategy you currently have in place?	Can you explain the key elements of the Employee Engagement strategy?
	What are the key elements of the strategy?	What is the aim of the Employee Engagement strategy?
	Is there a local modification of the strategy?	s. above
	(Why or why not?)	s. above
Terminology	Is there an organisation-specific term which you use to define, describe or name Employee	Is there an organisation-specific term which you use to define, describe or name Employee Engagement? (e.g. Work

	Engagement? (e.g. Job Commitment, Work Engagement)	Engagement, "Mitarbeiterkommunikation")
	From an international perspective: Do you refer to Employee Engagement in the local markets or do you use local terminologies such as "Mitarbeitemotivation" to name it?	From an international perspective: Do you refer to Employee Engagement in the local markets or do you use local terminologies such as "Mitarbeitemotivation" to name it?
Aims	What are your main aims?	s. above
	Why are you running an Employee Engagement strategy?	s. above
Challenges	Which key challenges are you facing in general?	Which challenges do you see with respect to Employee Engagement?
	NEW	Which challenges are you aware of with respect to the implementation of Employee Engagement strategies?
	What do you think are the key challenges in Germany?	What do you think are the main challenges of Employee Engagement in Germany?
Closing	NEW	Is there anything you would like to add regarding Employee Engagement?
	NEW	Thank you very much for your participation and time.

Source: Developed by the author

As most interviews would be executed in German, the author developed a German version of the interview questions. *Appendix 5: German translation of interview questions* shows the German translations of the interview questions which were used during the interviews. The author expected that the execution of the interviews in German would make the German-speaking participants more comfortable, reduce barriers related to a potential lack of language skills and allow them to reflect on Employee Engagement and the related terminologies in German. This approach was also supported by Bryman and Bell (2003), but required additional care during the interview transcription, which is outlined further in the respective section "Preparing the data: Interview transcription and anonymisation".

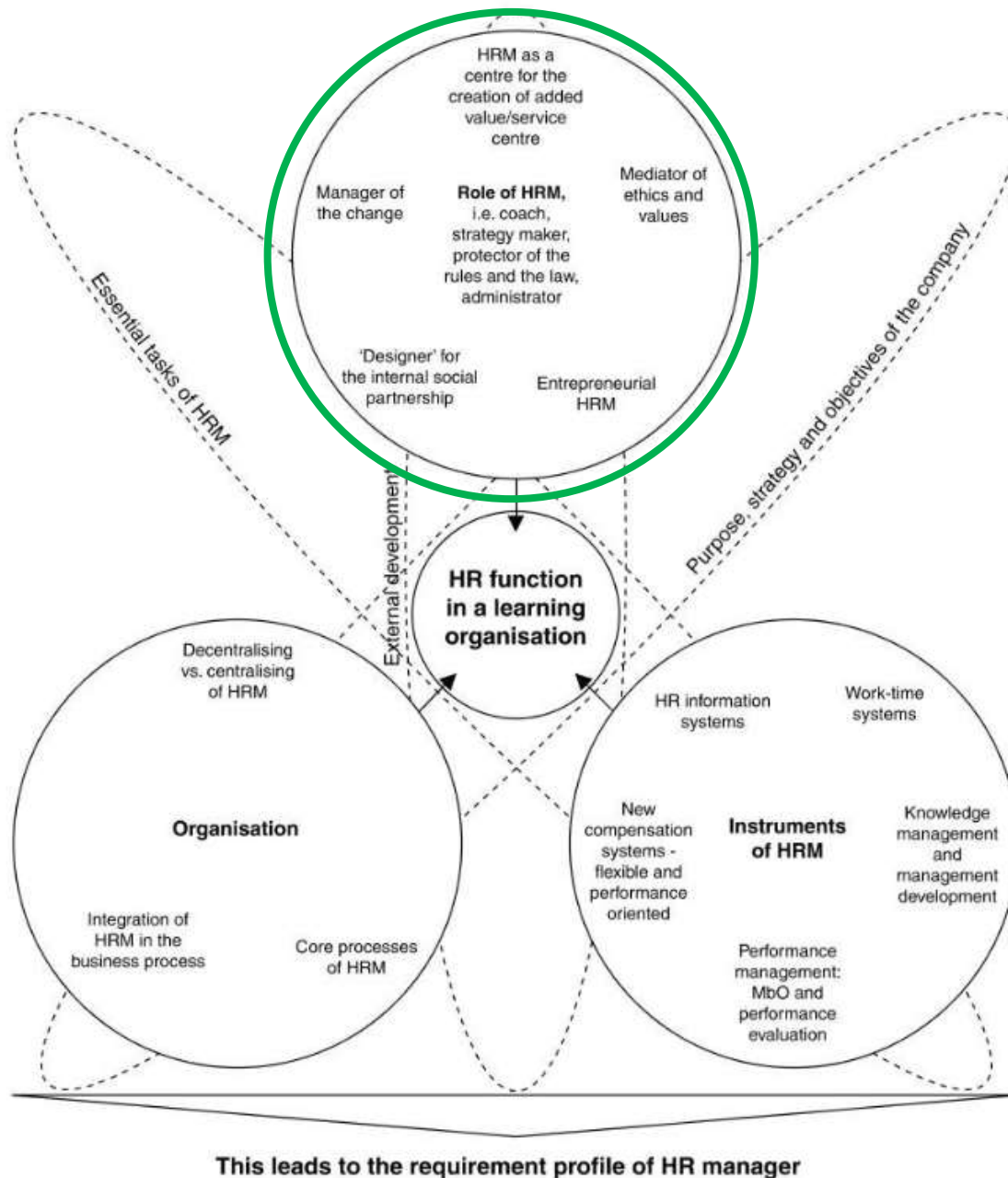
In the following section the sample section is described.

3.6.3 Sample selection

To arrange the interviews, the author's business contacts were sourced to generate first-hand data. The interviewees needed to be either located in the German subsidiaries or closely involved in the relevant roles in Germany, for example global or European human resources or Employee Engagement managers who were also responsible or at least had an influence on the strategies of the German subsidiaries. The target group identification was strongly driven by Schulz and Böhm's (2008:167) "*Areas of HR management*" (*Figure 8*) as the author identified Employee Engagement responsibilities as part of the 'Role of HRM'. Managers with such responsibilities are identified by the author as 'manager of the change', who work on

'Entrepreneurial HRM' and see 'HRM as a centre for the creation of added value/service centre', while the function is seen as the "Designer' for the internal social partnership" (highlighted in green).

Figure 8: "Areas of HR management"



Source: Scholz and Böhm (2008:167)

In addition, the author incorporated the official understanding of CIPD (2019b:online) on HR Business Partners in her identification process. According to CIPD (2019b:online):

HR business partners are aligned to and work closely with business leaders to enhance workforce performance, foster and nurture strategic people enablers such as talent,

leadership and culture, as well as develop people solutions, to achieve the organisation's objectives.

This definition by CIPD guided the author's sampling strategy further.

Based on the findings of the literature review with respect to the translation of Employee Engagement to German and its German equivalents, the author identified that the execution of the interviews should preferably be in German to ensure that the interviewees shared their perspectives on the different terminologies. At the same time, most of the identified interviewees operated in German on daily basis and it was deemed by them that they would feel more comfortable participating in the interviews in German. This would reduce constraints regarding their participation and allow the interviewees to speak freely without facing any language related barriers. However, if an appropriate interviewee was not able to manage the interview in German, the author executed the interview in English. Only the Pilot interview and one of the 18 interviews carried out in the main study were executed in English. All others were conducted in German.

After the study, its research questions, and the German interview questions had been defined, the author started to "consider what kind of population will be appropriate" (Bryman and Bell, 2003:92) for the research to gather comprehensive and representative data. Here she identified potentials who matched Scholz and Böhm's (2008) previously introduced HRM role. The author applied a convenient sample, which allowed her to involve a sample which she was able to address as part of the study. Still, she only included participants who met the research requirements with respect to organisational profile and individual HRM role. By doing so the study would allow the transfer of findings from the sample to other organisations with similar profiles. Therefore, the author needed to identify an approach which allowed her to gain access to the required target group. One option was based on the idea to approach large German organisations via their websites to get in touch with the respective target group within these organisations. Alternatively, the author considered addressing the target group directly, by using information which was available to the public on the Internet. To enable flexibility and gained access to the target group, the author decided to choose the second option. Here, the author relied on professional social media platforms, such as Xing and LinkedIn, to identify relevant participants based on their social media profiles. These online platforms and their large, publicly available databases enabled her to identify participants who fit the before mentioned requirements while at the same time enabling direct access to the audience without approaching their employers first. This enabled the author to be more proactive in the identification and contacting phase, which also ensured a faster sampling strategy. Therefore, the author started to set up a professional network of individuals by contacting adequate human resource managers during the early stages of her research to ensure the required sample size and to establish a trusting relationship with the target group. During this process,

the author identified a sample of approx. 80 potential interview partners for the qualitative study.

Although most human resource professionals do have a social media presence, the pool of potential was limited to individuals who owned a social media profile, while the strategy left out those without a profile. By using more than one platform, the author broadened her search, therefore she used both platforms available in the German market: LinkedIn and Xing. Furthermore, she scanned the platforms for different organisations and their workforces to ensure a diverse and representative sample. Additionally, further potential participants were addressed and recruited by existing participants via a snowball principle which further extended the pool of participants further. By combining the two platforms and making use of the snowball principle, the author ensured a diverse target group and a rich sample.

With respect to the details in the participants' profiles, the author looked for human resource managers and, if defined or specified, Employee Engagement or Employer Branding managers. Particularly the identification of these specialists revealed that the number of managers who were in charge of only one of these topics was rather limited in Germany, which could indicate that the terminology was not widely used in practice. Consequently, the author needed to review many curriculum vitae and social media profiles in great detail to ensure that the right pool of potential interviewees was defined. The profiles, experience, and suitability of potentials which were acquired via a snowball approach were carefully reviewed by the author, too. Here, the focus was on understanding their roles and responsibilities in their organisations to ensure that these participants also met the study's requirements and supported the author's aim to create a diverse, representative, and wide-ranging sample.

The list of potential interviewees, which the author had defined, is presented in *Appendix 6: Pool of potential Interviewees*. Additionally, the author clustered the potentials according to their industries. *Appendix 7: Industry Split of potential interviewees* summarises these clusters. In two cases, the potentials could have been added to two different industries. For the analysis, the author added these two potentials to one of the categories. Potential number nine had worked for two industries in recent times: logistics and consulting. The author added the potential to the category logistics due to the references made during the interview. Potential number 39 worked for an employer operating in engineering and defence. The potential was added to the engineering category; here she added a footnote that the engineering category also included a hybrid potential.

In the next section, the way in which the author approached the potential interviewees is described.

3.6.4 Approaching the interviewees

As previously described, the author identified the target group from her personal business network and via professional social media networks. There in particular, she looked at profiles and curriculum vitae which included keywords such as Employee Engagement, Employer Branding or other Engagement-related positions and expertise as well as the described roles in HRM.

To ensure the addressees' permission to participate in the study, the author introduced her study and the request for the participation in the interview via a personal message on LinkedIn or Xing. There, the author followed the suggestions by Bryman and Bell (2003) to approach the interviewees. However, instead of approaching them via phone, she chose to address them via their professional social media accounts, as these platforms were used to identify the required target group. Consequently, she could make a direct link to their published curriculum vitae. When sending them a short outline of the study and the purpose of the interview, she also offered the potential interviewee a first pre-discussion via phone or sharing additional information via e-mail. Some of the interviewees asked for a pre-discussion via phone, as they were not aware of the Employee Engagement term, but were familiar with the term *Mitarbeitemotivation* (engl. motivational level of an employee). These participants were, in particular, afraid that they would not be able to contribute essential insights to the author's research and required some acknowledgement that their input would also be useful to the study.

During this step, the author outlined the intension and research objectives to the potential interviewees to attract their interest and also involvement in the study. In particular, the potentials who were not aware of the term Employee Engagement were encouraged to still participate and share their experience on *Mitarbeitemotivation*. During the preparation calls, the author had to make sure that she did not enforce her own interpretation upon the interviewees. She used the most common Employee Engagement definitions to introduce the Employee Engagement term to one the interviewees (I17) who was not aware of the term at all.

During the interview, this interviewee partly referred back to the preparation call with the researcher. However, the additional questions led back to the interviewees' perspectives. Nevertheless, the pre-discussions helped to ensure the participants' involvement in the study and their agreement to participate in the interview.

The process of identifying and contacting potential interviewees was particularly time consuming. As the author was aware of this, she started to mention her research and the planned interviews at an early stage and outlined her research approach. Therefore, throughout the early years of the author's research career, she started to build a relationship

with the potential target group to ensure she obtained the required number of participants for the interviews. Additionally, the author mainly looked for large organisations. Even though the topic is of interest to companies of all sizes, usually only larger organisations have the structural size and the resources to manage the establishment and execution of Employee Engagement strategies.

Some participants highly engaged with the topic and their participation in the study, so they shared additional contacts with the author. This snowball principle supported the author gaining additional contacts and even additional interviews. Still, the author aimed to generate approx. 30 in-depth interviews. However, in some cases interviewees had to reject participation due to missing approval from their employers. Others stated that the interview would be too time consuming for them. Besides the pilot interview, the author finally executed 18 interviews in total.

In the next section, the execution of the interviews is outlined.

3.6.5 Interview conduction

After adjusting, extending and translating the interview questions, the author started to carry out the interview.

First, the author scheduled interview slots with each of the participants individually. The pilot interview had shown that 45 to 60-minute slots would be adequate for the execution of the interview. Per slot, she scheduled 90 minutes to ensure there would be enough time for additional questions prior to the interview or extensive discussions. About half of the interviewees had some general questions about the author's research before the interview started, which were not recorded as they were part of the preparation process.

During the interviews, the author realised that interviewee numbers 3 (I03), I13 and I17 were difficult to manage. I03 and I13 were challenging in particular due to the fact that the interviewees referred to two different positions they represented. I03 participated in the interview as a former intern and later a part-time employee of a major logistics company. The interviewee was challenged by the role she needed to cover during the interview. The author agreed with the interviewee during the preparation discussion that the interviewee would answer all questions based on her experience working for both of her former employers. I13, on the other hand, owned a smaller company. At the same time, I13 worked as a consultant for larger organisations which qualified the interviewee for the study. However, during the interview the author and the interviewee reflected on which role the interviewee needed to cover on demand. Besides, developing the transcription of interview I13 was challenging due to the compound sentences used. The effect is further discussed in the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter*. Still, during the interview the aim was to guide the interviewee through the

number of questions by avoiding disruption to the interviewee's flow while keeping the focus on the respective topics as suggested by Oppenheim (1992).

I17 was not aware of the English term at all, therefore the start of the interview was challenging for the researcher. The term Employee Engagement was replaced by the German equivalent 'Mitarbeitermotivation'. Nevertheless, all questions remained the same to gather the required insights.

Even though the number of interviews was smaller than expected, the quality of each interview was high. During the interviews, the interviewer realised that some of the interviewees provided very short answers or statements in connection with particular questions. To enrich the response, the author applied the "technique of laddering" as described by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012). The idea of this approach is to gather insights by asking why or asking for further examples. This technique was applied a couple of times when the interviewee was asked about his or her definition of the Employee Engagement phenomenon. If the answer indicated that the interviewee only repeated the employer's definition, the interviewee was asked to state what it meant according to him or her. By doing so, "it is possible to explore a person's understanding of a particular construct" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012:129), which was key to this study.

In the next section, the author describes the data collection from the applied documentary analysis.

3.7 Documentary data collection

3.7.1 Type of sources

As previously introduced, the author of this study applied a documentary method to establish a data triangulation. According to Denscombe (1998:10), the different 'types of document' can be allocated to three different categories: those which are 'public domain', secondly, those with 'restricted access', and thirdly, documents which are defined as 'secret'. As previously outlined, the author was unable to gather feedback from the participating organisations' workforces due to restrictions such as workers' council involvement. Therefore, the documentary method allowed the author to gather additional information and match it to the insights gathered from the in-depth interviews.

This exercise mainly relies on sources which are 'public domain' and were available to public via different media and channels.

The different sources of documents were previously introduced in the 'documentary method' section of the *Research Methodology Chapter*. As Bryman and Bell (2003:403) state, it is possible that the sources for documentary analysis vary. This research mainly reflected on sources coming from 'official documents', 'mass media outputs' and 'virtual outputs'. In most

cases, the type of source of the identified material combines mass media outputs and virtual outputs or virtual outputs and mass official documents. In all cases, the author was reliant on material gathered from the Internet, as this channel is commonly used for career purposes and for organisational communication.

For this documentary method, the author searched the following sources and channels which are available to public:

- ***Organisations' websites***
- ***Forums and blogs***
- ***Social media***
- ***Professional networks***
- ***External websites***

The author's approach to document this data via Nvivo is further outlined in the upcoming section titled 'approach for documentary data collection'.

3.7.2 Approach for documentary data collection

After looking into the different types of sources, this section reflects on the executed approach for the documentary data collection.

The author made use of some of the insights given during the interviews. For example, I09 referred to social media channels such as WhatsApp, which were used by the employee community to get in touch with other locations. Additionally, some of the interviewees with an established Employee Engagement strategy in their organisation stated the name of the programme or referred to their employer's brand missions and visions. Therefore, websites, blogs and social media channels were reviewed to gather additional information on the Employee Engagement activities of the organisation, the terminologies used, the drivers shown and the expected output. As the author only had access to public available material, there might be certain limitations due to the access and availability of information which was only shared and published in closed communities to which the researcher had no access.

To execute the data collection, the author applied three main steps:

1. The author focused only on the organisations which employed the participants of her interviews either at the time of research or in the past;
2. The author looked for information by searching for similar references and key words as presented in the interview guide (e.g. Employee Engagement definition, concept, drivers and output factors);
3. Last, the author searched for sources which the interviewees referred to during the interviews (e.g. Facebook sites or Employee Engagement programmes and other examples)

This third step was strongly influenced by the participants' subjective feedback in particular. These different steps helped the author to gather the input for the documentary analysis executed.

When it comes to these documents' quality, with respect to 'authenticity', 'credibility', 'representativeness' and 'meaning' (Bryman and Bell, 2003:404) it can be argued that the sources could be questionable while others' authenticity is not completely clear. In particular individuals' input on the perception of the organisation's Employee Engagement strategy, its understanding and definition, but also on the drivers and the subjective output are impossible to evaluate concerning their credibility. Here, the author evaluated various platforms for employee feedback and finally made use of two professional platforms (Glassdoor and Kununu) whose focus is a forum for employee feedback on employers. The material gathered provides important insights and additional unpinning for this study. The author will reflect on these aspects further during the *Documentary Analysis Chapter*.

At the beginning, the data was collected in an MS Excel file. Later, the data was transferred to Nvivo to be analysed along with the first-hand data from the in-depth interviews. There, the author applied a textual analysis to these findings. The documentary data was added as *Externals* to Nvivo. From there, the data was added as code to the existing nodes of the primary data. Additionally, the author created a *Relationship* between each of the external data sets and the interview files to ensure that the link between the interviewee, the statements made during the interview and the external data did not go missing.

The secondary data was collected over a duration of approx. five months. In the following section, the transcription process, including the anonymisation of the in-depth interviews, is explained.

3.8 Preparing the data: Interview transcription and anonymisation

The semi-structured interviews were transcribed in MS Word. While 17 of the 19 interviews were executed in German and two in English (pilot and I04), the author transcribed every interview in English only. Still, Bryman and Bell's (2003) suggestion to compare the translated version of the interview with the version in the original languages was applied to ensure that mistakes in the translation process were avoided. The advantages of MS Word include the spell checker option as well as the layout options and the possibility to upload the transcription into Nvivo easily.

One of the longest interviews (I8) took approx. 60 minutes and the author transcribed the interview for nearly eight hours. The differences in the length of the interviews was also pointed out by Bryman and Bell (2003).

While transcribing, the author adjusted the approach. Originally, she translated all German equivalents for Employee Engagement into Employee Engagement. However, the test transcription of I08 indicated that it was crucial to keep the German terms in the interviews to ensure the best possible analysis and to avoid the loss of findings. Therefore, the author started to use German terms in the transcription and added the English translation or closest meaning to the transcript. This way it was possible to execute an in-depth analysis without losing crucial definitions throughout the translation and transcription process. Additionally, it would enrich the data analysis on definitions and related challenges.

As more than half of the interviewees requested anonymisation of the interview, mainly due to the usage of their employers' name, the author reviewed whether the anonymisation of all interviews would have a negative impact on the further analysis and critically reflected whether this anonymisation would have an impact on the further quality of the study. The conclusion was made to replace all company names with the synonym 'company name' and change the interviewees' full names to first name and the first capital of the last name. Additionally, the author added the branch to the 'company name' to allow the reader a better overview. In addition, manager's names that were mentioned were adjusted along with Employee Engagement programme titles which included the company name. This way the requested anonymisation would be ensured. The interview transcription of I08 was officially revised by the interviewee's manager before it was further analysed. Adjustments by the manager were highlighted in the transcription (*Appendix 9: I08*).

Throughout the further analysis, the author even realised that the lacking company names and the unification of the organisations helped to put the focus on the research questions and the phenomenon by avoiding too much focus on the participating organisations. At the same time, the analysis of differences between industries and their perceptions, understanding and establishment of Employee Engagement was still possible. Based upon the order in which the interviews were conducted, the author numbered them consecutively (Pilot_01 and I01 to I18).

During this step, the author also worked on the further coding approach of the German terms used to explain and describe Employee Engagement.

The coding framework developed and applied is described in the next section.

3.9 The coding framework

3.9.1 In-depth interviews

Before looking into codes used in this study, it is important to understand what a code is. Saldaña (2013:3) defines it as follows:

A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.

Furthermore, he stated that the source of data can be diverse. In the case of this study, the origins are in-depth interviews as primary data and from documents as secondary data.

Based on the knowledge generated in the literature review, first assumptions were drawn from this inductive approach. The thematic analysis applied here allowed the author to reflect on the different aspects gathered and learnt during the literature review and the execution of the in-depth interviews.

The main aim of the research was to understand how the interviewees defined Employee Engagement and how it was defined and established in their organisational context – domestically and internationally. Therefore, the research reflected and analysed the phenomenon's drivers along with its definitions and the German terminologies used in the same context.

The inductive approach is also reflected in the first nodes which were defined prior to the coding process of the transcripts. This first step is described in detail in the "Preparation of analysis" section of the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter*. According to Jackson and Bezeley (2019:68), this approach is known by researchers "who employ grounded theory, phenomenology, or discourse analysis [*which*] start more often with detailed analysis and work up to broader concepts". Saldaña (2013) states that the coding exercise is based on a two coding 'cycle'. These two cycles are defined as follows by Saldaña (2013:3):

First Cycle coding processes can range in magnitude from a single word to a full paragraph to an entire page of text to a stream of moving images. In Second Cycle coding processes, the portions coded can be the exact same unity, longer passages of text, analytic memos about the data, and even a reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far.

The author also made use of this two-cycle approach in this study. In preparation for the first cycle, the following parent nodes were created prior to the analysis work and were added to the nodes structure in Nvivo:

1. Employee Engagement definition

Here, sub-codes including Employee Engagement itself, but also potential German equivalents such as 'Mitarbeitermotivation' (engl. motivational level of an employee) and 'Mitarbeiterengagement' (engl. an employees' voluntary involvement with the organisation) were defined based on the literature review carried out. These pre-defined subcodes supported the further coding process to identify the different terminologies used.

2. Employee Engagement indicators

This node was defined to group the different indicators of an engaged employee with respect to their behaviour and performance. The node was developed further at a later stage towards the ‘Outcome of Employee Engagement’, referring to expected and actual behavioural outcomes caused or at least influenced by the phenomenon. The prepared sub-codes were ‘commitment’ and ‘involvement’.

3. Measurement

The third node was strongly influenced by the many Employee Engagement measurement approaches published especially in the non-peer reviewed literature mentioned. Here, the phenomenon was commonly mentioned in the same context as employee surveys. A similar observation of the direct association of Employee Engagement and employee surveys was made during the interviews.

4. Establishment of Employee Engagement

The main aim was to understand the actual establishment of an Employee Engagement strategy or at least activities within the targeted organisation. Soon, this node developed further to differentiate between the demographic information (incl. the existence of a strategy) and the related details of this strategy. The general establishment of a strategy in the organisation is further reflected in the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter*.

As stated by King and Brooks (2017), this structure helped the author to remain closer to the original statements made by the interviewee. This leaves less room for interpretation and abstract codes, supporting the targeted template analysis approach.

During the next step, a sub-set of interviews was chosen to “become familiar with the accounts to be analyzed” (Brooks et al., 2015:203). These interviews were selected based on their insights which were identified during the transcription.

Throughout the review process of the codes (second cycle), the author renamed most of the nodes to be more specific surrounding the individual statements of the interviewees. Besides, the author also went back to the codes and applied an approach by Jackson and Bazeley (2019:73) to manage codes of less priority by, in case needed, “chang[ing] the term to a more general construct as the project develops”. Nevertheless, in this case it is important to track these adjustments to be clear the coding was adjusted. However, this approach was not used by the author, as the codes related to Employee Engagement were identified as priori codes which are required to remain untouched. Her focus on renaming was mainly connected to being more specific regarding the code titles.

Furthermore, groups were built to cluster different nodes related to one particular topic. When needed, further sub-groups were added to reflect properly on the required clusters. This hierarchy was built upon the previously outlined parent-node structure.

The detailed review showed that the aggregation of nodes was rather difficult, as the interviewees' statements were highly individual. To prevent losing content, the aggregation was avoided when needed; instead parent nodes with different statements on similar topics were added and developed further throughout the analysis process.

In the following section, the author presents her coding exercise in Nvivo.

3.9.2 Coding in Nvivo

For the coding and analysis of the data gathered, the author used Nvivo. Both data sets – the qualitative data coming from the in-depth interviews as well as the data gathered via the documentary method – were added to Nvivo to work further with the findings and to analyse the data appropriately.

Due to the large number of codes and sub-codes, the author developed a Nvivo Mind Map to sort the findings in accordance with the research questions. Based on this overview, the analysis was executed afterwards. The research questions were reflected on the first idea level. Child ideas were added to the individual ideas based on the coded nodes and the defined sub-nodes. However, during the analysis the author continued to critically reflect on the created codes, identified some duplicates and still reallocated some codes to other parent codes.

As suggested by Jackson and Bazeley (2019:72) the author avoided to “creat[ing] an overly nuanced code that attempts to capture all of them at once”. By doing so, the author had the possibility to compare the findings to “check whether this combination of codes forms a pattern” (K. Jackson and Bazeley, 2019:72). Furthermore, it is suggested to “look for repetitions”, which is also outlined in the ‘data interpretation’ section of this chapter. Along with identifying repetitions, Jackson and Bazeley (2019:72) suggest “us[ing] questions of the text to generate codes” which “help to ensure thoroughness of coding and to develop relational statements”. Besides, they also suggest researchers “compare and contrast passages of text” to gather reasonable insights.

In the next section, the thematic analysis applied will be further discussed.

3.10 Data analysis: Thematic analysis

For this research, the author took existing definitions and meanings (“the originally given descriptions”) and researched their occurrence and setting in German organisations (“underlying structures of an experience”). According to King and Brooks (2017), the biggest advantage and challenge of a qualitative approach as initiated in this study, is the richness of gathered data.

As part of this qualitative research, a phenomenological perspective was taken to ensure a detailed understanding of the different Employee Engagement views within German organisations. Here, Moustakas (2011:10f.) pointed out that:

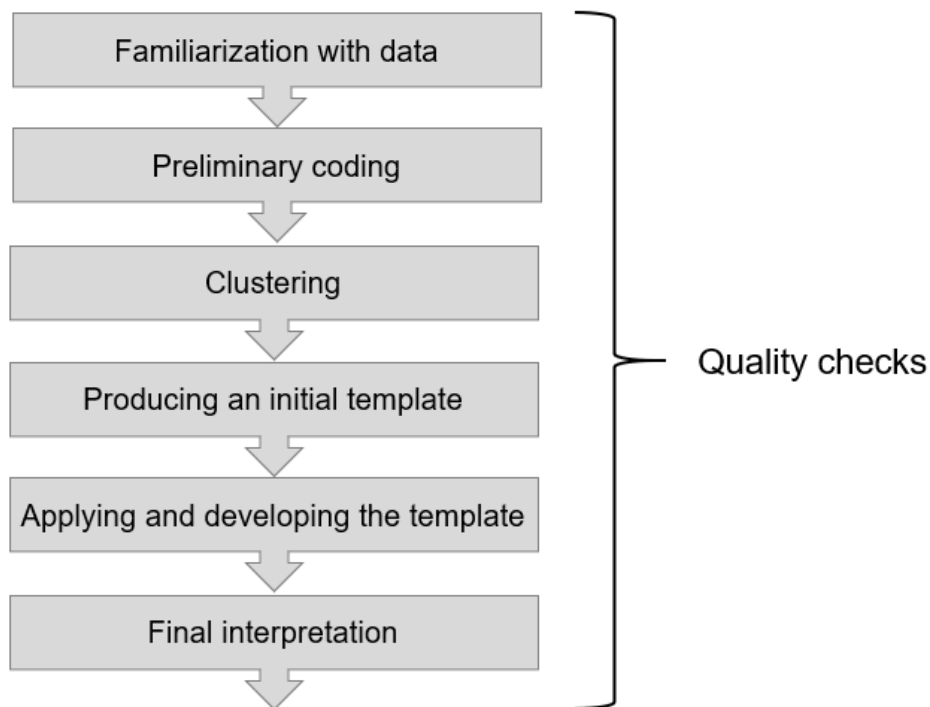
The empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience.

Reflecting further on the approach of this research, a thematic analysis was identified as an adequate approach. By applying a thematic analysis, the researcher can ensure that the findings can be generalised. As the author required a certain level of flexibility for the analysis while still reaping the benefits of a structural approach, she specifically adopted a template analysis, which is “widely used in organizational and management research” (Brooks et al., 2015:203). It allows the generation of knowledge using a step-by-step approach. Furthermore, Brooks et al. (2015:203) state that:

Template Analysis is a form of thematic analysis which emphasises the use of hierarchical coding but balances a relatively high degree of structure in the process of analysing textual data with the flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study.

King (2012:4) stated that template analysis “encourages the analyst to develop themes more extensively where the richest data (in relation to the research question) are found”. In the case of this study, more than 500 codes were developed by the author. To apply the outlined template analysis accordingly, the author followed the seven steps of a template analysis as introduced by King and Brooks (2017), which, according to them, are still flexible and adjustable based on the needs of the research conducted. *Figure 9: “Typical steps in Template Analysis”* displays the seven steps mentioned.

Figure 9: “Typical steps in Template Analysis”



Source: King and Brooks (2017:26)

King (2012:4) supported the flexibility in the research structure as well and pointed out:

Template Analysis does not insist on an explicit distinction between descriptive and interpretive themes, nor on a particular position for each type in the structure.

Based on Moustakas' 'horizontalization', the author coded the most significant results to identify how "participants experience the phenomenon" and a "cluster of meaning" is developed before they are structured (Creswell, 2013:82). These steps helped to develop "deeper understanding" (Creswell, 2013:81) and supported the design of a better practice.

After reflecting on the data analysis using a thematic approach, the author presents her data interpretation in the next section.

3.11 Data interpretation

In this section, the author reflects on the interpretation of data gathered from the in-depth interviews and from the documentary method.

During the interpretation of the data, the author followed Silverman's (2014:393) steps to prepare and design the report of the gathered data:

- Ensure "prior explanation" for every sub-heading to ensure that "nature and logical place in [...] argument" is clear
- "Make one point at a time"
- Ensure the reader is led to the argument, before stating it and follow with the analysis

- Admit inconclusiveness if given to show limitations
- Number extracts and use sequences
- “Convince the reader” by your interpreted data

Furthermore, Silverman (2014:396) discusses how individuals may influence the arguments of a study with respect to an individual’s personal experience and he reflects on the impact on “interpersonal relations with research participants”.

When it comes to the interpretation of the documentary data, the author followed a suggestion of Jackson and Bazeley (2019:72) and “look[ed] for repetitions and regulations”. By looking for repetitions, the author was able to identify important topics which might be of relevance to the interviewee and therefore also to the study.

Furthermore, the author followed the three steps highlighted by Jackson and Bazeley (2019:75) to identify which codes are of interest to the research. Therefore, the author started with ‘identify’, questioning whether the data was interesting for the study. Afterwards, she questioned ‘why it was interesting’ during the second step ‘ask’. In the third and final step ‘explain’, she explained why she was interested in the information. By sticking to this three-step approach, the author ensured that she focussed on the important information and on the research questions of the study. In addition, the predefined structure of the analysis in accordance with the research questions helped the author to keep the focus on the essential information. In addition, the author worked with the memo function in Nvivo to keep record of changes and findings. However, she also created a memo based on the analysis structure to track important findings by adding key words and linking different data sets to one topic.

Saldaña (2013:41) points out why it is important to create a memo and in which cases it can be used:

The purposes of analytic memo writing are to document and reflect on: your coding processes and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and concepts in your data – all possible leading toward theory.

Based on the memos, the author developed the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter* and the *Documentary Analysis Chapter* of this study. Besides, a lot of information was gathered which might be of interest for further studies in the field of Employee Engagement.

In the next section, the author reflects on the data validity and the resulting reliability.

3.12 Data validity and reliability

According to Silverman (2014:90), “the idea of validity originated in quantitative research”. Jackson & Bazeley (2019:335) add that “coding reliability is [also] a concept borrowed from

quantitative research in which only coded data are considered.” Furthermore, they point out that the evaluation of the data not coded is very uncommon but an alternative.

To ensure data validity and reliability, the author followed every ethical aspect of the faculty’s ethical requirements, working closely with the supervision team to guarantee three points: first, keeping the transcriptions of interviews as close as possible to the original interview; second, being precise and independent when doing the coding; and third, being aware of the individual participant’s personal perception and how it may influence statements. These ethical requirements were equally respected in the documentary analysis to ensure that the author respected and ensured the anonymity of the participating interviewees and their organisations. Therefore, the author edited the company details in the reference list along with the anonymisation of the interviews. This included the company name, the website title and the domain weblink if applicable.

Besides, when executing the documentary analysis and adding the resulting findings to the analysis, the author applied a comparison which is called triangulation to ensure that “the correct position of an object” (Silverman, 2014:91) is given. Furthermore, he states, “the most common application of triangulation in qualitative research is the use of multiple methods”.

According to Guba (1981:83), researchers can undertake various activities to ensure the “Four Aspects of Trustworthiness”. According to him, these four aspects are “truth value”, “applicability”, “consistency” and “neutrality” (Guba, 1981:80). The author followed these four aspects and targeted outcomes as stated by Guba (1981:83): *Credibility*, *Transferability*, *Dependability* and *Confirmability*. His approach is fully outlined in *Appendix 8: “The Naturalistic Treatment of Trustworthiness”* (Guba, 1981:83). With respect to this study, the following actions were undertaken:

To ensure **Credibility**, the author approached most potential participants via professional social media networks (LinkedIn and Xing). Before doing so, she analysed the published profiles of the potentials and their employers’ details. Those which matched the criteria were shortlisted (the list of potentials is shown in the *Appendix 6: Pool of potential interviewees*). Afterwards, she contacted the potentials via the private message function of the social media tools. The German introduction included a short description about the author herself, the study and planned interviews and why the potential had been selected (e.g. current role). Additionally, the planned study, including the interview questions, was submitted to Manchester Metropolitan University’s Ethics Committee for ethics approval, which was granted. All interviews carried out were recorded. The sound files were saved on secured local storage and no copies were distributed. Besides, the transcripts of the interviews were written up in English, without developing a German transcript of the interview first as an intermediate step before preparing the English transcripts. To ensure the credibility of the findings from the

in-depth interviews, the author applied Guba's (1981) suggestion to carry out a triangulation of data, thus comparing findings from the in-depth interviews with the findings from the in-depth interviews.

Transferability was guaranteed by the chosen participants as a sample. The author only included participants who matched the required profile, e.g. employees of large organisations, HR or Employee Engagement-related roles in the organisation. Besides, she also reviewed the organisations in detail, making sure that they match the requirements on the one hand and provide a diverse sample on the other hand. Additionally, the author anonymised all interviews (incl. employees' last names and the company), as more than half of the interviewees requested anonymisation. This way, she ensured transferability by avoiding too much focus on the interviews which were not anonymised.

Dependability was ensured by the careful preparation of interview questions which were tested during a pilot interview and were reviewed afterwards, before they were jointly agreed on with the supervisor team. Furthermore, sticking to the similar interview procedure throughout the execution of the interviews also supported the dependability. Finally, it was safeguarded by the recoding of the interviews and the transparent discussion of the transcripts, the coding and its interpretation throughout the research process.

Finally, **Confirmability** was supported by the individual and transparent activation of the single interviewees and the independently managed interviews. The author reconfirmed the reliability of the study by offering the interviewees the possibility to anonymise the interview transcript during the interview. This option was offered again at the beginning of each interview. Finally, the comparison drawn with the findings from other interviews and the outlined interpretation were reviewed and discussed intensively between the author and the involved supervisors.

The next section will reflect on the importance of reflexivity.

3.13 Research reflexivity

The author conducted a study on an Anglo-US phenomenon and its understanding in German organisations. Therefore, language played an important role in the study. This included, for example, the author's impact on the translations of the interviews during the transcription process. The author needed to make sure that first, no essential information went missing when creating the transcription and second, most importantly, that the German equivalents used were included exactly as they were used and that the author defined an adequate description to describe the German term accordingly. Moreover, the author conducted the study as a native German speaker discussing an Anglo-US phenomenon in most cases in German, with participants who were mainly located and operating in Germany. Consequently, the influence of language needed to be considered carefully during the preparation, execution, analysis and interpretation of the study as well as the resulting findings.

Besides, the quality of the sound files may also have had an impact on the quality of the study. However, the overall quality of the files was good. In case technical issues occurred or the author was not able to understand the interviewee correctly, she asked the person to repeat the missing information.

The main aim was to avoid subjective influence on the interviewees when defining the sample by addressing potentials in adherence with the requirements defined. Objectivity was also important during the approaching process, where the author made sure that she did not influence the participants during the preparation calls.

Moreover, staying objective was also important during the interview execution, the transcriptions and the analysis. Therefore, the author described each step of her research process in detail to ensure reflexivity.

The following section reflects on research limitations of the outlined research.

3.14 Limitations

The sample size of the research causes a certain limitation, as it provides a reasonable insight into the understanding of Employee Engagement in Germany, but due to the sample size the findings cannot be generalised for Germany overall.

Additionally, Employee Engagement is constantly developing – also in Germany. If the research had been conducted over a longer duration of time, the pool of responsible managers in large German organisations would have constantly grown. Besides, the setup of the phenomenon in the respective organisations would also have developed further. Consequently, further insights could have been shared by the interviewees when the Employee Engagement understanding had further developed.

As described previously, language has a large impact on the Employee Engagement phenomenon and also on this study. This does not only apply to the missing German translation of Employee Engagement, but also to the impact of language-related issues when translating surveys into other languages (Hallberg and Schaufeli, 2006). The linguistic component of the research cannot be fully outlined in this research as its nature is on the management and leadership aspects and less so on linguistics.

Another limitation of this research could be caused by completing the interviews via telephone instead of in person. According to Bryman and Bell (2003:120), “telephone interviewers cannot engage in observations”. Therefore, they add that it is more difficult for the interviewer to react to “signs of puzzlement or unease on the faces of respondents when they are asked a question”. The author picked up on verbal signs related to puzzlement and lulls in conversations which is further presented in the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter* of this study.

Moreover, the outlined limitations with respect to the access to the workforce of the organisations means that the findings of this research are limited to insights of the responsible managers. Insights from the employee-base could not be provided, but might contribute details on the workforce perspective on the phenomenon, its perception and also its establishment.

3.15 Conclusion of the chapter

The main focus of this chapter was the discussion of the multiple method approach which was undertaken for this study. It combined primary findings which were gathered qualitatively, conducted through in-depth interviews (including a pilot interview) and secondary data which was collected from textual analysis. It is outlined in detail how the interviews were prepared, planned and conducted. Afterwards, it is explained how the author coded the findings.

Furthermore, the author described her position as a social constructivist and the impact of the phenomenological approach which was undertaken in this research. Furthermore, the chapter summarises how a thematic analysis allowed the establishment of in-depth analysis.

Finally, the author presented the way in which ethical requirements were safeguarded and how research data validity and reliability were guaranteed through the design of the study, followed by an outline of the research reflexivity in this study. The impact of language and how it influenced the research was discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study were explained.

In the next chapter, the analysis of the primary and secondary data is outlined in detail, followed by the resulting discussion on the understanding of the Employee Engagement phenomenon in large German organisations.

4. Analysis of the in-depth interviews

4.1 Research context of the primary data analysis

4.1.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter outlines the primary data analysis of this study. It describes how primary data findings help to answer the three research objectives.

Throughout the chapter, the author refers to these research questions and reflects on the research findings to tackle the lack of knowledge. Therefore, the first sections of this chapter outline the framework which was applied to undertake the analysis. It starts with the analysis approach, followed by a summary of the details of the interviewees who participated in the study and goes on to present the investigation of the interviewees' demographic information.

Afterwards, the author presents the findings generated from the interviews. These sections of the chapter are structured in adherence with the research questions. Each section tackles the individual research questions and their details. For the structural analytical work, the author developed a mind-map to analyse the developed codes concerning definitions, drivers, output factors and terminology. Besides, the author based the analysis on the defined parent-node and sub-node logic as previously introduced in the *Research Methodology Chapter*. When needed, nodes were critically reviewed in terms of their current allocation and if needed they were reallocated.

This chapter starts with an introduction of its aim and purpose, before presenting an outline on the analytical approach of the research.

4.1.2 Aim and purpose of the chapter

This chapter is designed to present the findings of the in-depth interviews. It has been developed based on the previously introduced research questions:

RQ1: How is Employee Engagement understood and established in large organisations in Germany with respect to its terminology, definition, drivers and expected output?

RQ2: How is the concept of Employee Engagement viewed as supporting German businesses in comparison to its origin in the Anglo-US context?

RQ3: How do cultural differences influence the Employee Engagement construct in Germany?

Chapters 4: Analysis of the in-depth interviews and *Chapter 5: Documentary Analysis* present the findings and comments, driven by the research questions. The in-depth discussion in *Chapter 6* aims to present the findings of the research, before meanings and the conclusions are discussed, while *Chapter 6* is driven by research objectives.

Therefore, the main analysis of the understanding of Employee Engagement in larger organisations in Germany presents the findings on the interviewees' Employee Engagement

definitions, the phenomenon's conceptualisation according to the interviewees and includes a presentation of the drivers stated along with the output factors of Employee Engagement, aiming to tackle the first research question (RQ1). Furthermore, terminologies and concepts which were mentioned along with Employee Engagement are analysed and outlined before the author moves on to reflect on the stated German equivalents as well as the establishment of the phenomenon in German organisations, including its development and today's strategies and activities within the interviewees' organisations in Germany in comparison to Anglo-US companies. There, the focus is on the second research question (RQ2). Finally, the chapter outlines the value of Employee Engagement to large German organisations before the impact of cultural and organisational difference is further described along with general challenges and German-specific challenges on Employee Engagement, while examining the phenomenon's construction in Germany (RQ3).

However, prior to the detailed analysis of the findings, the author presents the analysis approach, the interviewee selection, the participants' organisations and the linguistic challenges, followed by the description of the analysis preparation. Next, the general observations from the in-depth interviews are presented, thus making sure that the analysis executed is presented as comprehensively as possible. Afterwards, the author presents the interviewees' demographic information to allow better interviewee classification.

4.1.3 Analysis approach for in-depth interviews

In this section the author presents her approach in analysing the findings of the research.

As outlined earlier in the *Research Methodology Chapter*, the coding work of this research was implemented in three main steps: first, coding of a defined pilot interview including the resulting review exercise, second, the coding of additional five predefined interviews including bigger adjustments of the coding approach and the final third step, the coding of all interviews including the re-organisation and small adjustments of the coding.

In preparation for the main analysis, the author executed the briefly mentioned first pilot analysis. This first analysis step was executed to understand the functionality of the Nvivo tool which was used to complete the analysis process. Prior to this exercise, the author looked into the different possibilities to analyse the collected and comprehensive qualitative data. Nvivo was recommended by the Faculty of Business and Law of the Manchester Metropolitan University and showed various advantages for the analysis execution in a qualitative study. Furthermore, the chosen system also allowed the documentary analysis of available material which the author added to the study to underpin the in-depth interviews with further insights, reflect on the organisations' constructions of Employee Engagement and the available feedback on the implementation in practice. The documentary analysis is presented in the next chapter in more detail.

For this first coding exercise, Interview Eight (I08) was used. 18 codes were created during the first cycle (Saldaña, 2013). The coding mainly resulted in single-word nodes – sometimes combinations of two words – to provide a structure of superior categories such as “Interviewees’ EE definition”. Using the example of Employee Engagement definition, the different interviewees’ views were added to the superior category without any further differentiation. This step took approx. two weeks. During this step, the author reflected on the coding exercise and the resulting requirements for the transcripts of all interviews. This exercise also supported the previously introduced “familiarization with data” as introduced by King and Brooks (2017:27) and also allowed for critical reflection of the best possible data preparation with respect to translations and anonymisation of the data. As part of this process, all interviews were analysed in Nvivo. The anonymisation process is described further in the *Research Methodology Chapter*.

After the first interview had been coded, the author continued to code the next four identified. This was especially valuable for this step, due to their quality with respect to the level of Employee Engagement insights and details shared during the interview. These four interviews were I03, I07, I10 and I14. However, this step was not a completely distinguished process; instead the author went back to the coding to make adjustments on the coding structure and added further, more detailed parent nodes to Nvivo. At the same time, the author also looked into other interviews to reflect further on an approach which could be applied to all interviews to gather all insights from the entire data set gathered.

Finally, after working on the main adjustments, the author analysed all interviews in Nvivo. During the second cycle (Saldaña, 2013) adjustments were still made to the codes when needed. The resulting findings on the interviewees’ understanding of Employee Engagement, especially with respect to the definition, drivers, outcome (later named outcome factors) as well as the findings on terminologies used and equivalents, were integrated into a mind map. There, the author differentiated between English and German terminologies used. The author worked with the mind-map function in Nvivo itself. It helped to create a better overview of the key findings from the interviews and prepare the analysis in accordance with the research questions of this study. Throughout the coding exercise, the author kept record of the steps undertaken and the first findings and observations in the Nvivo Memo function. The memo process is also suggested by Silverman (2014) when it comes to writing down the findings from the analysis.

Before presenting the analysis in greater detail to tackle the research questions, the following sub-sections will reflect on the interviewees and their organisations, the preparation work for the analysis and the analysis of the demographic information.

4.1.4 Organisations and interviewees selection

In this section, general information on the interviewees and their organisations is presented to ensure better classification of their nature.

The pilot interview and the 18 interviews of the main research were executed with organisations from various industries. In two cases, the author interviewed a former and a current employee of the same organisation. I03 is a former employee of I08's employer. However, I03 also referred to a second employer for whom the interviewee used to work, too. The interviewee drew comparisons and outlined similarities and differences between the organisations. Nevertheless, I03 mainly reflected on the understanding and establishment of Employee Engagement in one of the companies. The interviewee stated (Annalena L., 2018):

At [company name - consulting] (...) I am not quite sure as I have never been in a strategic department which was involved here. If they have one [Employee Engagement strategy], it is very well hidden away, I have to admit. I cannot say if they have it or not. I do not want to say that they do not have it and possibly they have one which is integrated somewhere and I have just not heard about it and therefore not been in touch with it.

Consequently, the interview reflected more strongly on one of the previous employers who had an Employee Engagement strategy which was well defined and established.

The employer of the pilot interviewee used to be an independent company, managed by the private owner of the business. It was finally merged into the organisation of interviewee I01 in 2017/18. However, the pilot interview took place in 2015, prior to the acquisition. When interview I01 was executed, parts of the UK division of the pilot interviewee's organisation as well as the German subsidiary were integrated into the operations of I01's employer. In addition, it needs to be pointed out that I01 and I04 belonged to the same organisational group, but worked for two separate brands. These two cases also operated in two different industry fields and were independently operating businesses.

Neither, the link between the organisations of the pilot interviewee and the employers of I01 and I04 nor the references of I03 and I08 to the same organisation limited the insights identified and analysed from these interviews. Both interviewees displayed different perspectives and contributed diverse perceptions to the study. This was also influenced by the interviewees' diverse roles in the organisations and due to the fact that both companies were rather large with respect to the number of employees.

After presenting the analysis approach in this section, the author specifies how she prepared the data for the analysis and outlines how she managed the linguistic challenges of this study.

4.1.5 Preparation of analysis

Preparing the gathered data for the analysis was an important step and strongly shaped the further coding of this study. In the *Research Methodology Chapter*, the steps followed in the template analysis are outlined in greater detail. Throughout the coding process, the author came back to this process frequently and also applied the respective quality checks.

As introduced in 'The Coding Framework' section of the *Research Methodology Chapter*, the author started the analysis of the first interview by reviewing the data based on the predefined nodes (*Nvivo Nodes: Employee Engagement definition, Employee Engagement indicators, measurement and establishment of Employee Engagement*). Based upon these first nodes and the coding of the first interview, the author developed further codes, covering a wider range of topics linked to the research questions and the aims of the study. The additional codes included more detailed findings and were further extended during the coding of the next four interviews.

It needs to be pointed out that two interviews, the pilot interview and I04, were both conducted in English as both interviewees were located outside of Germany, but were also responsible for the German subsidiaries of their organisations. The transcriptions of their interviews were based on a one-to-one transcription of the spoken word. Furthermore, it needs to be recorded that the interview with I08 was revised by the manager of the interviewee. Adjustments which were made by the direct manager of the interviewee were highlighted in the transcript as shown in *Appendix 9: I08*.

Additionally, the interviewees referred back to superior categories which were identified during the coding exercise of interview I8. Based on this data, the following extended parent nodes were defined:

- Challenges
- Organisational setup of Employee Engagement
- Country of origin impact on Employee Engagement
- Employee Engagement definition
- Employee Engagement drivers
- Employee Engagement responsibility (company department)
- Employee Engagement setup
- Employee Engagement terminology
- Established Employee Engagement strategy
- International modification of Employee Engagement strategy
- Local difference in Employee Engagement
- Organisational aims of Employee Engagement strategy
- Outcome of Employee Engagement

Afterwards, the parent nodes were added to the Nodes function in Nvivo. The author worked through each of the original nodes to understand and reflect on whether the codes matched the superior category they were allocated to or required adjustments based on the coding itself. As Saldaña (2013:194) stated, this is required practice to ensure trustworthiness “during the Second Cycle coding”. If required, the codes were rephrased and if needed also reallocated to the relevant parent-node in Nvivo (also known as categories (Saldaña, 2013)).

At the beginning, the author applied this process to the first five interviews (I03, I07, I08, I10 and I14) before continuing with another four interviews (I01, I04, I09 and I15) completely, or at least parts of the interviews. These interviews were chosen as the author identified interesting and relevant information when she transcribed these interviews. After completing this step, the author had coded more than 200 references.

Before proceeding with the coding, the author went back to the nodes of the incomplete coded interviews from the previous step and the completed the coding of these last interviews. There, she reflected on the codes created and reviewed how these codes would be best analysed. In particular, the demographic information created a certain challenge. As a result, the demographic information was left out of the main coding exercise. Instead, the author decided to manage this data in a different way to provide a detailed overview of the findings generated. All other codes were reviewed reference by reference to ensure that essential information would be included in detail as required, thus outlining all variations and differences.

In addition, the author added all findings from the secondary data gathered for the documentary analysis to Nvivo, too. To code these findings, the author created ‘Externals’ in Nvivo and added them to the data set. This data was linked to the primary findings via the ‘Relationship’ functionality in Nvivo. This way, the data was associated with the matching cases which supported the analysis process best. The detailed documentary analysis approach is outlined along with the related findings in the next chapter.

Due to the nature of the study, which looks into a phenomenon which is known and applied in English and due to the fact that there is no direct German translation for it, the author needed to be aware of some potential challenges which might affect the preparation of the analysis as well as its execution. Here, it also needs to be pointed out that the author’s own background of being German and executing this study with German participants in German influences its execution, but it also impacts the analysis of the findings, as the author put special emphasis on the German terms which were used by the participants during the analysis.

The author faced one crucial challenge which needed to be considered during the transcription and also during the analysis process. First and most challenging for the analysis was to find and apply an adequate process of how to manage the key words used with respect to Employee Engagement and potential translations. Therefore, the author needed to develop

and apply a consistent preparation of the transcripts, defining how to manage the use of German terminologies with respect to the Employee Engagement terminology. To avoid losing important findings from the research, the author kept all German terms used with respect to naming Employee Engagement in the original language when writing the transcripts. To ensure better understanding for non-German speakers, the author added the English translation or at least a close fit to the English transcript. Keeping the different terminologies used would be crucial for the further analysis and the resulting development of the study.

To ensure that the approach was fully applied, the author had to go back to the sound files and the transcripts a couple of times to guarantee the process was applied in the same way for all of the interviews. Finally, each file was reviewed again to assess whether any terminologies used in German or English might have been left out in the coding process.

Before presenting the approach, which was undertaken to analyse the demographic information to provide an overview of the nature of the organisations and the profiles of the interviewees, the author will reflect on some general observations and findings from the interviews.

4.2 Primary research observations

4.2.1 General observations from the in-depth interviews

The main aim of this section is to present the general observations made during the in-depth interviews. Focusing on *how* (form) and *what* (content) is also supported by Silverman (2014:187) and contributes to the avoidance of the potential narrowness of constructionism. The respective findings on the content will be presented in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

As stated in the *Research Methodology Chapter*, the author executed 17 out of 19 interviews in German to reduce language barriers for the participants while at the same time reflecting on the required terminologies. The remaining two interviews were carried out in English, as requested by the interviewees. The interview execution as well as the transcription showed that defining Employee Engagement was a challenge for some of the interviewees which led in some cases to difficulties for the interviewees to reply to the questions. During the preparation call, I17 stated that she did not speak English and as a result she had not heard about the term itself, but she was aware of the German term *Mitarbeitermotivation*. The interviewer decided to still execute the interview to evaluate whether or not the findings from the interview would contribute to the study. The insights gathered from the interview were useful to the study. In particular the interviewee's lack of Employee Engagement awareness, although she had knowledge on the drivers and output factors that have been associated with EE in the literature were of interest for the study.

I05, Head of Human Resources in retail, was rather challenged by the question related to the definition of Employee Engagement as well as by the question on the origin of his awareness. During the first few questions on Employee Engagement, it seemed that the interviewee struggled with the English terminologies and the interviewer aimed to avoid losing him throughout the further interview. As Bryman and Bell (2003:354) pointed out, very short interviews indicate either the “non-cooperation” of the interviewee or “anxiety about being tape-recorded”. Therefore, the interviewer left the questions on the origin of his Employee Engagement awareness and the definition of the term open and continued with the other questions. If needed, the author would have gone back to these questions at a later point, had interviewee not answered this question as part of his answers to one of the other questions. However, the interviewee reflected on the open questions during the interview, therefore the produced rich results which are discussed in this study, too. Bryman and Bell (2003) also pointed out that shorter interviews were not necessarily of less quality to the study in general.

However, other interviewees were also challenged by the opening questions on Employee Engagement. I01, HR Business Partner for EMEA at a tourism, travel and leisure company, stated that she had read about Employee Engagement in literature (Constanze L., 2018). She was asked to present her knowledge gathered from literature. The interviewee replied to the question, but was certainly challenged by the task and had to restart her reflection a couple of times.

In some cases, interviewees referred back to English terms when explaining Employee Engagement during the interviews. They used terms such as *engagement* (I08), *work engagement* (I01), *highly or positively engaged* (I12), *purpose* (I10), *happiness* (I12) and *cultural* (I08), *recruitment process* (I02) and *hiring process*, *top-talents* and *high-potentials* as well as *high performer* (I12) amongst others to refer to Employee Engagement, its definition and drivers as well as other topics. While work engagement is seen as an ancestor of Employee Engagement according to literature (Welch, 2011), I01 used the term as a synonym for Employee Engagement. Others, such as I03, shaped their view based upon their employer’s Employee Engagement strategy (‘becoming employer of choice’). I08, on the other hand, used the French pronunciation of engagement [notation ‘*an-ga-je-man*’], naming Employee Engagement *Mitarbeiter-Engagement*. Still, besides these two participants also others, such as I01, I02 and I09, referred to their employers when defining the phenomenon or mentioned them when it came the nature of the Employee Engagement awareness. Besides, literature and education were also mentioned as a basis for awareness, as well as different external influences such as commercial studies by large businesses, matching rewards and finally events. These different origins of the interviewees’ Employee Engagement awareness and their impact on the conceptualisation of the phenomenon according to the interviewees are further discussed in the upcoming *Discussion Chapter*.

Another observation from the interviews was the use of compound sentences and clauses as well as lulls in conversation. They made the translation from German into English even more complicated and time consuming, as the translation needed to be considered carefully. However, the author kept the transcripts as close as possible to the spoken word – including mistakes made in grammar and syntax – to avoid losing content or cause any other quality constraints. This was especially the case with respect to the details of views shared, terminologies and German equivalents used and details discussed. This approach was based on Bryman and Bell's (2003) suggestion to establish on going quality checks to ensure a constant standard including the back-translation of the English transcript to the German original. In particular, I13, Managing Director of a consulting company, used many compound sentences. As a result, some of the replies did not provide a straight forward answer to the interviewer's questions. For example, when the interviewer asked in which context the interviewee had heard about Employee Engagement, the reply was (Tjalf N., 2018):

Well... Actually, already during my education. Somehow, everything we are discussing is just old wine in new bottles, isn't it?! Digitalisation and so on it has already been there. If you ask me, it has already been a topic since the beginning of mankind. However, if you ask me in person, I believe it already starts in school. Students who are already "engagiert" [Engl. "engaged"] during class will continue to be so during their working life, too. It will continue during their careers and if you get into a management role, engagement is still important – with respect to promotions, managing employees and so on. I would say it is a hot topic from early childhood onwards. From my perspective, this is a really interesting question, because it is nothing new with respect to being engaged and being satisfied. It should actually be part of our nature and therefore it should strongly be linked to our individual behaviour.

So, the interviewee answered the original question, but at the same time added additional information which was partly related to the question. If this data was identified to be relevant for the study, the author also coded these insights. As a result, the author was able to develop many codes from the interview with I13. However, even though the interview was one of the longest, it did not contain the most codes and references, as the quality of some of the shorter interviews was much higher. This especially applies with respect to the details provided by the interviewee when answering the questions. I13 shared many details during the interview, which were of less importance to this study or the answers led away from the original topic. In comparison, I07 with the Head of Recruitment of an automotive and defence company was a higher quality interview with 73 codes and 138 references in total being defined, along with interview I04 with the Global Head of Strategic Talent Management & HR from the travel industry (71 codes and 114 references) and interview I10 with the Human Resources Manager from a luxury US hospitality and gastronomy chain (59 codes and 86 references).

Consequently, some organisations and interviewees are referenced more frequently than others due to the number of statements made and the quality of their shared insights.

The interviewees' different reactions to the questions provide essential insights which are not linked to the content provided, but to the way in which the information is presented. As outlined before, all interviewees were professionals working in human resources. Most of them occupied senior positions in the field. Their presentation of the answers indicated a particular uncertainty surrounding the phenomenon. It can be argued that this uncertainty is related to the lacking consistency of the Employee Engagement definition which was introduced during the *Literature Review Chapter* or otherwise linked to the translation issues from English to German with respect to the understanding of engagement in German as described in the section "Equivalent German constructions and views in Germany" of the *Literature Review Chapter*.

The next section focuses on the introduction of the interviewees and their organisations, including the analysis of their demographic information.

4.2.2 Introduction of the interviewees and their organisations

As stated in the analysis preparation section, the author managed the demographic information gathered from the interviews differently to the overall codes.

The data was still added to Nvivo, but the author used the Cases function in NVivo to create an overview of the interviewees' as well as their organisations' demographic information. By preparing the data as Cases, the author created a good overview of the gathered insights.

In the anonymised presentation of the data, the interviewees were anonymised by using the number of their interview according to the sequence of execution, for example Interview Number One is presented as I01. The employer is also not named, but the industry in which the organisation was operating is presented to allow a comparison between different sectors and allows the reader an easier overview. Additionally, the author outlines whether or not the organisation had established an Employee Engagement strategy and showed the interviewees' subjective feedback if the country of origin had an impact on the organisational culture and the Employee Engagement strategy. It provided crucial information and was included in the Nvivo Cases. The overview of the data is presented in *Table 7: Overview of interviewees' and their organisations' demographic information*.

Table 7: Overview of interviewees' and their organisations' demographic information

Interview	Interviewee name	Interviewee's position	Industry	Company's country of origin	Country of origin impact on culture (subjective)	Employee Engagement strategy in place	Country of origin impact on EE strategy (subjective)	Number of employees globally	Number of employees in Germany
I01 (Appendix 10)	Constanze	HR Business Partner for EMEA	Tourism, Travel & Leisure	NL	Yes	Yes	No	1,400	150
I02 (Appendix 11)	Rebecca	HR Manager	Automotive	DE	Yes	Yes	Yes	300	260
I03 (Appendix 12)	Annalena	Intern & Student Support	Logistics	DE	Yes	Yes	No	510,000	200,000
I04 (Appendix 13)	Christian	Global Head of Strategic Talent Management & HR	Travel Industry	DE/ NL	Yes	Yes	No	12,182	3,000
I05 (Appendix 14)	Heinz	Head of Human Resources	Retail	DE	No	No	N/A	7,000-8,000	6,200
I06 (Appendix 15)	Michael	Personalreferent(in)/ Personnel Officer	Construction	AT / DE	Yes	Only individual activities	Yes	12,000	82
I07 (Appendix 16)	Monica	Head of Recruitment	Automotive & Defence	DE	Yes	No	N/A	28,000	13,000
I08 (Appendix 9)	Michaela	Expert for EOS and Stakeholder Management	Logistics	DE	Yes	Yes	Yes	500,000	250,000

I09 (Appendix 17)	Kerstin	Head of Employer Reputation and Engagement	Gastronomy	USA	Partly	Yes	No	Not known	60,000
I10 (Appendix 18)	Linda	Human Resources Manager	Hospitality & Gastronomy	USA	Yes	Yes	Yes	100,000	2,000
I11 (Appendix 19)	Sebastian	HR Artist & Senior Manager	Banking	DE	Yes	Yes	Yes	2,500	700
I12 (Appendix 20)	Tim	Head of Human Resources	Education	DE	Yes	No	N/A	870	862
I13 (Appendix 21)	Tjalf	Managing Director	Consulting	DE	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	14
I14 (Appendix 22)	Isabel	HR Business Partner	Fashion Industry	USA	Yes	Yes	No	9,816	1,500
I15 (Appendix 23)	Rabea	Head of Recruitment	Fashion Industry	UK	Yes	Yes	Yes	5,000	500-600
I16 (Appendix 24)	Sabine	Personalreferent(in)/ Personnel Officer	Public Service	DE	Yes	Only individual activities	No	N/A	100-300
I17 (Appendix 25)	Emine	Managing Director	Health-care	DE	Yes	Only individual activities	No	N/A	1,200
I18 (Appendix 26)	Timo	Head of Human Resources	Gastronomy	DE	Yes	Only individual activities	Yes	5,000	4,000
Pilot (Appendix 3)	Vicky	Chief People Officer	Professional Services	UK	Yes	Yes	Yes	914	65

Source: Developed by the author

The demographic information connected to the interviewees' organisations has shown that the author was able to gather data from the targeted large organisations. The number of employees based in Germany varied from 14 to approx. 250,000. The smallest German employee-base belonged to I13. This interviewee was part of the study due to their role as consultant and the previous experience with Employee Engagement and its establishment as part of his role. With 65 and 82 employees in Germany, the pilot interviewee's organisation as well as I06's employer were both rather small. However, globally their employee bases, with 914 and 12,000 employees, matched the requirements the study of an advanced HR department. The proportion of employees of I02's employer in Germany indicated that this organisation had strong roots in Germany. However, as the preparation call indicated the organisation had the required expertise and activities in place for an Employee Engagement strategy as would usually be expected from larger organisations. Additionally, the interviewees were asked about their perception of the country of origin's impact on the organisational culture of the company and its impact on their established Employee Engagement strategy – in the case of the interviewee having stated that the company had such a strategy in place.

The majority of the organisations, eleven in total (57.89%), had their organisational roots in Germany. *Appendix 27: Companies' country of origin* shows the distribution amongst the different countries of origin. While the German origin held the biggest share, there were also two cases where the country of origin was a combination of Germany and Austria (5.26%) and Germany, the Netherlands and the United States of America (5.26%). These cases are not included in the 57.89% above. Besides, two companies had their origin the United Kingdom (10.53%), three in the United States of America (15.79%) and one in the Netherlands (5.26%).

With respect to the international workforce, there were only two organisations (I16 and I17) which only operated nationally: interviewee I16 referred to their previous experience in public service before leaving for maternity leave and interviewee I17 worked for a company which only operated within Germany. In addition, I09 did not know the number of global employees, mainly caused by the sheer international size of the organisation. I13 answered the question on workforce size based on the consulting company owned, not referring to the size of the customer which the consulting company worked for and which built the foundation for insights shared on Employee Engagement. Besides these, all other organisations employed a workforce of between 300 and 510,000 employees globally and fitted well into the category of the authors required target group. The largest German-based workforce was employed by a logistics company with approx. 200,000 to 250,000 employees according to I03 and I08, who referred to I03's former employer and I08's current employer. The difference in the stated size of the company might be caused by recent acquisitions which the organisation carried out since I03 worked for the company. At the time of the interview, the second largest number of

employees worked for I09's employer. There, 60,000 people worked for the international fast food chain in Germany only.

The individual roles of the interviewees were diverse. 17 interviewees held a role in human resources. The other two participants (I13 and I17) were managing directors. However, due to size of their organisations, they were strongly involved in HR processes, which was identified during the preparation alignments with both of the participants. According to their job titles, eight out of the 17 human resources participants held a leading role in their organisations, for example "Head of Employer Reputation and Engagement", "Head of Human Resources" and "Chief People Officer".

When the researcher addressed the question of whether the interviewees' individual employers had an Employee Engagement strategy in place, twelve (including the pilot interviewee) stated that they had such a strategy established. Three interviewees (I16, I17 and I18) pointed out that there was no explicit Employee Engagement strategy, but there were individual activities. I13 reflected on this question based on his experience as a consultant. Due to the holistic perspective of the interviewee, the researcher did not concretise the question further in this case. I05, I07 and I12 had no strategy in place. I07 pointed out that there was no Employee Engagement strategy established, but a strong organisational culture. Last, I12 stated that the establishment of a strategy was planned at the time of the interview.

While 16 of the 19 interviewees (18 interviews plus the pilot interviewee) stated that the country of origin had a strong impact on their organisations' culture, the number of interviewees who experienced a similar strong impact of the country of origin on their Employee Engagement strategy was much smaller. This is an interesting finding, as Employee Engagement is defined as a framework which is part of the overall strategic HRM and HRD practice as outlined previously and both of these are part of an organisation's overall business strategy. Consequently, it could be expected that both concepts are affected similarly by the impact of the country of origin. However, only seven interviewees stated that their Employee Engagement strategy was also impacted by the country of origin. Six interviewees were unable to answer the question, either due to the missing Employee Engagement strategy as in the cases of I05, I07, I12 and I13, or due to their incomplete Employee Engagement strategies which were, at the time, only based on individual activities (I16 and I17). According to I01, I03, I04, I09 and I14, the international development of their Employee Engagement strategies led to a diverse strategy with no influence by the country of origin. I08 stated that she saw an impact of the country of origin on the organisational culture and the Employee Engagement strategy, but throughout the interview she added further that the local management teams also had the option to adjust the Employee Engagement strategy according to their local needs. Consequently, the impact of the country of origin might be reduced if the local strategy of a country underwent major adjustments made by the local management team.

As introduced as part of the *Literature Review Chapter*, there are different tools which organisations may implement to manage international workforces, including the recruitment of international management teams (Almond and González Menéndez, 2013). The advantage of transnational strategies with respect to the implementation of global strategies amongst all subsidiaries was further supported by Lakshman et al. (2017), but they also pointed out that there is a lack of research in the respective area, which was lately supported by Latukha et al. (2020). Still, the importance of the right staffing for multinationalism was also discussed by Perlmutter and Heenan (1974). They also referred to a statement according to which it would take another 15 years to ensure multinationalism in MNC headquarters. More recent studies, such as Latukha et al.'s (2020:476), indicated that leveraging the “most effective practices of managing human resources to all business units became crucial for building sustainable competitive advantage”. Therefore, it can be stated that today's organisations have become more international with respect to their HRM strategies and consequently also their Employee Engagement approaches. In the case of this study, it can be argued that the organisations of the interviewees who stated that the country of origin had no effect on their Employee Engagement strategy in particular (I01, I03, I04, I09, I14, and partly I08) were affected by this. Still, also the cultural distance between the country the headquarters are based in and the subsidiary's country needs to be considered, as it can have a big effect on the knowledge transfer between the parties (Elia et al., 2019). Furthermore, it needs to be pointed out that these insights are based on the interviewees' individual perceptions and perspectives.

I07 pointed out that the country of origin had an impact on the company culture, but due to the lacking Employee Engagement concept it did not influence the missing strategy. Nevertheless, the company culture contained various important statements which were essential for this research and will be further analysed and discussed in this chapter as well as in the *Discussion Chapter*.

The next section focuses on the interviewees' understanding of Employee Engagement, in particular on its definition and drivers, the phenomenon's establishment and its German equivalent.

4.3 The interviewees' perception of the Employee Engagement phenomenon

4.3.1 How Employee Engagement is defined

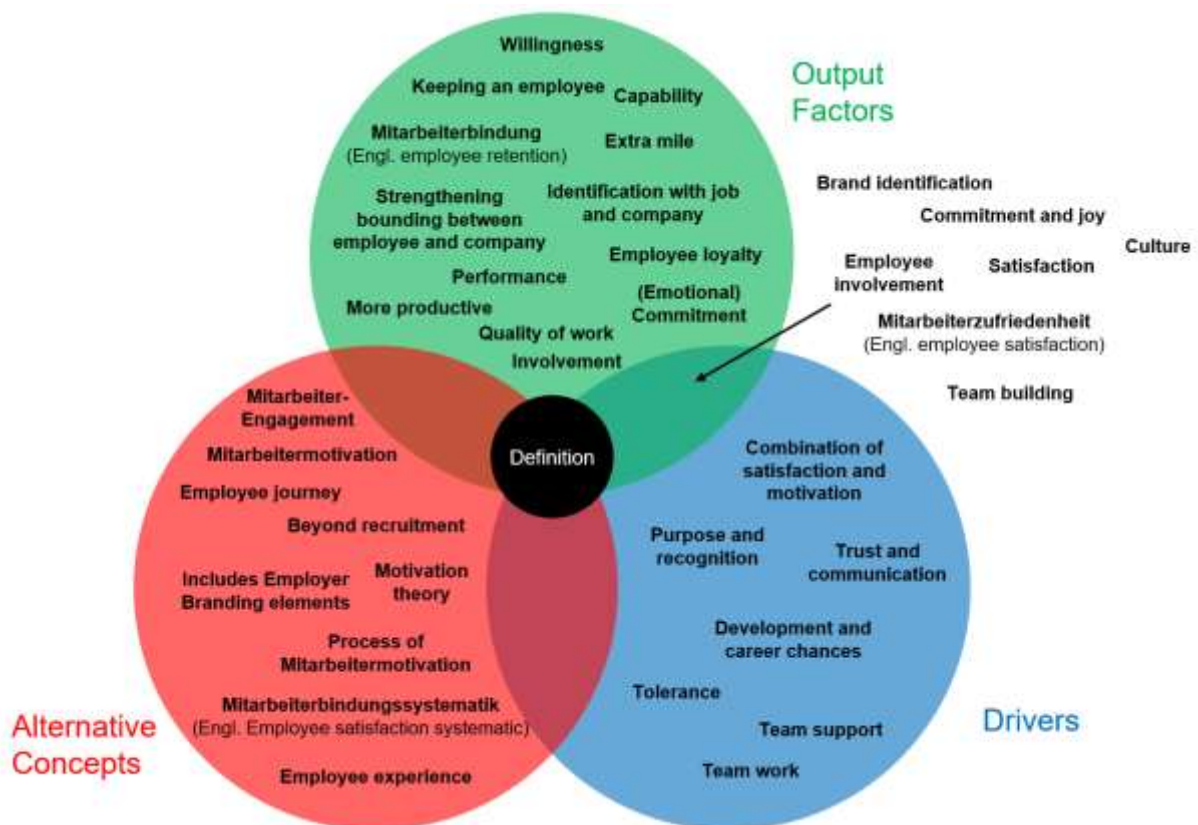
In this section, the author reflects on the definitions used by the participants involved in the study. Therefore, statements which were made with respect to their individual definitions and perceptions of Employee Engagement are presented.

During the coding process, the author clustered the different definitions of the phenomenon as part of the parent node “Interviewees' EE definitions” in Nvivo. In total, 54 references on

definitions were evaluated in all 19 files. These definitions were inductively derived by the interviewees throughout the interviews.

The evaluation of the respective codes allocated to the parent-code “Interviewees’ EE definition” showed many parallel views on the definition and approaches to define the phenomenon. However, the analysis also indicated that many definitions were based on output factors, drivers and alternative concepts of Employee Engagement according to the findings from the previously introduced literature review. *Figure 10: The definition of Employee Engagement according to interviewees* summarises the different concepts provided by the interviewees by clustering the participants’ approaches in connection with these three categories.

Figure 10: The definition of Employee Engagement according to interviewees



Source: Developed by the author

The interviewees’ clustered responses indicate that many of the unsupported definitions are based on either output factors of Employee Engagement, drivers or alternative concepts discussed in connection with the phenomenon. Besides, parallels to the earlier introduced HRM and HRD views were named, indicating that Employee Engagement goes beyond recruitment, influences different touchpoints along the employee journey, but also German concepts were mentioned along with Employee Engagement, such as Mitarbeiterbindung, Mitarbeitermotivation and Mitarbeiter-Engagement. Next, the provided definitions will be

surveyed further to evaluate the interviewees' in-depth understanding of the Employee Engagement definition.

However, some of the interviewees were challenged by the question to define the phenomenon. This also included I14, HR Business Partner in the fashion industry. As introduced in the literature review, the Employee Engagement phenomenon is defined in many different ways (MacLeod and Clarke, 2011), which also leads to confusion (Cole et al., 2012). According to the interviewee (I14), it can be difficult to "phrase a clear definition" for the phenomenon. I06 specified it as "a combination or a synonym for "Mitarbeiterbindung" [engl. Employee retention], "Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit" [engl. Employee satisfaction] (...) Employee involvement in the company" (Michael D., 2018). The previously introduced *Figure 10* the German equivalent *Mitarbeiterbindung* was added to the output factors of Employee Engagement as it leads to employee retention. *Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit* and employee involvement were identified as a combination of output factor and driver, as both can be an outcome of an engaged workforce, but can also drive employees' engagement levels.

Even though the interviewee began to define the phenomenon by naming synonyms and referring to drivers and output factors of Employee Engagement, I06 finally provided a potential definition (Michael D., 2018):

How much the employees identify themselves with the organisation and how much they are willing to work actively for the company, so as to involve themselves completely.

The particular struggle the interviewee faced on this question was also experienced by some of the other interviewees. The pilot interviewee, for example, felt challenged by defining Employee Engagement. According to her (Vicky E., 2015):

It is difficult to say in five words, but it gives people purpose, it helps them to feel more valued, to be recognised for their expertise and the effort that they're putting in. And for us as an organisation it helps to attract and retain the best talent in the industry by providing the right environment for people to thrive.

Other interviewees, for example, defined the Employee Engagement phenomenon based on the expected output factors such as increasing support between colleagues which was positively affected by Employee Engagement (I07), strengthened bonds between employees and organisations (I02), increased productivity of staff (I03) while maximising quality and involvement (I11) and keeping the quality output at a stable level (I17) as well as increasing identification with the company (I18).

On the other hand, I01 defined Employee Engagement as a framework which (Constanze L., 2018):

An employer – from an employer's point of view – uses to manage binding an employee (...) towards the organisation. With respect to values and tools which you provide to an employee for motivational and developmental purposes.

In addition, I17, Managing Director in health-care, defined Employee Engagement as a process which ensures the retention of employees. Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that she referred to the German equivalent *Mitarbeitemotivation* during the interview, not to Employee Engagement itself (Emine L., 2018). The importance of retaining employees was also picked up by the pilot interviewee, the Chief People Officer of a company from the professional service industry. She defines the retention of employees as creating *employee loyalty* (Vicky E., 2015):

I assume when you flip it to the customer environment, we refer to this as customer loyalty, so actually it is employee loyalty. So why are you loyal, because you are motivated so you know it is what you getting that helps you to give your best and feeling you are part of something.

The link between Employee Engagement and loyalty is also made by Kumar and Pansari (2015). They included it in their scorecard to measure Employee Engagement.

The HR Manager of the automotive company (I02) defined Employee Engagement by using one German term: *Mitarbeiterbindungssystematik* (Rebecca J., 2018). I09, Head of Employer Reputation and Engagement in a US fast food chain (Kerstin W., 2018), points out that according to her “engaging employees is different to motivating employees”. She uses the German word *engagieren* in the interview.

Further investigation showed that more frequently mentioned terms during the interviews were *satisfaction, commitment, involvement, willingness* and *identification*. These drivers and output factors which are commonly named along with the definition of Employee Engagement are also presented in previously introduced *Figure 10*. These terms were used by the interviewees without any support. However, as the previous example of I06 and his reference to *being willing*, from which the previous named willingness was deduced, showed, the interviewee did not directly refer to his final definition. Besides, other cases showed that the deduction of a definition was perceived as rather challenging by the interviewees, even though some of the provided definitions matched the previously introduced definitions according to literature. The emerging codes were clustered under the parent-node “Interviewees’ EE definition”, however further references were made which were clustered under “EE strategies in organisations”, which linked back to definitions, too. Additionally, some of the definitions were also coded as drivers of Employee Engagement due to the previously developed coding structure based on the literature review findings.

Therefore, the references to *satisfaction*, *commitment*, *involvement*, *willingness* and *identification* were evaluated in more detail to understand the content in which the interviewees used emotional and mental states by focusing on their relationships to Employee Engagement.

Satisfaction

The coding of the transcripts revealed that many of the interviewees associated Employee Engagement with the German equivalent of *satisfaction*, German *Zufriedenheit*, or specified it further by using *Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit* (Engl. *Employee satisfaction*) in their definitions.

The first reference, I12 stated (Tim K., 2018):

Well, for me Employee Engagement is a construct which combines and measures satisfaction and identification of employees with their task, their team and their employer and which stands in relation to the work performance [Interviewee uses English term].

For the first part of his definition, he picked up on satisfaction and identification as a foundation of Employee Engagement. This partly matches the previously presented findings from the literature review, according to which satisfaction itself does not necessarily lead to engagement, which the interviewee tackled by adding identification. Still, this did not yet make the definition complete. Furthermore, he linked both satisfaction and motivation to the employee's tasks, the team and the employer. According to his definition, Employee Engagement is a construct, which underpins the author's position that Employee Engagement is a socially constructed phenomenon leading to work performance. Besides, he also referred to the measurement of Employee Engagement, but his further answer on the resulting behaviour of an engaged employee was less driven by the measurement, but more by the expected performance increase, which are linked. Nevertheless, in his statement on the behaviour of an engaged employee, he did not refer back to the aspect of satisfaction, which he previously named. Instead he expected from an employee "a positive attitude towards working, especially with respect to performance" and also added "bigger identification with the organisation and therefore is more willing to contribute".

Besides I12, also I16 from the public industry referred to the link between satisfaction and performance and stated:

On the one hand to keep the employee satisfied and to make sure that s/he feels like being part of the big family, but on the other side also to ensure that the employees performance increases or at least stays stable through the organisation health management.

According to her, there is a clear intention of the organisation with regard to what is expected in return of fostering satisfaction within an organisation.

I17, on the one hand, stated (Emine L., 2018):

Satisfaction, keeping them, that they are happy in the organisation and that they are able to go through a development process within the organisation. So basically, that they do not get bored.

Her statement was much more strongly driven by satisfaction. She referred to emotional drivers such as happiness and also the possibility to develop, which links back to the HRD concept discussed during the literature review. According to her, this enabled the retention of an employee. Throughout the interview, she pointed out again, that her aim is to “ensure satisfaction”.

I10 also linked the phenomenon to satisfaction. According to her, satisfaction ensured that an employee showed support towards the organisation. Furthermore, she stated (Linda D., 2018):

If I think about Employee Engagement, I think about it as pro-employee, because my aim is to satisfy the employee so that s/he backs up the organization.

Her statement lacked details, especially with respect to a clear definition, but she referred to the employee’s support for the organisation, making a similar link to I12 during his statement. However, she only drew the link between the employee and the organisation and left out the tasks and team/co-workers.

On the other hand, I04 picked up on the previously mentioned discrepancy between satisfaction and engagement and pointed out that Employee Engagement was more than just satisfaction in his point of view (Christian D., 2018). According to him, an employee who is satisfied must not necessarily be engaged: “Employee Engagement looks beyond Employee Satisfaction. Because I think you can be satisfied without being engaged”. I04’s understanding of Employee Engagement matched the previously introduced statement by Erickson (2005, cited in Macey and Schneider, 2008:7) “engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction”. Additionally, I04 saw Employee Engagement as an evolution of employee satisfaction:

Talking about Employee Satisfaction was important in the past, but now talking more about Employee Engagement looking a bit more... it’s not surely interesting to know if people are satisfied.

Even though, he saw Employee Engagement as an emerging concept of employee satisfaction, he clearly pointed out that employee satisfaction was not the key concern of the researched phenomenon.

Along with *satisfaction*, *commitment* was commonly mentioned by the interviewees.

Commitment

As the analysis of the interviews showed, *commitment* was also often used in the context of the interviewees Employee Engagement definitions. However, it can also be argued that commitment is an output factor of Employee Engagement. According to I07, Employee Engagement is “not just about money, it is also about commitment” to go the “extra mile” without focussing only on what “I am paid for” (Monica W., 2018). Furthermore, I07 used “staff development”, “commitment”, “working together” and “tolerance” as key words when referring to Employee Engagement. Here, it needs to be flagged that I07 referred to the commitment of an employee to the company and the team, as she stated:

Retention [uses engl. term] is an important topic, staff development is an important topic, commitment is an important topic. Working together is an important topic. Tolerance is an important topic – from both sides. These are key words which come into my mind when we talk about Employee Engagement.

She drew the link between Employee Engagement and different output factors and drivers including *commitment*. To underpin an employee’s *commitment* towards the team, she shared the example of a football team founded by the employees which met frequently during their free time. From her perspective, this is a strong example of Employee Engagement. Commitment towards the organisation was reflected in an employee’s contribution into the company’s well-being according to her. In this context, she shared an example of an employee who encouraged the entire company to be more sensitive with the new IT equipment provided by switching it off, instead of leaving it on standby. According to her, from an employee’s perspective s/he has a commitment towards the company:

I have a commitment where I have to say ‘they trust me with what I do in the company and I have to do it my best possible way’.

Reflecting on the first part of her statement, it became clear that from her point of view an employee needs to be committed to the organisation, instead of an organisation starting to earn commitment through the way it treats its employees. This was also underpinned by the Kennedy quote she shared during the interview: “ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country”.

I08, on the other hand, referred to “Mitarbeiter-Engagement” instead of Employee Engagement (Michaela B., 2018). However, she defined it as “the emotional commitment of an employee with his or her company and the motivation to contribute to the company’s success”, which has similarities with the previously introduced Employee Engagement definitions in the *Literature Review Chapter*. According to the interviewee, the definition she referred to was developed by internal experts from different divisions of her employer. The expected performance improvement resulting in the company’s result was clearly put into focus. Looking back the

previous findings on strategic HRM and HRD and Employee Engagement framework as discussed in the *Literature Review Chapter*, the

Next, the role of involvement as part of the Employee Engagement definitions according to the interviewees is presented.

Involvement

The third term which was also frequently used when the interviewees were asked to define Employee Engagement was *involvement*. As previously presented, I06 put Employee Engagement in line with an employee's involvement in an organisation (Michael D., 2018). When referring to an employee's involvement in a company, he specified further:

How much the employees identify themselves with the organisation and how much they are willing to work actively for the company, so involving themselves completely.

Here, not only involvement is used to define the phenomenon, but also willingness which is discussed next. However, the interviewee did not specify what "involving themselves completely" meant to him. However, comparing his statement to the previous literature review findings job involvement (Albrecht, 2010) along with one of the targeted outputs of soft HRM as stated by Keenoy (1990).

I11 also used involvement when defining Employee Engagement. The interviewee phrased the phenomenon's definition as follows (Sebastian S., 2018):

All basic conditions and hygiene factors would create a situation where employees are happy to work and willing to contribute to the success of the business which does not need to be an extreme time effort, it means the maximum quality and the maximum involvement.

His definition also contained involvement as targeted output factor of Employee Engagement strategies. Besides, he used happiness and willingness to define the phenomenon, which both support the achievement of company success. Additionally, he underpinned that achieving the extra mile was not necessarily a question of time (e.g. investing additional working hours), but the best possible output and involvement of an employee to contribute more. This understanding matches the explanation of MacLeod and Brady (2008) on the extra mile.

Willingness

Another term which was, according to the interviews, often linked to Employee Engagement is *willingness*. It was commonly used to define the phenomenon, but was also mentioned when reflecting on strategies and Employee Engagement outcomes. As above statements showed that *willingness* was commonly named along with the other terms above. Considering the willingness of an employee, I01 defined Employee Engagement as follows (Constanze L., 2018):

It means that he/ she does his/ her job which he/ she executes, is capable of doing so, willing to do so and also valued correctly by the company and also understands what he/ she does and should be doing.

Her definition picked up on MacLeod and Brady's (2008) understanding of willingness, but she did not specify that it should result in a performance increase as Dalal et al. (2012), Smythe (2013), Finney (2008) amongst others expected. However, the expected increase in performance, as discussed in literature, was also picked up by I07 when referring to willingness. Still, the interview with the Head of Recruitment was strongly driven by the idea of culture as a driver instead of designed Employee Engagement strategies (Monica W., 2018).

However, *willingness* was also discussed as an output factor of Employee Engagement. According to I12, willingness is a result of "highly or positive engaged" employees (Tim K., 2018). Additionally, it was also picked up on when the interviewees referred to their Employee Engagement strategies which are generally designed to increase an employee's willingness to contribute. For example, I16 referred to a link between higher Employee Engagement and an increase in "an employee's willingness to work for a company". Furthermore, the interviewee added (Sabine B., 2018):

The stronger the bounding between the employee and me, as the organisation, gets, the willingness of the employee to do something for me increases.

I10, on the other hand, added that being engaged leads to an increase in willingness which allows organisations to motivate an employee (Linda D., 2018). *Willingness* is further discussed as driver of Employee Engagement in one of the upcoming sections "The perceived drivers and output factors of Employee Engagement".

Identification

Identification is less often mentioned when it comes to defining Employee Engagement. As previously stated, when reflecting on *willingness*, I12 saw a positive relationship between "highly or positive engaged" staff, "positive attitude towards working" and "a bigger identification with the organisation" resulting in an employee's willingness to contribute (Tim K., 2018). This definition was underpinned by I18, Head of Human Resources in gastronomy, who defined Employee Engagement as a tool which helps to (Timo W., 2018):

Bring something to life in an employee which ensures that employees like their work and that they are able to identify themselves with what they do and the company.

Identification was also named by Brown (1998) when discussing the impact of organisational culture on the level of motivation of an employee. However, the first part of statement made by I18 is of particular interest here. He started with "bring something to life in an employee". From

a social constructivist perspective, it should be argued that the organisation creates a reality and a state of mind, which ensures enjoyment of work and identification with the company.

The Global Head of Strategic Talent Management and HR, I04, even went one step further and developed *identification* further to *brand identification* (Christian D., 2018). According to him, it mirrored “to what extent you are the brand”, “how long... how far you are willing to go for the brand”, “how engaged you are in the company” and how much an employee identifies “the wellbeing of the company as part of [their] own wellbeing”. His understanding of identification and the resulting behaviour of an employee towards his/her job and the brand met the cognitive, emotional and physical roles as introduced by Kahn (1990).

I14, HR Business Partner in the fashion industry, reinforced this by stating that the increase in identification with a brand’s values caused positive effect on employees’ behaviour and an increase in loyalty towards the brand (Isabel R., 2018). Furthermore, she added that “this is our experience”, referring back to her employer. I05, Head of Human Resources in retail, concluded that concepts such as Employee Engagement helped organisations to bind employees to them by stating (Heinz L., 2018):

I would most likely define it through “Mitarbeiterbindung” and I would say that Employee Engagement or the German term for it is the binding of an employee towards a company. Ensuring “Arbeitsmotivation” [engl. work motivation].

According to him, there is a positive attitude to “binden”, as it leads to work motivation. A similar statement was made by I01, who also saw the benefit in the “framework” which allows a company to “manage binding an employee (...) towards the organisation” (Constanze L., 2018). The German word “binden”, as used by the interviewees and which was introduced as part of *Literature Review Chapter*, has a strong meaning here, as it indicates that it is the organisation’s primary aim to tie the employee to the company, not necessarily through the work contract agreed on, but through the Employee Engagement initiatives of the organisation.

Along with the above-mentioned drivers and output factors of Employee Engagement, performance is commonly named. The different concepts in which it was used were outlined throughout this section. Additionally, this chapter reflects further on the topic of performance when presenting the findings of the output factors of Employee Engagement according to the interviewees.

However, various definitions also emerged from the interviews, which were less driven by the expected outcomes of Employee Engagement. Other interviewees defined Employee Engagement from a more conceptual perspective, reflecting on the employee journey. This also included a definition of I09, who stated that Employee Engagement enables the motivation

of an employee throughout the different stages s/he goes through within an organisation – from starting to work for the company until becoming an alumnus/a when s/he leaves the organisation. According to her, Employee Engagement covers the “complete package” (Kerstin W., 2018):

For me it covers everything on how we motivate an employee to start working for us, to keep him and if he leaves how we can still keep him as a brand ambassador. For me it is a complete package.

Her definition indicated the complexity of the phenomenon and also the organisation's expectation in Employee Engagement activities as a tool. In comparison to the earlier outlined findings on the coverage of HRM and HRD, Employee Engagement activities are seen here as motivational drivers. By looking at the statement made with respect to her reference to former employees as brand ambassadors, it became clear that the interviewee saw the phenomenon as a tool to ensure employee relations, which goes beyond the physical contract made between the employer and the employee and has an impact on the behaviour of an employee as previously introduced based on Lewis et al. (2003). This perspective on the phenomenon also led to the upcoming section concerning the construction of the phenomenon according to the participants. Additionally, also I01 considered Employee Engagement as a 360° tool which covered all aspects of the employee experience (Constanze L., 2018). Her anticipation was a rather wider view on the Employee Engagement construction. However, the details were less defined.

In comparison, I05 stated that Employee Engagement means development and career opportunities for staff (Heinz L., 2018). This was supported by I02's statement that employee loyalty, which she associated with Employee Engagement, goes beyond recruitment and therefore also covers the retention of employees (Rebecca J., 2018). The previously introduced perspective of I09 according to whom Employee Engagement effects the entire journey of an employee with an organisation was also supported by I12, who stated that Employee Engagement had developed further towards Employee Experience over the previous years (Tim K., 2018):

However, during the last years the term has stretched much more towards Employee Experience – if I am allowed to say so. This goes along with the measurability and then also the establishment of it. So, straight away I have no easy or CEO-like explanation of which I have heard so far.

However, the interviewee also stated in the last part of his statement that he had “no easy or CEO-like explanation”, which linked to the previously outlined challenges of the interviewees to define the Employee Engagement phenomenon.

After looking into the definitions which were expressed by the interviewees, the author will now analyse the construction of Employee Engagement according to the interviewees in more detail.

4.3.2 The reconstruction of Employee Engagement and its implementation in Germany

As presented in the literature review, the social construction and reconstruction of the Employee Engagement phenomenon is an essential aspect which needs to be considered not only when discussing the understanding of the phenomenon, but also when looking into its establishment and implementation in organisations. Therefore, this section of the chapter reflects on the interviewees' reconstruction of Employee Engagement in their organisations by reflecting on the specific organisation context of the studied companies.

To understand the construction and also the potential reconstruction of the Employee Engagement phenomenon according to the interviewees, the participants were also asked about their employers' Employee Engagement strategies. The aim was to understand whether a strategy existed and, in those cases where a strategy was in place, how they perceived its development. A further purpose was to understand the individual constructions of the phenomenon within the organisations. Furthermore, the interviewees were asked about the details of the strategy with respect to its main elements and overall aim. The detailed questions were previously introduced in the *Research Methodology Chapter* of this study.

During the coding exercise the resulting codes were clustered under the parent-node "EE strategies in organisations". This parent-node included three sub-nodes, which allowed a better overview and easier analysis:

- "Development of EE strategy" to cluster details on the nature of the development (incl. key stakeholders)
- "International modification of EE strategy" to hold all details on international modifications of the developed Employee Engagement strategy
- "Organisational aim of EE strategy" was developed to group all details on the organisational aims of the established Employee Engagement strategies

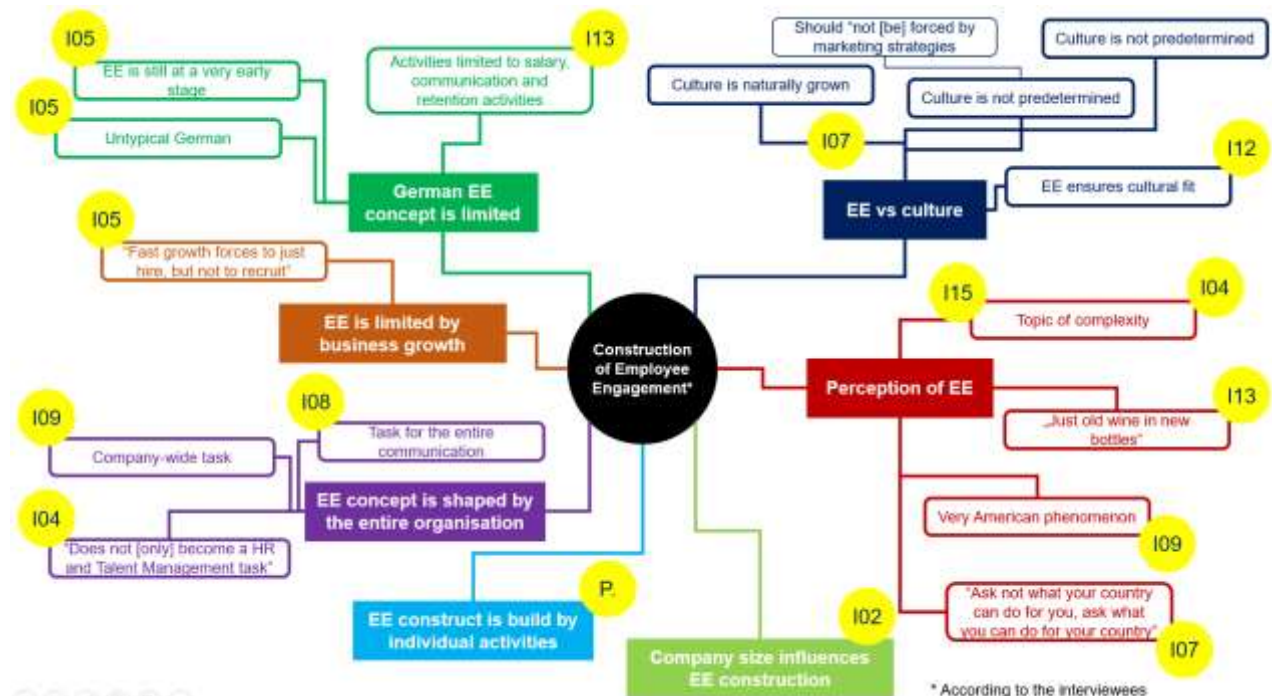
An additional parent-node was created to cluster input on "origin of strategic development of organisational EE strategy" with the aim of clustering additional information on the perceived origin of the individual strategies.

Furthermore, the strategies were also evaluated based on the interviewees' feedback on their subjective perspective regarding whether the country of origin had an impact on the organisations' overall strategy and especially the Employee Engagement strategy itself.

In total, 88 codes resulted from the 19 interviews and were all linked to the Employee Engagement strategies, which were further clustered in a mind-map shown in *Figure 11: The*

construction of Employee Engagement according to the interviewees. This mind-map includes the most significant findings, which are further discussed throughout this section.

Figure 11: The construction of Employee Engagement according to the interviewees



Source: Developed by the author

Two interviews were identified as of particular interest with respect to their perception of the construction of Employee Engagement. First, I13, the consultant, and second, I07, Head of Recruitment in defence and automotive. However, as this section shows, there are further relevant findings on the construction of Employee Engagement according to the interviewees.

According to the Managing Director in consulting, the Employee Engagement phenomenon and the resulting discussion was not new; instead he claimed (Tjalf N., 2018): “Somehow, everything we are discussing is just old wine in new bottles, isn’t it?!”. Similar statements were identified during the literature review, including earlier introduced findings by Albrecht (2010) and the question on the originality of HRM in comparison to personnel management (Wilkinson et al., 2017). He further explained that the Employee Engagement concept addresses humans’ general need to be engaged and satisfied (codes: “Engagement is nothing new” and “Engagement is part of human nature”. I13 further explained that from his perspective, Employee Engagement accompanied a person throughout his/her entire life (Tjalf N., 2018):

If you ask me in person, I believe it already starts in school. Students who are already “engagiert” [Engl. “engaged” or “involved”] during class will continue to be so during their working life, too. It will continue during their careers and if you get into a management role, engagement is still important – with respect to promotions,

managing employees and so on. I would say it is a hot topic from early childhood onwards.

His statement indicated that the Employee Engagement concept is based on the theory of motivation in general, which matches Laming's (2008) perspective on motivation as a "pattern of behaviour" of human kind.

The second reference, which was identified as being of particular interest during the coding, was interviewee number 07. According to the interviewee, her employer had no Employee Engagement strategy in place, but she referred to a strong and established organisational culture, which ensured that many outcomes which were usually targeted with Employee Engagement strategies were achieved. The interviewee used Kennedy's quote "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country" when referring to Employee Engagement, as from her perspective it matched the concept of Employee Engagement and the idea of give-and-take basis between employee and organisation. This statement provided an interesting perspective, as the literature and the primary data findings are based on a trigger initiated by the organisation resulting in Employee Engagement. According to literature, the employee is not the first initiator, as the Kennedy quote indicates.

Furthermore, it was important to I07 to point out that culture in comparison to Employee Engagement is not predetermined (code: "Culture is not predetermined") (Monica W., 2018):

That's what I mean. This is culture. This is not predetermined. And these are the small things why people like to come to the office and why they like being there and why they are willing to invest more, why they like to support each other and this doesn't follow a strategy. It does follow a culture.

She came to the conclusion that culture leads to work engagement as "people like to come to the office" and commit to their organisation by being "willing to invest more". This links back to MacLeod and Brady's (2008) understanding of the extra mile. Additionally, she saw the advantage of culture in feeling "linked to the company you work for". Most important, she added that this "doesn't follow a strategy" (Monica W., 2018) and, according to her, culture should:

Not [be] forced by marketing strategies, marketing products which say we need to do this because otherwise we won't get scorings in "Best Place to work for" and whatever else.

Therefore, from I07's perspective, an Employee Engagement strategy is usually something synthetically designed, while culture is a naturally grown concept and pure employee engagement encouraged by a strong company culture affects an employee more effectively than a designed activity (Monica W., 2018). This stands in contrast to the discussed conceptualisation and strategically initiated Employee Engagement activities of organisations

'designed' to encourage Employee Engagement to develop. However, her perspective on the difference between a designed Employee Engagement strategy and a real organisational culture underpinned the position in this research reflecting on Employee Engagement as a social construct, as it is constructed by society, here the company and its people. Her example of "Best Place to work for" is further evaluated through the documentary analysis in the upcoming chapter and discussed in the *Discussion Chapter*, as the documentary analysis pointed out that most organisations used awards such as "Best Place to work for" to promote their Employer Branding. These paid certifications are provided by commercial companies which offer organisations an evaluation of their performance as an employer by means of an employee survey (Great Place To Work Institute, 2020b:online).

These two contradictory perspectives, in comparison to the previous findings on the conceptualisation of Employee Engagement provided a rich insight into the organisational perspective of the phenomenon. Still, their perspective and partly criticism of the phenomenon were also reflected in some of the critical statements on the phenomenon itself, but also on HRM and HRD. However, as outlined in *Figure 11: The construction of Employee Engagement according to the interviewees*, various statements were also identified, which matched the previously presented findings from the literature review.

From a macro-perspective, many interviewees flagged the complexity as well as the different stakeholders of Employee Engagement. I15, Head of Recruitment in the fashion industry, pointed out that Employee Engagement a very complex topic (code: "EE is a very complex topic") (Rabea G., 2018), which supported Blaikie's (1993) perception of the complexity of social phenomena. This topic of complexity was also described by I04 as part of the strategic change in the organisation (code: "Moving away from measuring satisfaction to measuring engagement") and his perception that "Employee Engagement does not [only] become a HR and Talent Management task" (code: "EE is not only a HR or Talent Management effort alone") (Christian D., 2018). This also reflects Keenoy's (1990:7) statement that the management of human resources (to which Employee Engagement also belongs) is "never exclusively the responsibility of the personnel function". This is also supported by the following statement of the Global Head of Strategic Talent Management and Human Resources (code: "EE as task of all different management levels") (Christian D., 2018):

If we start aiming at it as being a HR responsibility than you will fail. If you aim it to be senior leadership responsibility, you will fail.

Similarly, I09 (Kerstin W., 2018) pointed out that Employee Engagement was a company-wide task and topic (code: "EE is a company-wide topic"), while other interviewees pointed out that their Employee Engagement strategy was managed by HR such as I01 (Constanze L., 2018), I11 (Sebastian S., 2018) and I14 (Isabel R., 2018). These perceptions link back to the

increasing strategic importance of HR, which Carbery (2015) and Chapman et al. (2018) referred to. Furthermore, I10, Human Resources Manager in hospitality, added to the discussion that the Employee Engagement phenomenon had been invented as part of the company culture (Linda D., 2018). She stated that Employee Engagement was designed as part of organisational vision and mission (code: “EE is included in company’s mission and vision”). According to her, this integration was important to ensure that the concept worked (code: “EE strategies in organisations”) and also indicated the reconstruction of the phenomenon in connection with the company’s and target group’s requirements and needs.

I12, the participant from the educational sector, saw the benefit of Employee Engagement initiatives in their support for the organisational culture. According to him, it ensured the talents’ cultural fit matched the organisation (code: “EE is designed to improve culture fit”). Consequently, a changing environment, for example changing expectations of recruits, could lead to the adjustment of the Employee Engagement initiatives to still meet the target group requirements.

As shown in *Figure 11*, further statements were identified and coded with respect to the (re)construction and development of the Employee Engagement phenomenon, including a statement by I09, Head of Employer Reputation and Engagement in gastronomy, who pointed out that Employee Engagement was a very American phenomenon (code: “Engagement topic is pretty American”) (Kerstin W., 2018). Her interview was strongly driven by examples from her employer and initiatives driven by the US headquarters.

The pilot interviewee’s conceptualisation of the phenomenon is based on a different perspective. She stated: “the Employee Engagement term drives the activity. The activities bundled together give you Employee Engagement” (Vicky E., 2015). According to the participant, the organisation’s perspective on the Employee Engagement establishment is rather global and focusses less on Germany only. However, the statement indicated that the construction of Employee Engagement was flexible and depended on the activities an organisation initiated to foster the phenomenon.

I12 strongly reflected on the role and responsibilities of human resources. He pointed out that (Tim K., 2018):

HR was 95% administrative work until today. Now with the perspective – considering me as Head of HR being now in charge of [Company name]’s HR and Career Partners for just three weeks – of developing employer marketing internally but also externally. Also covering communications on Employee Engagement in future.

So, according to this interview, human resources itself has developed towards a more universal function in organisations (code: “Evolution of HR ending in EE”), which went in line with the idea of strategic HRM as outlined before. This perspective was also shared by I04. The Global

Head of Strategic Talent Management and Human Resources stated that today human resources plays a role when it comes to securing the customer journey (Christian D., 2018):

It is the sales and account management team who wants to take the recognition for and the honour for that; HR has an element in that as well.

The perceptions of I12 and I04 matched the outlined change in human resources, especially with respect to moving away from personnel management to (strategic) HRM, as pointed out by Keenoy (1990) amongst others.

During the interview, I02 compared her large-mid size employer with large global organisations. She pointed out that the development of Employee Engagement strategy and today's possibilities differed to the strategies of large organisations (Rebecca J., 2018):

Henkel looked at it from a much more global perspective. They included, for example, international development perspectives for young professionals to reach the next level. So, traditional career possibilities. And we have, for example, complimentary tickets for the local swimming pool. Just to give you some basic examples.

Due to the given flexibility of the Employee Engagement concept, it allows organisations to approach the individual challenges which they are facing. The interviewee's comparison indicated that the conceptualisation of the phenomenon depended on the organisations, the target groups and the targeted needs.

The pilot interviewee stated that her organisation had established the Employee Engagement strategy to support communication and allow employees to interact with the senior management. She explained the key components of the communication part of the Employee Engagement strategy as follows (Vicky E., 2015):

The communication strategy is around ELT office visits, quarterly senior manager updates, monthly performance on how we're doing against our Key Performance indicators.

Furthermore, she described the internal communication and recognition tool (*The Bubble*) (Vicky E., 2015):

The Bubble officially plays a big part in that. Because that is the vehicle to quickly get communication out to the people. So that's the communication piece.

Other organisations, such as the employer from tourism, travel and leisure (I01) had established a specific team called 'academy' which managed the activities the employer had in place in connection with trainings etc., which should lead to Employee Engagement (Constanze L., 2018), a strategy based on the key initiatives of HRD.

Furthermore, insights into the conceptualisation and construction of Employee Engagement in Germany were identified. For example, I12 criticised that in Germany the conceptualisation of Employee Engagement was often limited to “satisfaction and loyalty and/ or recommendation”. Furthermore, he stated that the German Employee Engagement perspective did not “look at the relationship of those and how other drivers effect it” (Tim K., 2018). Besides, also I13 criticised how companies in Germany had interpreted the Employee Engagement concept or even how they conceptualised it (Tjalf N., 2018):

Companies seem to think, 'I do my employee survey and some more cosmetic things and I add some additional money for bonus agreements and do some career management', but these are all things which only survive for so long.

Furthermore, he pointed out that organisations limited their Employee Engagement activities and also their understanding to salary, benefits, communicational improvement and employee retention activities (code: “Companies do only think of employee surveys, bonus agreements and career management when speaking about EE”). From the interviewee’s perspective, individual activities (“I believe it is not enough to just organise a nice barbecue” in code: “EE goes beyond just organising a barbecue”) were not a targeted Employee Engagement strategy (Tjalf N., 2018). The interviewee’s view on Employee Engagement was strongly driven by digital tools to improve communication and encourage exchange, but also by a better understanding of the activities of other competitors surrounding the company (code: “Benchmarking were competitors are”). Furthermore, he added that the implementation of such tools helped to manage a social exchange between staff as it is historically known from when employees meet in the kitchen to discuss things.

Further statements emerged from the interviews on the conceptualisation of Employee Engagement in Germany. For example, I16, personnel officer in public service and currently on maternity leave, stated that from her perspective Employee Engagement was (code: “EE is very untypical German”) (Sabine B., 2018):

Not typical for Germans. Being German means performing and everything must work and I think it is very difficult to get it into people’s heads that this is a completely different approach.

I03 reflected on her experience with the establishment of Employee Engagement in two different organisations in Germany. According to her, Germany is still at a very early stage when it comes to Employee Engagement (code: “EE in Germany is still at a very early stage”) (Annalena L., 2018):

There is only a limited number of companies which already take it seriously. It is getting more and more popular, as in particular for service companies’ employees are the most

important resource they have. But I think it is still at a very early stage and that many companies are not thinking about it yet.

These statements are in line with the identified lack on Employee Engagement literature from and about Germany. An additional example is I07. The Head of Recruitment in automotive and defence, also reflected on the lacking invention of Employee Engagement in Germany. She stated that it is less developed in Germany than in Anglo-Saxon countries (code: “Missing EE development in German-speaking regions”) (Monica W., 2018):

I think in the German-speaking region the topic of Employee Engagement is not yet as developed as much as in Anglo-Saxon cultures, so the US, UK, also Sweden – much more is done there. There it is much more let's call it 'common'. We are now talking about culture which should be taken for granted. However, even this is not natural for some.

Besides, also I09 reflected on the development of the phenomenon in Germany in general. According to the Head of Employer Reputation and Engagement, “motivation is easier to create” than Employee Engagement. Furthermore, she stated that the phenomenon was “pretty American” and she raised the question of how to “make this more German” (code: “EE is pretty American, how to make it more German”). Additionally, she questioned whether “Employer Branding is moving forward to Employee Engagement”. She addressed the question of whether Employer Branding and Employee Engagement referred to the same concept just by using different names. According to the interviewee, the topics have developed into something very similar and are difficult to distinguish (Kerstin W., 2018).

As the invention of Employee Engagement in organisations may differ as well as its development, the author placed further focus on the difference between implemented strategies and activities, which were established by the interviewees’ organisations.

4.3.2.1 Implemented Employee Engagement strategies and activities

Not all of the participating organisations had an Employee Engagement strategy in place at the time of the interview execution. The previously introduced *Table 7: Overview of interviewees' and their organisations' demographic information* provides an overview of the organisations’ establishment of an Employee Engagement strategy. In some cases, the interviewees’ employers only had single activities or a list of activities in place to drive Employee Engagement.

The pilot interviewee reflected critically on the potential establishment of an Employee Engagement strategy in her organisation. According to her, the Chief People Officer of the organisation from professional service, the company’s Employee Engagement programme was based on a framework, which was not yet a complete strategy (code: “EE approach is a framework based on things influencing EE”). The framework included different activities which

had an impact on Employee Engagement and had been locally modified to ensure it matched the requirements of the various countries involved. These activities included training and development, career management, fair rewards, bonuses and recognition (code: “EE strategy focuses on fair rewards and recognition”). Additionally, the pilot interviewee pointed out that it was important to consider the effort for the employee when being part of the different Employee Engagement activities, along with the investment for the organisation, in order to avoid staff getting frustrated as too much was being asked of them (code: “Example how too many EE activities can frustrate people when they are taken away from their job”) (Vicky E., 2015). I02, in comparison, referred to a German term when defining Employee Engagement, which can also be understood as a type of framework. According to her, Employee Engagement is a *Mitarbeiterbindungssystematik*, which could be translated as ‘employee retention systematic’ (Rebecca J., 2018). Here, the previously outlined debate in the *Literature Review Chapter* on the meaning of “binden” in English and German needs to be flagged again.

The US-American fast food chain which I09 worked for at the time of research had started to establish a central Employee Engagement strategy (Kerstin W., 2018). At the time, the interviewee was responsible for this new department and worked on the task with an international team. The aim was to develop a joint strategy. Therefore, the interviewee and her team reviewed the different activities which had already been established with respect to Employee Engagement.

In comparison, there were organisations with slightly more advanced Employee Engagement strategies. I04, for example, indicated that his organisation’s Employee Engagement strategy was not inherited from one of the former companies which were merged into today’s organisation. Instead, the strategy was developed in particular for the current organisation “in the current setting” (Christian D., 2018).

I10, Human Resources Manager in an US-American hotel chain, pointed out that their Employee Engagement strategy was built on the organisation’s mission and vision. The strategy had been developed and run under the slogan “celebrating our people”. According to the interviewee, various activities had been developed based upon this strategy. This included activities such as “a Segway tour for all employees to do a city sightseeing tour or a frozen yoghurt stand or a barbecue party” (Linda D., 2018).

HR Business Partner from the fashion industry, I14, also reflected on a more holistic Employee Engagement strategy which her employer had in place. The strategy aimed to bring the organisation’s “culture closer to our employees” (Name of Employee Engagement programme: “[Company name] cares”). However, their aim was to make the strategy an initiative from employees for employees. According to her, it was a “designated team” with “one employee in

particular in charge”, but the rest of the team was a group of volunteers which were released from their functions for these activities (Isabel R., 2018):

Besides her, there is a large group of volunteers working on this. The board is currently based on 25 volunteers here from the head-quarters in Rating who meet frequently once per months to discuss different initiatives. However, it is completely voluntary and they work on the concept of “[Company name] Cares”. So, it is really from employees for employees. And different initiatives are discussed. It is a highly respected function in its own right to underpin its importance.

Still, the ownership of the strategy belonged to the human resources team. Furthermore, the Employee Engagement strategy of I14’s employer was designed also to bring employees’ families closer to the brand. Therefore, they organised an annual family event which could be a barbecue, but also a ‘Nikolaus Event’ (Holy Saint Nikolaus is celebrated traditionally on 6 December in Germany) or a ‘Sankt Martins Event’ (Holy Saint Martin is celebrated on 11 November in Germany). Besides, they had established three pillars which constituted the foundation of all activities: 1. “Do good to ourselves”, 2. “Do something good jointly” and 3. “Do something good for others”. For example, based on these pillars the company established company runs to ensure that each employee “do[es] something good for yourself and ideally in the group”. Internationally, the strategy was adjusted in the local markets when needed (Isabel R., 2018).

While I14’s employer was an international fashion brand, I02’s employer was a mid-size company mainly operating in Germany. Even though the company had an Employee Engagement strategy in place which was called “We are [company name]”, the interviewee pointed out that there were ongoing budget constraints when it came to financing the strategy (Rebecca J., 2018).

However, there were also other global companies, such as the logistics company for which I03 previously worked, who had holistic Employee Engagement strategies in place. According to the interviewee, this organisation linked its corporate strategy and the Employee Engagement strategy. While the corporate strategy ‘Strategy 2020’ was designed to address the needs of different stakeholders (employees, customers and investors), the Employee Engagement strategy was designed to address the employees’ needs. Here, the status was continuously measured by running employee surveys (Annalena L., 2018). I08, who worked for the logistics company, underpinned the existence of an Employee Engagement strategy. She pointed out that the strategy was based on three pillars called “Focus”, “Connect” and “Grow”, which were globally aligned but “need[...] to be modified based on the requirements of the individual departments and divisions”. The aim of the strategy was to support continuous improvement within the organisation (Michaela B., 2018). The holistic perspective of an Employee

Engagement strategy, which also considers other stakeholders, was also underpinned by I04 from the travel industry. According to him, even though the strategy belonged to HR and Talent Management, it was “part of our overall vision for the company” (Christian D., 2018).

The second participant from the fashion industry, Head of Recruitment I15, stated that they had an Employee Engagement strategy in place, which they had established shortly before the interview. It was strongly driven by the head office team in the United Kingdom, while the German team was mainly involved in the execution of the developed strategy. Besides, as part of the strategy, the team evaluated its success using via an employee survey to understand what was needed. Based on the results, they started to adjust their approach. One example the interviewee shared was that “employees are not benefitting from the success of the company and consequently we created an activity on shares”. Additionally, they started to offer employees extra leave days, for example on an employees’ birthday (Rabea G., 2018).

I08, on the other hand, had no Employee Engagement strategy established in her organisation. According to the interviewee, the organisation was built by its culture and all activities were driven by employee initiatives which were influenced by that organisational culture (Michaela B., 2018).

While some of the organisations had Employee Engagement strategies in place or were at least developing these strategies at the time of the interview, there were other organisations which had no complete strategy in place, but had different individual or ad hoc activities aiming towards Employee Engagement.

I16, personnel officer in public service, stated that before she left for maternity leave, her employer had only had individual activities in place. Some activities were linked to health management and family-friendliness. The employer “provide[s] different classes for employees”. However, there was “no real concept behind [it] and in public service there is never money available for anything” (Sabine B., 2018). This was also supported by the Managing Director in health-care (I17). According to her, there was no strategy in place, only individual activities depending on the individual employee’s needs (Emine L., 2018).

I01 specified that her employer had developed a more holistic Employee Engagement strategy. However, the interviewee only mentioned training and development as part of the organisation’s “big model of competency” as well as a “performance review process” as activities in place (Constanze L., 2018).

The participant from education, I12, did not run a full Employee Engagement strategy, but aimed to invent one. The activities of his organisation were strongly driven by communicating the organisation’s purpose to the employees. Besides, the interviewee pointed out that they were discussing the inclusion of a so called “party paragraph” in employees’ work contracts to also include the culture of the organisation in a formal way (Tim K., 2018):

We are also discussing between HR and management – also with a little smile on our faces – the inclusion of a so-called party paragraph in our contracts: “Celebrate till the end” which is of course very difficult to establish from a law perspective, but to a certain extent to link back to the culture and to create a surrounding where people like to be and to create awareness that our employees are often spending more time in the office than at home and to ensure that they are willing to invest more than just the minimum into their job and to identify with it.

Bank participant I11 took a different perspective on this topic and stated that his employer applied the “Rasenmäher-Prinzip” – the *principle of a lawn mower or one-size-fits-all approach* – including packages for the employees (code: “Rasenmäher-Prinzip (One-fit-all)). Furthermore, the participant questioned this approach during his interview (Sebastian S., 2018).

The consultant, I13, also pointed out that many established approaches were only based on Employee surveys or some other activities which someone had heard about and had therefore been established, but which were not in line with the organisation itself. He saw potential in social intranet to get people engaged (Tjalf N., 2018).

Resulting from the invention and establishment of the phenomenon in the participating organisations, the author analysed the perceived drivers and output factors of Employee Engagement according to the interviewees further and presents the findings in the next section.

4.3.3 The perceived drivers and output factors of Employee Engagement

In this section, the author presents the different drivers of Employee Engagement which were named by the interviewees. Along with the definitions, the author clustered the drivers which were inductively derived by the interviewees by developing a mind-map in *Nvivo* to ensure that all input was analysed accordingly.

The identified drivers of Employee Engagement according to the interviewees were clustered under the parent-node “Perceived EE drivers” in *Nvivo*. Further sub-codes were created and analysed throughout this section.

The analysis of the inductively derived drivers, which were named by the interviewees, showed some general statements on the drivers of engagement. According to I13, different employees were driven by different needs (code: “Everybody got different needs”). This perception was supported by I17, who assumed that Employee Engagement drivers differed from employee to employee (code: “Motivation of employee is evaluated individually”) and the drivers depended on the individual employee (Emine L., 2018). The importance of identifying the “key factors which engage you” was also underpinned by I10 (Linda D., 2018). With respect to these findings, it needs to be pointed out that the different layers of needs need to be revealed. As Kahn (1990) and Welch (2011) amongst others mentioned, there are more rudimentary needs

(incl. psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability) which need to be ensured before further needs can be addressed.

Besides these general statements, the different drivers discussed amongst the interviewees are *development opportunities*, *recognition* and *appreciation*, *communication* and *transparency*. Besides, other factors mentioned by the interviewees are also presented. The different findings with respect to these drivers are presented in the next subsections.

Development possibilities drive engagement

The previously discussed positive effects of HRD on engagement, which were introduced during the *Literature Review Chapter*, were also flagged by I13 and other interviewees. I13 referred to career possibilities and development as a driver of Employee Engagement (code: "Development and career drive engagement"). According to him, it applied to all employees when companies considered it from a "vertical or horizontal" perspective, as "not everyone always wants to become a manager when this person is just good at their role" (Tjalf N., 2018). At the same time, I07 also supported development as a driver of Employee Engagement along with other factors (code: "Development, commitment, team work and tolerance drive engagement"). Furthermore, also the pilot interviewee referred to development as a driver of Employee Engagement and stated (code: "Overall people strategy focuses on recruit, develop, retain and engage") (Vicky E., 2015):

My overall people strategy focuses on recruit, develop, retain and engage. The recruitment piece sits probably outside of Employee Engagement. But I see that develop, retain and engage are all sitting under the Employee Engagement banner, because for me once we have employed somebody everything that we have done builds to that point on how engaged they are and how satisfied they are with us as an organisation.

This interviewee's approach also indicated that Employee Engagement is not only driven by one of the aspects, but by different factors. Besides, her reference to the "Employee Engagement banner" indicated that the company labelled these different activities, which can also be seen as individual, Employee Engagement-independent initiatives under the Employee Engagement brand. The last part of her statement left open what the organisation's actual expectations for engagement and satisfaction were, as she did not specify the expected output factors. A further statement by her (code: "EE strategy is an in compose of retention, development and communication aspects that forms the overall strategy") indicated that she understood the Employee Engagement phenomenon as being something flexible, which is shaped by different aspects. Besides, it also indicated that even though the Employee Engagement strategy relied on the development aspect, it was based on more than one driver. Here, also retention and communication contribute to the success.

However, as these findings indicate, Employee Engagement is not only driven by one of the aspects, for example development, at a time. Different drivers create Employee Engagement.

Recognition and appreciation to foster engagement

I13 saw a strong driver of Employee Engagement in “the entire topic of ‘Anerkennung’ [Engl. translation “recognition”] (code: “Recognition as driver of EE”). Besides, he also referred to ‘Wertschätzung’ (Engl. translation ‘appreciation’) which, according to him, was “used frequently but is very quickly forgotten” (code: “Appreciation is an EE driver, but frequently forgotten”). To underpin his perception of the Employee Engagement drivers ‘Anerkennung’ and ‘Wertschätzung’, the interviewee presented an example from practice (Tjalf N., 2018):

As a company, I first need to create a proper reputation to get new employees ‘engagiert’ [Here it can be translated either with “campaigning for someone” or with “engaging someone”] and here the term would be used first. And during the first months the question comes up how to take care of this employee so that he does not quit during the first day? Usually, we take care a lot during the recruitment, pay attention to someone, even put a fruit basket on the table but when this person first arrives you just realise “oh yes, you start today”. And there the ‘Wertschätzung’ [Engl. translation “Appreciation”] is again not given. Somehow this all links to it.

The example he shared here indicates the importance of recognition and appreciation. This linked back to previous examples on the employee journey within a company and how each step of this journey can be positively influenced by recognition and appreciation. This again matches the idea of HRM and HRD according to which the administration tasks of human resources are no longer key tasks of the function.

This perception was supported by I04 who saw a strong dependency between feeling recognised and being engaged and vice versa (code: “Lacking recognition leads to missing engagement”) (Christian D., 2018). He put even further emphasis on lacking recognition and its consequences in his statement to further underpin the importance of recognition. Besides, I07 also stated that an engaged employee was driven by recognition which could be small things (code: “Small things make EE”) (Monica W., 2018):

I have a certain “return” [uses Engl. word] when I have had a good idea; doesn’t matter if it is praise, if it is a card for Christmas or a monetary reward, but I do something.

According to her, recognition would create a positive effect on the employee and reflected that an engaged employee drove the company culture. Here, the focus is on the company culture again, which fosters Employee Engagement naturally, according to the interviewee.

Communication and transparency lead to trust, identification and contribution

Additionally, I15 pointed out that Employee Engagement was influenced by various factors. As Head of Recruitment, she referred, on the one hand, to the importance of communication, especially between managers and employees, but also to the hiring and the on-boarding process of a company (code: "Communication with employees has an influence") (Rabea G., 2018) when she discussed the different challenges of Employee Engagement (code: "EE is influenced by various topics"). The important role of communication in HRM was previously introduced based on findings by Wilkinson et al. (2017). I13 also reflected on the aspect of communication also as an important driver as it created transparency which again drove Employee Engagement as it increased trust in the 'organisational leadership' (code: "Trust drives engagement") (Tjalf N., 2018), which was also discussed by Bardwick (2008) with respect to the lack of trust and the resulting lack of engagement and by Valentin (2014) in her discussion on soft HRM and its focus on trust, training and development. The importance of "openness, transparency, trust" as a drivers was also supported by I07 (code: "Openness, transparency and trust cannot be determined ") (Monica W., 2018). The Head of Recruitment stated that communicating how an employee's success affected the company's success was essential for a positive result, too (code: "Communication is an important driver as it creates understanding"). The strong link between Employee Engagement and transparency was underpinned by I18 who pointed out that communication created trust (code: "EE is about trust and communication") (Timo W., 2018). I13 also saw the communication as an important driver (code: "Communication is an important driver of EE") but also stated that it was not ensured in many organisations. Furthermore, he stated that communication allowed an employee "to understand the company's business and why things are done in a certain way" (Tjalf N., 2018), as it allows transparency. Based on clear communication, an employee can identify what their individual add-on is and what the employee can contribute. Therefore, "communication is a really big topic", he added. His comment on transparency and communication of knowledge was identified as being most relevant. He further criticised the idea of "knowledge is power" (code: "Knowledge is power") standing in contrast to the idea of Employee Engagement and the respective drivers discussed here. This fit in with Ciuk et al.'s (2019:927) explanation on the role of translation in communication as an "enactment of power and a channel of control". Another interviewee who reflected on communication as key driver for a positive culture was the Head of Human Resources in education (I12). Along with communication, he added the importance of feedback and the communication circle, too (code: "EE is about communication") (Tim K., 2018). When the pilot interviewee referred to the importance of communication, she added the key role of senior management to her explanation. According to her, senior management involvement included, for example, the frequent visits of the different subsidiaries to give staff the chance to discuss topics with the executives (code: "Communication strategy involves senior management") (Vicky E., 2015). By doing so, the company not only creates

communication towards the employees, but also moderates a forum of communication, which allows employees to share their perspectives, too. This way, they not only increase the communication and transparency, but they also create appreciation and recognition by using the senior management team as a partner for discussion. This links back to the importance of communication when it comes to driving Employee Engagement. The role of the management team as described by the pilot interviewee was also shared by other interviewees. These findings were clustered under the parent-node “Role and influence of management teams”. I03, for example, shared a personal example of her experience with her direct manager and how s/he made her feel like she was not part of the organisation (code: “Direct manager has a big effect”).

I08 saw the task of the organisation in influencing the managers to impact their staff (code: “Impact of individual manager”). She stated (Michaela B., 2018):

If you want to steer this through the entire group you would need – well it would at least be most effective – to influence every individual manager to influence the Mitarbeiterengagement [engl. Employee Engagement] positively. Which is of course very difficult and nearly not manageable.

At the end of her statement, she stepped back pointing out the complexity of this task by stating that this task was not manageable. The strong impact of leadership and leadership styles on Employee Engagement was also discussed amongst authors such as Smythe (2013) and Welch (2011) with respect to communication, but also with respect to encouraging collaboration and focusing on key tasks (Bardwick, 2008). The extent of the influence the manager has as a driver of Employee Engagement, was also pointed out by I15 (code: “Direct manager has a big impact on EE”). She stated that (Rabea G., 2018):

If you are just not good in one field, for example the managers are not doing well, then an employee can become an “un-engaged” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] employee really easily.

The interviewee referred to the English word “engaged” during her interview. On the one hand, this might indicate the lack of alternatives in German, or, on the other hand, she might have made use of the English term as the interview referred to the Employee Engagement phenomenon without providing an adequate German equivalent.

I08 also referred to the key role of a manager (code: “Impact of individual manager”).

Along with the drivers mentioned above, other Employee Engagement drivers were also shared by the interviewees. I07 stated that Employee Engagement was driven by an employee’s willingness to invest in the organisation. As mentioned before, this interviewee referred very strongly to organisational culture which from her perspective naturally leads to

engagement. Additionally, according to her, important drivers were “retention [...], staff development [...], commitment [...]” along with “working together” and “tolerance [...] – from both sides” (Monica W., 2018). Furthermore, I07 pointed out that “openness, recognition, exchange, exchanging expertise [and] giving space to create exchange” embraced Employee Engagement, thus aiming for transparency and inspiring employees “to be critical” to ensure “that ideas and improvements are communicated” (Monica W., 2018). In her explanation, she referred to many of the drivers previously mentioned by the interviewees which were also reflected in literature.

The interviewees pointed out the following influential factors upon Employee Engagement which were most important to them: culture (I07 (Monica W., 2018)), understanding how motivation works (I11 (Sebastian S., 2018)) as well as employee involvement (I07 (Monica W., 2018), I13 (Tjalf N., 2018)). On the other hand, I05, Head of Human Resources in retail, added a more rudimentary driver to the discussion: security. According to him, engagement is driven by security. He shared an example from his own experience in the organisation when employees received permanent contracts to ensure security and therefore drive Employee Engagement (Heinz L., 2018). His reference to security as a driver of Employee Engagement matched Kahn’s (1990) perspective of the Employee Engagement construct. Consultant I13 also added a more rudimentary driver to the discussion. According to him, engagement is driven by salary. He also pointed out that in his opinion this was a controversial driver, as others may not agree (Tjalf N., 2018). This leads back to the discussion in literature on the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as outlined in the *Literature Review Chapter*.

At the same time, different interviewees also mentioned basic factors such as resources and infrastructure as drivers. Even though they might only be indirect drivers of engagement, they still provide the field for the setup of initiatives and activities to drive the phenomenon. I01 (Constanze L., 2018) and I11 (Sebastian S., 2018) pointed out that time was an important driver (code: “Importance of time”). This was further supported by I10 (code: “Challenge of time”) (Linda D., 2018) and I14 (code: “EE initiatives require a lot of time”) (Isabel R., 2018). According to them, time as resource is needed to drive Employee Engagement and related activities. I11 added that one challenge was that the lack of knowledge about how to drive engagement might have negative effects and, on the other hand, “things are often done quickly to ensure that one or two stakeholders, which are usually not the employees, are satisfied” (code: “Focus on wrong stakeholder”) (Sebastian S., 2018). It can be argued that importance of focus on the target group is key to driving Employee Engagement. Therefore, the requirements of the different stakeholders need to be clear and understood.

German Head of Employer Reputation and Engagement in a large American fast food chain, I09, reflected that the organisation’s focus was less on the terminology of Employee

Engagement but more on (code: “Not looking at what the term itself includes; trying to understand what motivates people”) (Kerstin W., 2018):

Understand[ing] what motivates people to work in a specific company, to also represent the company externally and how we can establish it in our case.

Here, the drivers were more prominent and essential to the strategy than its name. This perspective supported the idea of Employee Engagement as a social construction.

Furthermore, I11 added that holistic approach was needed which was applied in different situations similarly (Sebastian S., 2018). Only I05 added a factor which does not influence Employee Engagement. According to him, loyalty is not a strong driver of Employee Engagement (Heinz L., 2018).

As mentioned before, the drivers of Employee Engagement were commonly named along with the targeted output factors of Employee Engagement initiatives by the interviewees. Therefore, the output factors were analysed along with the drivers of the phenomenon. These output factors were inductively derived by the participants of the study. Based on the results of the coding exercise, the author clustered the different output factors, reflecting on *performance*, *loyalty* as well as *brand identification* and *involvement*.

Performance

The pilot interviewee felt challenged in defining Employee Engagement. However, when she defined it, she named different output factors of the phenomenon (Vicky E., 2015):

It is difficult to say in five words, but it gives people purpose, it helps them to feel more valued, to be recognised for their expertise and the effort that they're putting in. And for us as an organisation, it helps to attract and retain the best talent in the industry by providing the right environment for people to drive.

As presented in the previous section on the interviewees' definition of Employee Engagement, the author also reflected on the performance aspect of Employee Engagement. However, only a few interviewees saw a direct link between performance and Employee Engagement. The Head of Human Resources in education (I12) pointed out that “a ‘highly or positively engaged’ [interviewee uses English terms] employee shows a positive attitude towards working, especially with respect to performance” (Tim K., 2018). Here, a similar behaviour to the previous example of I15 was identified. Both interviewees referred to the English verb “to engage”. Its translation into German is challenging, as the previous findings on the translation of *Engagement* into German indicated. As pointed out before, I01, HR Business Partner for EMEA from the tourism, travel and leisure industry, mentioned the “performance review process” which was part of the organisation's engagement area (Constanze L., 2018). This was underpinned by I04, who reflected on his travel company's own engagement programme as

an ambassador within the company that all activities had an effect “on the customer, on the employee, on you, on cost, on revenue, on everything” (Christian D., 2018). The impact of Employee Engagement on performance was also highlighted by I08, Expert for EOS and Stakeholder Management in logistics. The interviewee stated that the organisation’s “core activities [were] to achieve industry-leading performance” (Michaela B., 2018). I16, personnel officer in public service who was on maternity leave at the time of interview, combined satisfying employees and making them feel part of the family in order to increase their performance or at least stabilize it (Sabine B., 2018). Besides, the influence of Employee Engagement on performance outcome was also indicated by I12, Head of Human Resources in education. According to him, “a ‘highly or positively engaged’ [interviewee uses English terms] employee showed a positive attitude towards working, especially with respect to performance” (Tim K., 2018). Additionally, I11, HR Artist & Senior Manager at a bank, also pointed out that Employee Engagement was about “deliver[ing] top efficiency” (Sebastian S., 2018).

Interviewee 15, Head of Recruitment at a large hotel chain, saw a strong link between brand identification, especially with respect to its values, mission and the purpose of the organisation, which helps to activate additional effort on the employees’ side, thus bringing the organisation forwards. Furthermore, she stated that the organisations relied on good performance to ensure business success. According to her, engaged employees (Rabea G., 2018):

[...] show much more effort. I believe that they have a much more positive attitude towards work. That they are much more in contact with other employees and are much happier in general. Most likely also more loyal. For sure more loyal.

The topic of loyalty is discussed further in the following section.

Loyalty

According to literature, loyalty is one of the output factors of Employee Engagement which organisations try to aim for. As Brown (1998) stated, organisational culture can support loyalty as well as identification. The interview with I07 showed that the participant had a strong opinion regarding the importance and sustainability of an organisation’s naturally grown culture instead of a designed and promoted Employee Engagement strategy.

She pointed out that there was an importance of tying an employee to the organisation, but she also added (code: “Blind loyalty vs engagement”) (Monica W., 2018):

I see a difference between blind loyalty and engagement. Blind loyalty is just this saying yes to everything, basically ‘yes and amen’. For me this is not engagement. Engagement is exactly this extra mile.

Furthermore, she saw a link between binding an employee to an organisation, employee satisfaction, commitment and goal achievement, which has an impact on the satisfaction level of an employee and consequently helps to ensure “that they also do not leave the company” (Monica W., 2018). In addition, she shared an example of an employee who is strongly engaged and tied to the employer. The person took initiative and asked colleagues and managers to switch off large screens which had been installed lately and were very expensive. According to the interviewee, this employee was not responsible for the facilities, but felt responsible for the new infrastructure to avoid damage and extra costs for the company. She also shared additional examples of loyalty as an output factor.

Another example which was shared by the interviewee referred to the company’s football team, which included female and male players and which met every Wednesday afternoon to train during the employees’ free time (code: “Engaged employees are willing to spend their free time together”) and “just having fun together”. However, she also followed up with her own personal example: as a thank you for her team’s hard work she bought them a tabletop football game on her own expenses. This gave her team the chance to enjoy playing a match before continuing with their jobs. Besides, she also pointed out that the company allowed employees to bring their pets. According to the interviewee, this had a positive effect on the owner and also on the colleagues, as they had the chance to take some time and walk the dog during breaks. I15, Head of Recruitment in fashion, also reflected and stated that “the employee is emotionally bonded to the company” when engaged (Rabea G., 2018).

I08, Expert for EOS and Stakeholder Management in logistics, also stated that she and her employer “assume that engaged employees are strongly involved with their company” (Michaela B., 2018). Human Resources Manager in hospitality and gastronomy, I10, also drew a link between an employee’s feelings towards the company and the loyalty they aimed to achieve (Linda D., 2018). According to her, an engaged employee’s loyalty is also presented by the employee’s support in the company’s decision and his/her willingness to be motivated. Furthermore, she pointed out that an organisation needed to invest much more in an unengaged employee to achieve the same outcome. To her and her employer, it was essential to ensure Employee Engagement to “provide luxury hospitality”. Here, she also identified the importance to place this “amongst the highest positions”. Finally, I04 stated that “the engaged employee is a true soldier and a loyal soldier to the company” (Christian D., 2018). Here, a certain objection was identified based on the literature review findings, as engagement is not equivalent to basic loyalty, as Erickson (Macey and Schneider, 2008) shared. In comparison, the expectations in the behaviour of a soldier are basically blind loyalty and amenability as a subordinate.

After looking into the loyalty as outcome, the following section will look into the brand identification involvement as an outcome of Employee Engagement.

Brand identification and involvement

When establishing Employee Engagement strategies, companies are expecting – besides increases in performance and loyalty – higher brand identification and stronger involvement as outcomes.

The pilot interviewee outlined a connection between Employee Engagement and brand identification and its effect on talent management (Vicky E., 2015):

If we have an engaged workforce, we provide an environment that is conducive to helping people to enjoy their time at work well. That provides us with a very powerful story to attract new and good talent into the organisation. This attraction and recruitment piece is a bit outside of Employee Engagement but it influences how attractive we are as an employer. Yes, there is a slight divide between that and Employee Engagement that forms our overall people strategy.

I04, Global Head of Strategic Talent Management & HR in the travel industry, stated that Employee Engagement meant “being a promoter of the company”. Furthermore, he saw the advantage of an engaged employee particularly as supportive in developing a company. This means that an employee who is engaged “would not first ask what’s in it for me, but wait for it to come because being engaged means the company does something for the individual as well” (Christian D., 2018). From his perspective, the individual should wait for the return, which will come when the person has contributed his or her part.

I08 also reflected on Employee Engagement resulting in involvement. She referred to a joint understanding with her employer stating “we assume that engaged employees are strongly involved with their company” (Michaela B., 2018).

Managing Director in consulting (I13) looked at the outcome of Employee Engagement from a more holistic perspective. According to him (Tjalf N., 2018):

‘Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit’ [engl. Translation „Employee satisfaction“] starts directly on the first day until an employee leaves the company. This also has a big impact on the image. Defining how well an employee is still involved with the company. Maybe this employee makes good reputations for new employees if he leaves the organisation positively and it is a great company, it just did not match any more for whatever reason, but still does not refer badly on the company. This is also something we often do not take completely into consideration. Sometimes, when an employee leaves the organisation, s/he might get a more or less good reference and that’s it. Alumni are not lifted correctly. They are usually founded by previous employees and are not managed by the organisation, but can be a very important tool to ensure satisfaction also afterwards.

However, there were also other interviewees, such as I01, who reflected on the employee life cycle even though they had put less focus on the importance of alumni (Constanze L., 2018).

Besides, other outcomes of Employee Engagement were also mentioned in the interviews. I18 stated that Employee Engagement allowed employees to “move things for the company” (Timo W., 2018), which went along with I07’s perception of Employee Engagement – in this case culture – creating ‘The Extra Mile’. I16, personnel officer in public service on maternity leave, saw a connection between Employee Engagement and “willingness to work for a company” (Sabine B., 2018). According to the interview, an increase in the level of Employee Engagement would result in higher employee willingness. I10, Human Resources Manager in hospitality, also pointed out that Employee Engagement included more than “just the traditional benefit package – also supporting with development and talent management and everything surrounding it” (Linda D., 2018).

Before reflecting on alternative views and definitions of Employee Engagement and its equivalents in Germany, the next section outlines the reasons why organisations aim for Employee Engagement according to the interviews.

4.3.4 Reasons why organisations aim for Employee Engagement

This section focuses strongly on the reasons for and the value of Employee Engagement in large German organisations in the opinion of the respondents. It reflects on the participants’ feedback on the reason why employers have an interest in an engaged workforce.

As outlined earlier on, some of the interviewees defined Employee Engagement as employee satisfaction which can be seen as a value of the phenomenon. However, there were also others who saw employee satisfaction as one of the output factors which organisations aim for (I17 (Emine L., 2018)), as outlined earlier in this chapter.

Another advantage which Employee Engagement brings to an organisation is willingness, according to I10 (Linda D., 2018). According to the interviewee, willingness allows an organisation to motivate an employee; if an employee is less engaged, the person will be less willing to be motivated. The investment to motivating a less-engaged person is much bigger. This is underpinned by the benefits presented in the literature review section on the Employee Engagement definition. MacLeod and Brady (2008) stated that engagement leads to energy while Kalliath and Kalliath (2012) go one step further and link an engaged workforce to better financial results caused by reduction in absence days.

Kenexa (2012b) pointed out that the industry sector of an organisation has an influence on the Employee Engagement level. I17 reflected on this issue in the health-care sector in which the interviewee’s employer was operating and how important it is to engage employees in this field (Emine L., 2018). I05, Head of Human Resources at a consumer goods retail brand, stated that from his perspective in a fast-growing organisation it was often not possible to establish a

tool such as Employee Engagement properly (code: “If a company growth quickly, strategic it usually lacks strategic approaches (incl. EE)”) (Heinz L., 2018):

We have grown too quickly in the past and usually, if a company grows quickly and we have grown so explosively, there is usually not enough time for these kinds of topics.

Furthermore, he pointed out that an organisation which grows so fast often just hires but does not recruit and that fast growth can lead to higher fluctuation (code: “Fast growth forces to just hire, but not to recruit”). Here, it can be argued that an Employee Engagement strategy is an option to face this challenge and reduce the negative side effects, as the previously introduced example of KIA and the aim to reduce fluctuation showed (Tomlinson, 2010). Independent from the missing Employee Engagement strategy in his organisation and his issues to define the term, the interviewee explained how the job market had changed over the previous years and that Employee Engagement could be an answer to the resulting challenges which were outlined earlier. Throughout the interview he stated various activities and approaches which had been invented. These activities were established to create security and therefore it can be argued they were also put in place to ensure Employee Engagement. These activities included permanent contracts to increase security and reduce fluctuation as well as the necessity to improve management skills to establish a relationship and binding between the employee and the organisation. In addition, the interviewee outlined that retail brands had strong brand awareness from the customer’s point of view but the “employer brand is a bit behind”. So, the organisational aim is to push the employer brand in line with the example of the customer brand. Here, Employee Engagement can support the undertaking of promoting the employer brand (Heinz L., 2018).

I13 referred to the topic of work-life-balance which might influence the perception of a brand (Tjalf N., 2018):

The topic of pressure of work is an important topic which companies need to keep in mind. They need to work on the images. The topic of “work-life-balance” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] is a big topic. However, a topic which is also shown at so many HR trade fairs is the topic of “Gesundheitsmanagement” [Engl. term “Health Management”].

I16, from public service, supported this statement during her interview (Sabine B., 2018).

However, the importance of an engaged workforce for the organisation was also underpinned by other interviewees. I10, Human Resources Manager at an international hotel and gastronomy chain from the United States, stated that engaged employees were key for the service industry (Linda D., 2018).

Besides, the pilot interviewee also reflected on different purposes of Employee Engagement. She linked the advantages of Employee Engagement strongly depending on the requirements

of a country. Therefore, she saw a certain flexibility in the establishment of the Employee Engagement strategy and stated (Vicky E., 2015):

I suppose that in Germany the pulse survey is a good example. I know that Germany does a monthly pulse-type with the employees. So, for me the importance for us is that we regularly measure how our employees feel about working for us as an organisation. In Germany, this is done monthly. In the UK we participate in the best company survey, which is a national engagement survey with lots of other organisations. In Australia they have adopted social recognition, which works in their particular environment. So, people are using the tools that we have created and using them for different purposes. So, in Germany with the monthly survey we don't include Germany in the overall pulse survey as they are already surveyed once a month.

The individual approaches in countries may differ in connection with local requirements. Therefore, it can be argued that the value of Employee Engagement in Germany might have a different strength due to the fact that "Germans value security, order, structure, and predictability" (Scarborough, 1998:213) which I05 also supported by stating that the organisation aimed to provide every employee with a permanent contract to ensure safety (Heinz L., 2018). This aspect is further discussed in the upcoming *Discussion Chapter*.

In the next part of the chapter the author reflects on alternative views on Employee Engagement in Germany.

4.3.5 Culture, Talent Management, Mitarbeiterbindung, Mitarbeiter-Engagement and other alternative views on Employee Engagement

As presented in the "*How Employee Engagement is defined*" section of this chapter, various terms were used by the interviewees to define Employee Engagement including commitment, satisfaction, involvement and willingness. According to the interviewees, these terms are essential for the definition of Employee Engagement. However, at the same time, the participants of the study also referred to other concepts and German equivalents during the interviews, which are discussed within this section of the chapter.

During the coding process, the different concepts and German equivalents mentioned were coded including the original term. For references with the German equivalent *Mitarbeitemotivation*, codes were developed including the German term. A similar process applied for other German equivalents.

As outlined in detail, I07 referred mainly to culture during her interview, instead of Employee Engagement. According to her, culture was the key aspect, which drives and fosters the level of engagement of an employee. Still, as presented during the previous sections, her definition and the references made with respect to the drivers and expected output factors of culture

were equivalent to literature review findings on Employee Engagement and the statements of many of the other interviewees.

Expert for EOS and Stakeholder Management, I08, presented an aspect which might influence many perceptions and also constructions of Employee Engagement. Even though, in her organisation, they tried to stick to the Employee Engagement term. However, she pointed out that there was a challenge with the nature of the term itself (Michaela B., 2018):

Yes, we try to use the term 'Engagieren' [engl. engage] as it would be more consistent in the overall language. But sometimes it just simply doesn't fit. The problem is that in German you soon interpret the term with "Ehrenamtliches Engagement" [engl. charity work].

According to Personnel Officer, I06, Employee Engagement creates 'Arbeitsmotivation' (Engl. translation *work motivation or being motivated to work*). Furthermore, the Personnel Officer in a construction company pointed out that his employer aimed to keep employees in the company longer by trying to bind them to the organisation. This was also reflected in the organisation's career management activities. Here, the construction company tried to offer employees which had developed in their current job a new role within the organisation (Michael D., 2018).

I12, Head of Human Resources in education, defined Employee Engagement as "mainly a term used by HR and employers" (Tim K., 2018). Furthermore, he pointed out that the Employee Engagement and Employee Experience were mentioned in the same context. Furthermore, the interviewee stated that the Employee Engagement term was widely known but the definition was unclear. This issue was supported by I05, who raised the question during the interview of how Employee Engagement can be translated (Heinz L., 2018).

The pilot interview, on the other hand, stated that the UK part of her organisation used the term 'Employee Engagement' to refer to the phenomenon. However, she also indicated that the local variations with respect to naming the phenomenon were of less importance as the output was the essential aspect (Vicky E., 2015). Others, such as I14, referred to the name of the Employee Engagement strategy which the organisation had established, and less to how the phenomenon's actual terminology (Isabel R., 2018). The pilot interviewee stated that the organisation did not force the international teams and colleagues to use the Employee Engagement term (Vicky E., 2015):

From my perspective, taking the terminology Employee Engagement it is about having a conversation that does not work if we force people to call it something they do not recognise in their own offices. It needs to be in a language that works and in a terminology that works in their office. Your 'employee motivation' that is actually what it is.

The naming aspect is an especially important remark by the interviewee. It indicates that the name is of less importance, as long as the approach itself and the concept behind it result in the expected output factors. This perspective on the reconstruction of the phenomenon including the name change is further discussed in the upcoming *Discussion Chapter*. While I08, Expert for EOS and Stakeholder Management, stated that in her organisation the terms Employee Engagement and engagement were used (Michaela B., 2018), I15, Head of Recruitment in fashion, stated that in her company Employee Engagement was not used at all (Rabea G., 2018). She underpinned the statement from the pilot interviewee that it might be called Employee Engagement in England, “but this does not include us as there is a big wall and a lot of water between it”. However, she was unsure what to call the phenomenon in Germany, but added “definitely not Employee Engagement” (Vicky E., 2015). Additionally, I07, Head of Recruitment in automotive and defence, stated that within the company, she had “not even heard the term once”; they referred to *culture* instead (Monica W., 2018), even though the company was also operating internationally. I18, Head of Human Resources in gastronomy, had not heard of the term since his time at university (Timo W., 2018). Another interviewee, I17, stated that she did not use the Employee Engagement at all. As a recap, she was not aware of the Employee Engagement term at all (Emine L., 2018). However, there were also interviewees such as the HR Artist and Senior Manager in banking, I11, who stated that Employee Engagement was used in their businesses (Sebastian S., 2018).

Even though I08 stated that the term Employee Engagement was used, she pointed out that there was a certain variation in the term’s pronunciation. Depending on the situation, the team would use the French or the English phonologic notation when speaking German. She stated further (Michaela B., 2018):

Sometimes you would say – but this might be related to the fact that we work in an international team – that we use “Das Engagement” [French notation ‘an·ga·je·man’, commonly used in Germany] ” or also “Das Engagement” [English notation ‘uhn·geij·muhnt’]. But I do have the feeling that we rarely say “Mitarbeiterengagement” [engl. Employee Engagement] as the terminology is very bulky. However, it is the official name of the KPI. It becomes even more interesting when you talk about “engagieren” [engl. engage] and “motivieren” [engl. motivate] and if you want to differentiate these.

However, she also stated that they were not consistent with the used terminologies in the organisation, “using either [...] just Engagement or more official Employee Engagement” (Michaela B., 2018). The lack of uniformity was also pointed out by I18. According to this interviewee (Timo W., 2018):

We do not have one unique term which we use throughout the company about which we as HR people would say 'this is actually what drives us at the moment'. Everything we do is individual and everybody has a different focus.

Others, such as I04, included the Employee Engagement term as part of their Employee Engagement strategy (Christian D., 2018) while I01 stated that she used Employee Engagement on a daily basis and also other terms like *Talent Engagement* and *Talent Management* (Constanze L., 2018). Other organisations, such as I10's employer, flagged *purpose* as a key term in their Employee Engagement strategy (Linda D., 2018). However, I04's company "[stuck] to the English term in all markets" (Christian D., 2018).

On the one hand, there were also organisations where the strategy behind Employee Engagement was named similarly in all regions, such as in the organisation of I01, HR Business Partner for EMEA in tourism, travel and leisure (Constanze L., 2018).

The previously stated influence of various small aspects on Employee Engagement was also supported by I07. Her focus was very strong on the necessity of a naturally grown organisational culture. To her, "engagement is exactly this extra mile" (Monica W., 2018). Furthermore, she linked the expected outcome of an engaged employee influenced by the organisational culture with the drivers and specifies the extra mile as follows:

To think about how to improve, for example how can I save something, make something more efficient. Not just in my team but also outside my team. Ideally cross-units or (...) to other divisions. But also the small things: That I do not switch things on standby when I leave instead of really turning them off. I have a commitment where I have to say 'they trust me with what I do in the company and I have to do it my best possible way'. So, I also have to take care that the equipment doesn't break. Therefore, I switch it off, so that they do not need energy for nothing. Or if I have an idea: who shall I address to get this idea placed. Or I get together with others to develop an idea further which has a positive effect on the company. Also for myself because I have a certain 'return' [uses Engl. word] when I have got a good idea; doesn't matter if it is praise, if it is a card for Christmas or a monetary reward, but I do something.

On the other hand, I03, who referred to the same organisation pointed out that within the logistics company Employee Engagement was used – also by the workforce – and that there was no translation available for the phenomenon (Annalena L., 2018).

Many of the interviewees presented related terminologies by stating that there was a difference between their perception of these terminologies, their concepts and the researched phenomenon. An important aspect which will further be discussed in the next chapter based on the following findings: For example, I06, personnel officer in a construction company, mentioned *work* and *job engagement* along with the phenomenon but pointed out at the same

time that there was a difference in Employee Engagement and *work/job engagement* (Michael D., 2018):

If the employee identify himself totally with his work and his company. And if he fulfils his task or to do's accordingly or if he is rather slacking it or if he does his job but does not identify himself with the company or the work. So, he could do the work in any other company as well. Therefore, I would say that's where it finds its basis, claiming that he should not just identify with work but also with a high binding and a great understanding of the meaning behind his work. Understanding why his work is important for the company and how the company profits from his work.

In comparison, I09, Head of Employer Reputation and Engagement working for a large US fast food chain, questioned whether Employee Engagement was a separate topic from Employer Branding. Furthermore, she stated (Kerstin W., 2018):

As everything is somehow the same and there is no clear differentiation, as I see it, I think the challenge is that you can put everything into engagement.

She further reflected on this statement, presenting examples from her organisation where the discussion occurred if topics such as Christmas parties were Employee Engagement tasks and needed to be managed by the interviewee's team. According to her, it is difficult "to set the line on what Engagement is and what does not belong to Engagement" (Kerstin W., 2018). Therefore, she added that most organisations would not differentiate between *Employer Branding* and *Employee Branding*. To her, it is to be defined whether people want to continue talking about Employer Branding when it comes to creating Employee Engagement, or refer to Employer Engagement to which Employer Branding belongs, too. Furthermore, she flagged that when referring to the department *Employer Reputation and Engagement* was used. Furthermore, she indicated the limitations of the different terminologies used stating (Kerstin W., 2018):

If you want to explain it, I usually say: Well it covers Employer Branding and much more beyond it. There is so much more and it does not end with Employer Branding. And... well Employer Branding isn't a German word either so to replace it by a German word is just really difficult and I usually do not succeed, so normally I say it in English and explain it with Employer Branding and everything else I do in addition to it.

I02, HR Manager in the automotive industry, suggested that the naming of the phenomenon and its counterparts was irrelevant. According to her (Rebecca J., 2018):

[It] doesn't matter if you say Employee Engagement or Employer Branding or anything else, however you want to call it – it is still an English term.

Furthermore, she pointed out that when it came to English terminologies “there are enough companies, small- and midsize companies, which resist this in general” (Rebecca J., 2018). Besides, she advised that their resistance of one English terminology also affected other English terminologies, which are consequently also rejected (code: “Does not matter which term is used, it is still an English term”).

Along with the various alternative views concerning English definitions, various German terminologies were also mentioned when it came to equivalents of Employee Engagement. In this section, the author reflects on the terms which were identified during the interviews.

According to I16, personnel officer in public service who was on maternity leave when the interview was conducted, the Employee Engagement term was not used at all by her employer. Instead she stated that “most likely ‘Mitarbeitermotivation’” was the commonly used term (Sabine B., 2018). I17, on the other hand, had not heard about the Employee Engagement term at all. Therefore, the author asked the interviewee about her awareness of the German equivalent *Mitarbeitermotivation* which was used by other interviewees (Emine L., 2018). The interviewee was also aware of the term *Mitarbeiterengagement* (French notation ‘an·ga·je·man’), as it was introduced by interviewee I08 before. Furthermore, I08 also referred to ‘Das Engagement’ applying the French pronunciation [notation ‘an·ga·je·man’]. Nevertheless, *Mitarbeiterengagement* was also not commonly known by her as it “is very bulky” (Michaela B., 2018). I02 referred to Employee Engagement as *Mitarbeiterbindungssystematik* (Rebecca J., 2018).

Other interviewees such as I03 pointed out that “in the German language there is no correct translation for Employee Engagement available as it is not ‘Mitarbeitermotivation’”. Furthermore, according to her (Annalena L., 2018):

Many Germans say that they put ‘Mitarbeitermotivation’ [Engl. translation “Employee Motivation”] equal to Employee Engagement. If this is correct or if it really makes the point remains to be seen.

I04, who was based abroad and whose interview was executed in English, was not aware of the lacking translation of Employee Engagement. He stated that this was very interesting information to him (Christian D., 2018). This was also supported by I09 who backed up the statement by adding that there “is not yet a suitable German term for it” (Kerstin W., 2018). I05, who was also not aware of the Employee Engagement term, referred to *Mitarbeiterbindung* when it came to the reduction of employee fluctuation, a challenge he was facing with his organisation (Heinz L., 2018).

As presented earlier, I13 pointed out the importance of communication when it came to Employee Engagement. According to him, “it ensures [...] exchange” which has a positive

effect on *Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit* and Engagement. This helps “as a company but also as a person, a team or a department” to become better (Tjalf N., 2018).

Interviewee number 14 also stated that in her organisation they used the name of her organisation’s Employee Engagement internally to refer to the phenomenon. Internationally, the Employee Engagement programme was named differently in her organisation, but the aim remained the same (Isabel R., 2018).

I06, on the other hand, stated that there were many different statements made on Employee Engagement. However, when the interviewee, working as personnel officer in construction, was asked if he was familiar with the term Employee Engagement, he specified that he had looked it up prior to the interview and found different synonyms of which he was aware from work but also from his academic education. He was not aware of the English term itself. The interviewee also pointed out that (Michael D., 2018):

It seems to be a combination or a synonym for ‘Mitarbeiterbindung’ (Engl. Employee retention), ‘Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit’ (Engl. Employee satisfaction) (...). Employee involvement in the company. How much the employees identify themselves with the organisation and how much they are willing to work actively for the company, so to involve themselves completely.

I08 also reflected on the linguistic challenge (Michaela B., 2018):

When working internationally, the English and the German term ‘Mitarbeiterengagement’ [engl. translation Employee Engagement] and ‘Employee Engagement’ [Interviewee uses Engl. term] respectively have different shades on a linguistic level. This can sometimes be a bit difficult, especially with translations.

Not all interviewees were aware of the term Employee Engagement. This was also underpinned by I17, who was also not aware of the term at all (Emine L., 2018). I05 stated that “there are various things you hear. The question is how it can be translated” (Heinz L., 2018).

In the next section, the author will present the findings on the establishment of Employee Engagement in the organisations of this study.

4.3.6 Challenges in the implementation and management of Employee Engagement in Germany

In this section, the author will present different challenges which were mentioned by the participants during the interviews. The nature of the challenges was very diverse. According to I03, “Employee Engagement is very individual” which is, pursuant to her, “the biggest challenge” (Annalena L., 2018). This was also supported by I08 from logistics, who added that “not a single one and only acceptable definition of Employee Engagement” existed (Michaela B., 2018). I04 argued that slow adoption could also become a big challenge for Employee

Engagement. This was an attitude he connected to Germans (Christian D., 2018). I16, from public service, argued that the topic of individuality was challenging, too, as there was the importance of approaching Employee Engagement activities holistically, so that the benefit for the employee fit the organisational expectations (Sabine B., 2018). I01, from tourism, travel and leisure, argued that organisations needed to understand their employees' expectations otherwise this caused challenges, too (Constanze L., 2018).

According to I15, leadership could be a challenge for Employee Engagement. Furthermore, she stated that German organisations were usually well set when it came to benefits, etc., but the impact of leadership in both directions – positively and negatively – might have an impact on Employee Engagement (Rabea G., 2018). However, I06 added that the involvement of employees during daily business also caused challenges (Michael D., 2018), while I01 stated the missing persons in charge caused challenges surrounding Employee Engagement strategies and that the buy-in from decision makers was required to establish Employee Engagement (Constanze L., 2018).

Furthermore, I11 shared an example of transparency and how this needed to be applied under different aspects (Sebastian S., 2018). I03 underpinned that “it needs to be a big concept which is modifiable for every individual employee” (Annalena L., 2018), but also stated that such an approach was also very challenging with respect to its possibility. I07 added that it needed to be real, “not like these kinds of marketing programmes which have generic effect where everybody gets three days off to do something” (Monica W., 2018). Furthermore, she stated that Employee Engagement activities needed to be real to ensure that they were not just ‘marketing activities’.

Additionally, interviewee number 05 argued that recruitment had changed lately. In the past, organisations could choose from a pool of candidates. By the time of research, the situation had changed completely. The employer no longer made the decision. It was the employee now who decided to work for a company and “the companies who ask for flexibility from their candidates need to show their flexibility now”. Furthermore, I05 reflected on his own organisation as a fast-growing company facing different challenges, the “aim [being] to find the staff” and according to him: “you just recruit who is there. You cannot do a bit recruitment process. You just need the people”. I05 also saw a link between fast growth and lacking Employee Engagement strategies (Heinz L., 2018):

We have grown too quickly in the past and usually, if a company grows quickly and we have grown so explosively, there is usually not enough time for these kinds of topics.

On the other hand, I14, from the fashion industry, saw the challenge in particular in the efforts surrounding cost and time. She stated (Isabel R., 2018):

Sometimes you have costs involved and in our case, it is definitely the time effort. Because in our case, you need to make an employee or even more than one available for a day or more to organise such a “Family Day” [Interviewee uses Engl. term]. This is not just done.

The pilot interviewee also referred to the cost and time challenge. She further added that her Employee Engagement programme relied on the same resources as paid customer programmes, so it was possible that internal requirements became deprioritised to manage a customer programme instead (Vicky E., 2015). The topic of resources was also shared by I02, whose employer was a larger midsize company with its own Employee Engagement strategy. She stated that the establishment of Employee Engagement required the designated resources (Rebecca J., 2018). When asking the other interviewees about the challenges they experienced with respect to Employee Engagement, the required amount of effort was named (I14 (Isabel R., 2018)), but also the required resources (I10 (Linda D., 2018)). I17 from health-care saw the big challenge in “integrat[ing] it into daily business” (Emine L., 2018).

I03 referred to a more general challenge Employee Engagement was facing in organisations. She pointed out that Employee Engagement was seen as an albatross around the neck (Annalena L., 2018):

I always had the feeling at [company name - consulting] that the HR department, for sure it also included employee engagement, is an albatross around the neck and it somewhere has its right to be there, but it does not belong to the core business. And I believe that this attitude or this perspective is still the case for many managers. I also see this also when I talk to my boyfriend who studies Finance and we can discuss what is more important for a service company for ages: Finance or HR. So, it’s still a big topic.

This statement also led back to the impact of leadership on Employee Engagement which was presented at the beginning of this section. I09 added to this discussion “that you can put everything into engagement” which leads to additional tasks such as organising Christmas parties which could or could not be seen as Employee Engagement activities (Kerstin W., 2018). This challenge could also be caused by the lacking definition and clearance concerning Employee Engagement and will further be discussed in the next chapter.

I13 also referred to challenges when it came to the uniformity of approaches and an overall strategy. He shared the following example (Tjalf N., 2018):

For example, in recruitment, if I ask three people I will get five different answers, consequently, a clear strategy – if there is one – does usually just exist on company level with respect to where you want to head with the organisation. But broken down for different departments, such as HR, and then even broken down further on

“engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. term]... if someone says so then the person has just developed it. I do not believe that this is a real strategy in this case.

This challenge was also underpinned by I05 from retail. According to him, “speaking the same language and running into the same direction”, was “the biggest challenge” (Heinz L., 2018).

Other interviewees, such as I03 (Annalena L., 2018) and I18 (Timo W., 2018), reflected on general challenges when it came to the diversity of target groups with respect to generations, diverse job roles and skill levels which would need to be addressed and engaged by the same strategy. I01 also referred to the changes of employee types throughout generations (Constanze L., 2018). I11 added the challenge to find a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach for Employee Engagement (Sebastian S., 2018) while I14 from fashion raised the challenge of measurability (Isabel R., 2018) which was also flagged by I06 (Michael D., 2018) and I01 raised the need for consistency which could be challenging (Constanze L., 2018).

I13 from consulting also referred to a more general challenge: the lack of trust. He, in particular picked up on Employee Engagement surveys in this case (Tjalf N., 2018):

Often people do not trust this employee engagement surveys as the tools are setup in a way so it is possible to refer back to an employee; especially when feedback from different departments is summarised.

HR Artist and Senior Manager from the banking sector, I11, specified that people’s fear to change causes issues, too. He referred to the example of an employee survey, stating that organisations and decision makers were “afraid that the results might be bad and that we are getting more transparent in areas where things are not working” (Sebastian S., 2018). I08 added to this topic that the lack of activities based on results was also a challenge (Michaela B., 2018).

Head of Employer Reputation and Engagement, I09, saw strong challenges in Germany when it came to the Employee Engagement concept and its definition, but she also referred to a challenge linked to the academic education of new human resource managers (Kerstin W., 2018):

It is also a challenge to get the new talent prepared for this. Those who are now still at university, studying HR and decide to focus on Employee Engagement. I just had the challenge with a job description for a student job for Employer Engagement and Reputation and nobody knew what was meant. And I explained we were looking for somebody for Employer Branding and suddenly everybody understood and pictured it. In the meetings, I explained in more detail why the department was named this way and that it was much more than Employer Branding.

I18, who studied Employee Engagement during his academic education, added to the topic of education that challenges were never part of his academic education (Timo W., 2018).

The next section will further reflect on challenges, but will in particular present the challenges which were named by the interviewees with respect to Employee Engagement in Germany.

While various challenges were mentioned with respect to the implementation of Employee Engagement in organisations, data was also gathered on the operational challenges of the phenomenon in the participating organisations.

I08 from logistics saw a strong challenge when it came to the understanding of Employee Engagement. She stated that “the problem is that in German, you soon interpret the term with “Ehrenamtliches Engagement [engl. ‘charity work’]” (Michaela B., 2018). This was also supported by I09, who was working for a large American fast food chain. She stated that the term and important related terminologies and their translations such as ‘inspire’ are simply not applicable for Germany (Kerstin W., 2018):

This is one big challenge – you cannot translate it! And... I have the problem that everything which comes from the US such as “Inspire, crew and management”, you would not... you cannot “jemanden inspirieren” [Engl. translation “to inspire someone”] to work. It is not our culture and it doesn’t make sense. We don’t speak like this. However, in any claim “inspire, crew and management” is included and it is simply a challenge, because this is absolutely an Engagement term which cannot be easily implemented in German.

According to I14, “the German market [was] not yet as “Employee Engagement”-oriented as other countries are”. Furthermore, the interviewee also included her personal perspective, “I am partly Dutch and I believe that the Netherlands are slightly more developed in this field. Also others”. Additionally, she pointed out that Germany, in comparison to other countries, was not yet very work-life-balance oriented, which could collide with Employee Engagement strategies, too (Isabel R., 2018).

In comparison, I11, HR Artist and Senior Manager in a bank, saw the challenge in certain German stereotype attitudes (Sebastian S., 2018):

Because we organise everything in a very detailed way and establish it in detail (German term “einprägen” and “überstülpen”) and for a German soul it is complicated to include a certain verity.

Besides, others also reflected on the challenges which occurred in particular in Germany. One challenge, pointed out by I12, was the large segment of mid-size companies, which “is still not very international and therefore the acceptance of an English term is not yet given” (Tim K., 2018).

In the previous section, the author presented the interviewees' perceptions on the importance of leadership. Consultant I13 also linked this to Germany by stating (Tjalf N., 2018):

They think German and work German and this will not change until they have changed their management board and their HR board by adding other people who come from other countries and therefore bring different cultural understandings.

Furthermore, he added:

Those with the German minds usually pretend to be very international, but they still apply a very German way of thinking. Nevertheless, I am not saying it is a bad way of thinking, but it is a very particular way of thinking which other people, HR, etc. in other countries need to live with. For sure, there has been a lot of change over the last years also effected by the media, outlining that it needs to be approached differently.

I14, HR Business Partner in the fashion industry, added that Germans often “think this through again” which caused challenges for Employee Engagement strategies, too. Furthermore, she pointed out that Germany was very traditional while Employee Engagement was very modern. Additionally, she perceived Germans to be driven by numbers, which did not fit to a phenomenon such as Employee Engagement (Isabel R., 2018).

Next, the author outlines the findings on the influence of cultural and organisation differences on Employee Engagement according to the participating interviewees.

4.4 The influence of cultural and organisational differences on Employee Engagement according to the interviewees

In this section, the author reflects on the impact of cultural differences on Employee Engagement according to the interviewees: The first point presented is the country of origin impact and culture. Afterwards, the author reflects on the impact of organisational culture.

The findings gathered from the in-depth interviews show that the interviewees had very different options about the country of origin impact on their Employee Engagement strategy. *Table 7: Overview of interviewees' and their organisations' demographic information* presents the full overview of the interviewees subjective feedback on the country of origin impact.

Some of the interviewees provided more detailed feedback on this topic. For example, I08 stated that the country of origin of her company had an impact on the Employee Engagement strategy when it came to the individual execution of the strategy in the divisions and countries. Furthermore, she stated that in the case of her employer (Michaela B., 2018):

Germany is our home market for our group and still among one of the biggest markets which the [company name] has. And the bigger divisions are the more difficult it gets to influence the entire division.

This was underpinned by I09, Head of Employer Reputation and Engagement in an international US-American fast food chain. At the time, her organisation did not operate on the traditional continental split. The work groups, including the team who worked on Employee Engagement, originated from different countries ensuring joint development. Furthermore, she stated that the number of determined actions from the US were limited and, if needed, locally changed including adjustments due to the local rules and regulations (Kerstin W., 2018). I18 added that in organisations with a long history, the origin did have an impact on the company, too (Timo W., 2018). Furthermore, I08 reflected that certain countries, such as Germany, were challenged by certain wordings and terminologies when measuring Employee Engagement. She reflected on the cultural difference as follows (Michaela B., 2018):

As I mentioned, one of those questions is “Ich bin stolz darauf für mein Unternehmen zu arbeiten” [engl. I am proud to work for my company] and I think that we in Germany always have a problem with the term “Stolz” [engl. proud]. In particular, due to our history – this is a question where you do see clear tendencies in Germany – that this question is answered more negatively than in other countries. And in Germany we do have, in general, by trend a more negative answering behaviour. This behaviour we also have in other parts of the world such as Japan, but I do still see this as a particular challenge for Germany. And additionally, Germany is our home market for our group and still among one of the biggest markets which [company name] has. And the bigger divisions are, the more difficult it gets to influence the entire division.

According to I10, Human Resources Manager in an US hotel chain, the North-American origin also had an influence on Employee Engagement (Linda D., 2018):

The Americans are – how shall I say that – a bit more flowery in their imagination and a typical American culture, this touch they want to live and they do it slightly less in their hotels.

This was also supported by I11. The interviewee worked for a German bank and, as previously outlined, pointed out that Germans were very structured and therefore variations were certainly challenging for them.

On the other hand, interviewees (I01 (Constanze L., 2018) and I04 (Christian D., 2018)) who stated that their Employee Engagement strategy had been developed in an international environment by different parties and colleagues from different countries, saw less impact of the country of origin on their strategy.

After reviewing the interviewees' feedback on the impact of culture with respect to country-specific differences, this section presents the findings on a different kind of culture, the organisational culture and how it influences Employee Engagement according to the interviewees.

As stated above, I08 saw an impact of the country of origin when it came to the implementation of Employee Engagement in individual countries. However, the company held many different sub-organisations and each had built an individual company culture. As quoted above, the implementation and execution of the strategy may have slightly differed based on the divisions, also impacted by their role in the organisation caused by their size (Michaela B., 2018).

According to I07, Head of Recruitment in an automotive and defence company, stated that organisational culture had a big impact on the work atmosphere. Furthermore, she stated (Monica W., 2018):

You feel completely different linked to the company you are working for and to the people and not forced by marketing strategies, marketing products who say we need to do this because otherwise we won't get scorings in "Best Place to work for" and who else.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I12's organisation (education) was still growing internationally. According to him, he saw the necessity to adjust the Employee Engagement strategy in countries to ensure that the requirements and needs of the local markets were considered in the Employee Engagement strategy (Tim K., 2018). The current strategic focus on Germany was caused by the fact that the German team formed the largest employee-base and most of the international teams only held a few employees. However, if this changed, the interviewee saw the importance to also adjust the strategy in countries based on their local requirements (Tim K., 2018):

But becoming more and more international and considering that for us as a group growth is just starting, I believe that if we have enough country organisations of a certain size, this engagement strategy needs to be adjusted based on cultural requirements in the local markets.

Besides, I05 also stated that the operational environment of an organisation had an impact on Employee Engagement (Heinz L., 2018). This was also underpinned by I17, who referred to the specific example of the health-care sector and its very specific challenges (Emine L., 2018). I05 phrased the challenge he and his retail organisation were facing as follows (Heinz L., 2018):

This also depends how qualified the employed staff are. First of all, we employ sales staff, either those who have been qualified as sales assistant but also many un-qualified employees. This is also different to an industry in which I am working with engineers or something like that.

The different impacts on Employee Engagement are further outlined in the *Discussions Chapter*. The next section summarises the key findings of the outlined analysis of this section.

4.5 Overview of the chapter findings

In conclusion, the various interviews contributed rich and relevant findings to the study and supported the author in answering the research objectives. The analysis showed that the majority of the interviewees were aware of Employee Engagement itself. However, even though a few participants were not aware of the English term of the phenomenon, their interviews showed that they were still aware of the expected output factors with respect to the expected behaviour of an employee, while others referred to alternative terms in English or German such as *culture*, *Talent Management*, *Mitarbeitermotivation*, *Arbeitsengagement* and *Mitarbeiter-Engagement* amongst others. Nevertheless, the analysis of these interviews also showed that many drivers and output factors were named which show similarities to the findings of the Employee Engagement phenomenon in literature – even though the term itself is not used. Here, in particular *development*, *recognition* and *appreciation* were mentioned along with *communication* and *transparency* as drivers of Employee Engagement, while the interviewees saw the most relevant output factors in *performance*, *loyalty* and *brand identification* as well as *involvement*. However, the analysis also showed a blending of the drivers and output factors of the interviewees in comparison to the previously introduced literature review findings. Besides, the analysis of the in-depth interviews showed that most of the participating organisations had established an Employee Engagement strategy according to the interviewees or at least managed ad hoc activities to trigger the presented output factors of the phenomenon within the workforces of the participating organisations. Nevertheless, there were also variances in the level of detail which the interviewees shared. While some of the interviewees defined the phenomenon in great detail and refrained from the phenomenon's conceptualisation of their employers, the provided concepts of others strongly relied on the Employee Engagement concept of the organisation.

The research also showed that there are various factors which influence Employee Engagement. This causes further complexity and influences the individual understanding and conceptualisation of the interviewees. It was identified that the interviewee's employer had a strong influence on the individual participant's individual view on the phenomenon. Some interviewees referred to more generalised Employee Engagement approaches which were partly influenced by interviewees academic education or other external information (e.g. non-peer reviewed literature, publications and events) which had shaped the participants' views on the phenomenon. This part of the analysis also provided further insights on the evolution of Employee Engagement within the participating organisations. Key findings from the interviews indicated that the phenomenon was perceived as a very American concept, which still struggled to find its way into the German business context. At the same time, the interviewees provided great details on their employers' intentions to establish Employee Engagement

initiatives to foster safety as well as employee retention and employees' willingness to contribute and go the extra mile.

Finally, the analysis showed that country of origin and the resulting cultural differences also with the organisational culture of an organisation influenced its Employee Engagement and vice versa. However, even though the interviewees were challenged by defining the phenomenon, the analysis of their interviews showed many parallels in their construction of Employee Engagement to the findings in literature. Nevertheless, criticism of the phenomenon was also shared, especially with respect to its relationship to organisational culture and its originality. Similar debates were identified within the literature review.

The next chapter will present the findings gathered by means of a documentary analysis. The findings of both analyses will be discussed comprehensively in the *Discussion Chapter* which follows the *Documentary Analysis Chapter*. Here, the author has also included the previously presented Literature Review findings.

5. Documentary analysis

5.1 Research context of the documentary analysis

5.1.1 Chapter introduction

After presenting the findings of the in-depth interviews during the previous *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter*, this part of the study is designed to present the findings of the documentary analysis, which was executed based on publicly available materials mainly published by the interviewees' organisations, as well as by current and former employees of these companies.

To draw a comparison between the documentary analysis and the previous primary research and to allow the author to underpin her findings, she designed the layout of the *Documentary Analysis Chapter* based on the key sections of the previous *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter*. Consequently, it equally picks up the previously introduced research objectives and aims to underpin the previously presented results with additional findings.

Along with the primary research analysis, the documentary data was also added and reviewed in *Nvivo*. In this case, the author used the *Externals* function to code the data accordingly. The author will outline her approach including the material selection and the preparation of the documentary analysis, after presenting the aim and purpose. Afterwards, the limitations of this research step are present.

Following this, the author presents the findings on how the phenomenon of Employee Engagement is presented including its definition, drivers and the invention of the phenomenon. Besides, the author outlines the data gathered concerning the employees' perceptions of Employee Engagement, in particular with respect to the activities mentioned by the interviewees and the documentary details found on the organisations' strategies. Finally, the author reflects on observations made on cultural and organisational differences, before summarising the key findings of this analysis.

Next, the author will present the aim and purpose of this documentary analysis.

5.1.2 Aim and purpose of the chapter

The main aim of this documentary analysis is to underpin the findings from the in-depth interviews with additional insights from alternative sources available. The focus is on analogies between interviewees' and employers' official material published on websites, social media and blogs amongst others. It aims to explore how Employee Engagement is presented and whether there are differences in the ways this is done. Moreover, implications of these differences or similarities are outlined along with further details on the different constructions of Employee Engagement. Therefore, the author also includes employees' perceptions in the analysis which she collected from different online forums. This material refers to ratings from

employees and alumni on the respective organisations with a specific focus on the Employee Engagement activities which were identified. Based on these findings, the author aims to draw a comparison between the officially published material, the interviewees' feedback and the wider perception from the workforce.

In addition, this analysis supports reflection upon the different views of the phenomenon as introduced by the interviewees. Besides, the author's intention is to identify how strongly these statements have been influenced by the organisations' reconstruction and invention of Employee Engagement. However, the author also aims to collect and present any contradictions or objections which might be identified from documentary analysis in comparison to the in-depth interviews.

In the *Discussion Chapter* of this thesis, the author will use the gathered data to investigate whether the different Employee Engagement views which were acknowledged during the investigation of the documentary sources match the various findings from the in-depth interviews. The author will also put them into perspective by using the results of the literature review.

In the next sections, the author outlines how the documentary analysis was approached, before continuing with the presentation of the data selection for this documentary analysis.

5.1.3 Documentary analysis approach

As previously mentioned, the author used the documentary method to evaluate the different sources available to reinforce or challenge the primary data findings from the in-depth interviews.

During the in-depth interviews, the author started to search for references which were made by the participants during the interviews. The first aim was to find additional information on the Employee Engagement programmes, activities and the views which the interviewees shared by applying a documentary method. However, the main documentary research was done during and after the transcription of the interviews. When transcribing the interviews, the author realised that some of the interviewees, especially I01, I02, I04 and I08, strongly identified with their employers' views on Employee Engagement. This was indicated by the interviewees taking their organisations' perspective referring to 'we' when making statements on their organisations' Employee Engagement views and inventions. One example for this very strong identification with the company and its view was I04. Others, such as I08 from logistics, used even stronger wording which indicated a very solid identification between the interviewee and her employer. When referring to Employee Engagement, she stated "it is a definition which we have developed with our internal experts from the different divisions" (Michaela B., 2018). These answers espoused the importance of the Employee Engagement phenomenon and how the organisation addressed it.

These statements encouraged the author's approach to reflect stronger on additional information shared on the organisations' Employee Engagement views, how they reconstructed it for their own purpose and how they invented it as part of their strategies. Therefore, she included the different programme titles which were named by the participants during the interviews in her documentary search. *Table 8: Names of Employee Engagement strategies mentioned by the interviewees* presented below includes the different programme names which were shared by the interviewees. As not all organisations had an explicit Employee Engagement strategy in place or the interviewees referred to their employees' relationship but not use the term (including I01 (Constanze L., 2018) and I06 (Michael D., 2018)), the table only outlines the Employee Engagement strategies which were actively named by an interviewee. According to I11, his employer had invented an Employee Engagement strategy, but its name was not shared during the interview (Sebastian S., 2018). Please see previous introduced *Table 7: Overview of interviewees' and their organisations' demographic information* for a detailed overview of the interviewees and their employers as well as their establishment of Employee Engagement strategies.

Table 8: Names of Employee Engagement strategies mentioned by the interviewees

Interviewee	Industry	Title of Employee Engagement strategy/ programme
<i>Pilot</i>	Professional services	Strapline: "Inspiring People to reach their full potential"
<i>I02</i>	Automotive	Theme: "Wir sind [company name]" (engl. 'We are [company name]')
<i>I03 and I08</i>	Logistics	Theme: "Strategy 2020" including "Employer of Choice" (along with "Investment of Choice" and "Supplier of Choice")
<i>I04</i>	Travel	Theme: "Confident self"
<i>I09</i>	Gastronomy	Theme: "Inspire crew and management"
<i>I10</i>	Hospitality	Purpose: "We care for people, so that they can be their best" Theme: "Celebrating our people"
<i>I14</i>	Fashion	Theme: "[Company name] cares"
<i>I15</i>	Fashion	Theme: "Values and Purposes"

Source: Developed by the author

Most of these initiatives showed strong themes, which were used like a brand's name or slogan during the interviews. Additionally, the themes and slogans showed different natures. While themes like "Confident self" or "Inspiring people" were driven by a focus on the individual, others such as "We are [company name]", "Celebrating out people" and "[Company name] cares" addressed the collective belonging. As a result of this observation, the question occurred if this reflected the discourse of the sector. To understand if this difference was related to the sectors or industries the organisations were operating in, competitor programmes were reviewed. Still, the research only provided a few results. While the luxury hotel chain which participated in this study, used "Celebrating out people", a direct competitor also used

the idea of collective belonging by using the theme “[Company name] Talent Community” and referring to the “[Company name] Talent Network] and “#Team[Company-name]” (*Hospitality and Gastronomy Competitor* redacted, 2019:online). Other competitors did not share similar themes or slogans on their websites. Furthermore, a direct competitor of the travel company was evaluated. There, no theme like the one presented was identified. However, further analysis of the themes of the participating organisations of this research were not used prominently in the evaluated documents. Consequently, it is possible that competitors also used these kinds of themes primarily for their internal communication.

With respect to further research, these insights helped the author to identify relevant information from sources available online. However, for the documentary analysis she reviewed material from all organisations – also those which stated that they had no Employee Engagement strategy in place. The aim was to understand whether there might be a reference to Employee Engagement or one of the related views and concepts of the phenomenon, even though the interviewee stated that there no Employee Engagement strategy had been invented in the respective organisation. As I16’s employer was not specifically named during the interview due to the interviewee’s current maternity leave, the author initiated no further research on this organisation (Sabine B., 2018). Besides, the I13’s organisation was also left out as the consultant referred to examples without providing the names of the organisations which he had worked for in the past (Tjalf N., 2018). Finally, the website of the pilot interviewee’s organisation could not be analysed, as it was shut down after the company was taken over by another organisation (Vicky E., 2015).

The selection of material is described in the next section.

5.1.4 Selection of relevant publicly-available material

As introduced in the *Research Methodology Chapter*, the author identified sources which were available online to the public. Therefore, no further approvals from the organisations were needed for this part of the research and no ethical issues were raised either. Based on the list of potential sources which was mentioned earlier on, the author specifies the channels in more detail in this section.

To gather first-hand information from the organisations themselves, the author identified the **corporate websites** as the key source. In particular, the career pages of the larger organisations offer substantial amounts of information to potential employees which provided good insights into the organisations’ views on Employee Engagement. The author also looked into any kinds of **sub-pages** which might be used by the organisations to communicate Employee Engagement-related topics.

Besides, the companies’ **social media** profiles were reviewed as well, mainly to gather posts and comments from employees, which were linked to the reviewed material. However, during

this step, the author also identified a lot of material published by the organisations themselves. Therefore, she analysed the organisations' corporate profiles and focused on material which was shared by them and which linked to their workforce, Employee Engagement and other related topics. As stated previously, the main channel identified for the analysis was Facebook. The author also considered Twitter and Instagram, but the format user on Facebook, especially with respect to the availability of historic data on the so-called timeline, reinsured the author to focus mainly on Facebook.

Additionally, the author reviewed **external websites** such as the German website Kununu and the international equivalent Glassdoor to gather information on the participating organisations. Glassdoor, in particular, provided a rich database on employee and alumni feedback on the organisations researched as part of this study. Additionally, employee benefits provided by the companies were evaluated on the platforms. Kununu, on the other hand, provided feedback on the company culture and how (previous) employees evaluated the organisations in a separate section, which was also reviewed for the documentary analysis. Still, the qualitative data analysed, including statements and comments on the organisations, was mainly gathered from Glassdoor.

Moreover, **professional networks** were identified as communication channels of large organisations. This also includes information on Employee Engagement, career and talent management. The authors particular focus was on LinkedIn as a source and on Xing, an equivalent of LinkedIn which is mainly known in German-speaking countries. LinkedIn was identified as a global tool which was used mainly in English and the identified company profiles containing mainly international information about the brands. The author recognised the data on the German equivalent Xing as being more useful, as it focused mainly on the German market. Still, the professional networks were less frequently used for the analysis.

As stated by Denscombe (1998:10), the different sources helped the author to establish the required "panoramic view" to enrich the dataset further. However, she followed Bryman and Bell's (2003:404) approach to reflect on "authenticity", "credibility", "representativeness" and "meaning" of the material considered to be clear on the quality of the sources reviewed and included. Especially the social media channels and other online materials used hold a certain risk, as the authenticity is frequently unclear due to the intransparent sources. These kinds of platforms and forums allow every person to share a statement, independent from their real relationship to the organisation. Consequently, the author's main focus was on publications by the employers themselves.

After looking into the material used for the documentary analysis, the author presents the preparation of the analysis in the following section.

5.1.5 Preparation of the documentary analysis

The amount of data available online is immense. Therefore, the author needed to focus on the essential and most relevant data with a strong link to the presented research. For example, the logistics company which I03 and I08 referred to had 965 ratings and 193 data sets on corporate benefits on Glassdoor (*Logistics Company Group* redacted, 2020a:online) while the fast food chain (*Fast Food Company* redacted, 2020:online), which I09 worked for, had even more with approx. 36,000 ratings and 6,900 posts on benefits at the time of research (latest update: 24.07.2020). Therefore, the author scanned through the subject lines of the individual ratings to identify posts which were linked to Employee Engagement, its drivers and other related topics. As stated previously, the interviews were conducted more than two years prior to the finalisation of the documentary analysis. To ensure that the documentary material gathered still referred to the same strategies, their aims and inventions, the author started with the documentary analysis of the company websites to identify differences, before reviewing external sources. During this task, the author considered the date of creation to make sure that the source referred to the same context as the interviewee. In summary, only the logistics employer had an updated overall organisational strategy in place, which still referred to the same key elements, especially with respect to its people strategy, while the takeover of the pilot organisation also affected its strategic positioning, management teams and overall human resources. Both changes are considered in this documentary analysis.

During the preparation of the analysis, the author continued to reflect on the quality of the sources identified based on the four quality indicators 'authenticity', 'credibility', 'representativeness' and 'meaning'.

Along with the primary data, the author added the information gathered in *Nvivo*. To categorise the data independent from the primary data, she created the findings as *Nvivo Externals*. She also organised the data in *Nvivo* in accordance with the interviewees' individual identification numbers to achieve a better overview. Additionally, she organised the analysis in a similar way as the primary data analysis which was presented in the previous chapter. For the analysis, the author created a memo which she further developed in line with the analysis itself. To allow a better overview on the findings, the author added the interview numberings to the title of the external *Nvivo* data. Furthermore, she created a relationship between the interviewees' *Nvivo* Cases and the external data in the system. Finally, she grouped all resulting *Nodes* under the parent-node 'Externals'.

As I03 and I08 referred to the same employer, the author linked all *Externals* created which were identified during the documentary analysis and referred to the logistics employer to I08.

As outlined in the *Research Methodology and Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapters*, the author was asked to anonymise the primary data by the majority of participants. To ensure

that it is impossible to link the documentary data back to the interviewees, the author also redacted the references gathered and list of references attached to this study to ensure that the participants' anonymity is ensured.

Before presenting the detailed analysis and findings of the documentary analysis, the author presents the general observations in the next section.

5.1.6 Limitation of the documentary analysis

As outlined in the *Research Methodology Chapter*, some of the interviewees, such as the pilot interviewee and I09, mentioned communication channels which were used by the organisations and their employees, but which were not available to public. This included 'The Bubble' of the pilot's organisation (Vicky E., 2015). The pilot interviewee explained that this was an internal online communication tool which included the social recognition functionality already mentioned. Additionally, I09 referred to online communication which was initiated via the instant messenger WhatsApp (Kerstin W., 2018). According to her, this tool was used to communicate with staff in approx. 1,500 restaurants all over Germany in 2018 (Statista, 2018:online). These communication channels were not made available to the author.

Besides, it needs to be pointed out that the number of posts, comments and information published and shared via social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are very extensive. In addition, there new information is made available on an ongoing basis. However, the amount of data available in forums such as Glassdoor and Kununu also increase at very fast pace. Therefore, the author decided to focus only on Facebook as social media channel. The decision was mainly based on the setup of the platform, as historic data could be viewed and analysed more easily and the platform is commonly used to re-post publications made via Instagram or Twitter, as the profiles are linked with each other. For this study, the author had to focus on data relevant to this research and which supported the development of an answer to the research questions. Additional sources which the interviewees named, such as the intranet, social intranet and platforms as well as internal WhatsApp groups were not publicly available. Still, the online channels available held further rich information, which was not evaluated as relevant for this study, as it focused on a different country and so on. A longitudinal study with a focus on an individual case study could be used to analyse the long-term effect of Employee Engagement in certain organisations (also as part of a cross-country study), while also considering its impact on staff and their performance.

During the documentary analysis, the author identified various awards which companies named on their websites and via their social media channels to underpin their good performance as employers. The assessment criteria of the different awards presented in the documentary analysis are not further specified. The investigation of these awards or certificates, in particular the "Top Employer" certificate, showed that this information was not

publicly available, as the provider's business model was based on selling the certification. According to the provider, they evaluated the HR practices of the employer via an employee survey, which was based on 10 different areas including "Talent Strategy", "Workforce Planning", "Talent Acquisition", "On-boarding", "Learning & Development", "Performance Management", "Leadership Development", "Career & Succession Management", "Compensation & Benefits" and "Culture" (Top Employers Institute, 2020:online). A parallel approach was identified on the website of the provider Great Place to Work (2020b:online).

Before presenting the results of the documentary analysis, the author first outlines the general documentary research observations before.

5.2 Documentary research observations

5.2.1 General observations from the documentary analysis

This section presents some general observations which were made during the documentary analysis.

First of all, it needs to be pointed out that none of the organisations explicitly used the term Employee Engagement on their websites. Hence, none named its drivers or output factors. However, both drivers and output factors were used to outline the work environment and the organisations' expectations in their employment relations. Nevertheless, there were different indicators for Employee Engagement, the organisations' views on the phenomenon and the expected results identified. This data was analysed as part of this documentary analysis.

Second, the number of identified documents varied strongly between the different organisations, on the one hand with respect to the data shared by the organisation itself and on the other hand with respect to statements and comments made by current or former employees. The companies' online profiles on Glassdoor, which were managed by the organisations themselves, provided substantial information, including details on the tourism, travel and leisure company (I01), the logistics employer (I03 and I08), the travel company (I04), the hotel chain (I10) and the two fashion brands (I14 and I15). However, there were also organisations such as the employer of I02, operating in the automotive industry, the automotive and defence company (I07) and the company from health-care (I17) with no company profile available on Glassdoor at the time of research. The retailer (I05) (*Retail Company redacted*, 2020:online) documented only a small number of references (17 ratings and eight references on benefits) in comparison to its number of employees. This also applied for the gastronomy employer (*Gastronomy Company redacted*, 2020b:online). Besides, the profiles of the bank (I11) (*Bank Company redacted*, 2020:online) and the participating organisation from education (I12) (*Education Company redacted*, 2020:online) only included a few references. Others, such as the construction company (I06), only presented a company profile without any references (*Construction Company redacted*, 2020:online). The pilot interviewee's organisation also

owned a Glassdoor company profile including employees' feedback (*Professional Services Company* redacted, 2020:online), even though the company was acquired by another organisation, as pointed out in the *Research Methodology Chapter*, during the conduction of the study (Anonymous, 2016:online). The company's website was no longer available. Therefore, the organisation's website no longer existed and the author focused on alternative documentary data for this analysis.

In addition, the author identified that the logistics company provided a very comprehensive career site on its website which addressed different talent groups from delivery staff, students, trainees to experienced employees. As stated above, the author also found many references about the logistics employer on Glassdoor. The analysis of the selected material is presented in the next sections. However, due to the diverse number of employees and the various job types, many of the references available in this forum were submitted by the company's delivery staff and contained information on the number of parcels which needed to be delivered and the other tasks of a deliverer in particular, which did not provide direct information on the company's Employee Engagement strategy. However, this information was also of interest, as it referred to the previously introduced importance of safety which influences Employee Engagement (Kumar and Pansari (2015), Welch (2011), Khan (1990)).

Nevertheless, the missing reference to strategic aspects could also mean that the company's delivery staff was not aware of the activities or did not experience the Employee Engagement activities which were shared by interviewees. This assumption is supported by the gathered documentary data based on submissions by staff from the headquarters, who referred to some of the activities in place. The full details are presented in the next sections of this chapter. Various social media activities of the German logistics company were also identified. It needs to be pointed out that the company's different sub-brands communicated via individual sub-company profiles on Facebook, which made it difficult to gather a general overview of the group's activities. Through further research, one Facebook profile was finally identified which referred to career related topics within the entire group (*Logistics Company Karriere* redacted, 2020:online).

Third, the analysis showed that it can be argued that larger organisations with better access to resources and most likely also with bigger budgets are probably more commonly able to develop integrated approaches with respect to the messages, communication and the channels used. The employer from the field of logistics, for example, ran a very integrated approach covering the full range of communication channels with different Employee Engagement activities. However, on the other hand, the employer from automotive and defence was identified as less active on social media and in forums as stated above, even though the company counted itself as an international player in the field (*Automotive and Defence Company* redacted, 2020a:online). This reservation might be related to the frequently

criticised defence sector, which again been discussed in various mass-media channels for its business practices (cr/dpa (2020:online); ak/dpa-afx (2020:online)). However, further evidence was not identified. Besides, it can be argued that organisations with existing Employee Engagement strategies or at least more advanced approaches also reflect on these activities in their communication channels.

Fourth, organisations which operated mainly nationally, such as I02's and I06's employers, were represented less on different channels such as Glassdoor as mentioned previously. However, this might also be influenced by the number of employees and the resulting lower level of feedback in total.

Finally, it needs to be pointed out that the documentary data is blurry to a certain extent, as it was created by different commentators of very diverse backgrounds. As the research showed, many of the international organisations employed international staff. Consequently, the insights gathered might be influenced by different perceptions when it comes to the understanding of Employee Engagement and impact of cultural differences. In particular, the previously introduced source Glassdoor holds a lot of national and international feedback from employees. Based on the location of the employee, the author was able to identify whether the commentator referred to his or her experience in Germany. However, the only indicator on the background of the commentator was the language of the shared comment, differentiating between comments shared in English or in German. The research showed that especially the logistics employer (I03 and I08), the fast food chain (I09), the company from tourism, travel and leisure (I01), the fashion brand with UK-origin (I15), the company from the travel industry (I04) and the international hotel chain (I10) were rated by many international team members. Therefore, the author looked into feedback which was linked to German-based employees according to their locations, when it came to the perception of the organisations' Employee Engagement inventions in Germany.

After reflecting on the general observations, the author presents her findings on the Employee Engagement programmes which were named by the interviewees.

5.2.2 Findings on invented Employee Engagement solutions

The author searched for details on the Employee Engagement programmes based on the strategies' names which were introduced by the participants during the interviews. In this section, she presents the findings on the individual strategies per employer.

“Confident self” – I01 and I04

I01 and I04's organisations belonged to the same group as already mentioned. I01 did not actively refer to the name of the organisation's Employee Engagement strategy. On the other hand, I04 introduced the strategy's name during his interview. The author reviewed the websites and social media channels of both organisations to understand if and how the

strategy was communicated online. The programme's name 'confident self' was not prominent presented on the employer's website. However, as the programme received a human resources award in 2017, some press releases were available which referred to the programme (*Travel Company* redacted, 2017b:online). According to the information identified, the initiative was invented to support the *recruiting* of new employees and at the same time make sure that the organisation was able to *retain* existing employees.

Furthermore, the company aimed for *employee satisfaction*, *empowerment* and invested in *development* to increase the *identification* with the brand. Additionally, benefits were presented which included development possibilities, salary and security. Besides, the 'confident self' strategy focused strongly on diversity to encourage females in management positions (*Travel Company* redacted, 2018:online).

"Wir sind [company name]" – I02

The company's website referred to the "Wir sind [company name]", in English "We are [Company name]" (*Automotive Company* redacted, 2019a:online). However, the author also identified some articles published in the local press which referred to the employer's health management activities and some joint team activities connected to the European football cup as part of the Employee Engagement strategy. Both examples were developed under the umbrella of "Wir sind [company name]". The Employee Engagement programme's slogan was also used in social media as hashtag *#wiirsind[companyname]* (*Automotive Company* redacted, 2020:online).

"Strategy 2020" – I03 and I08

With respect to its Employee Engagement component, "Strategy 2020" was mainly presented on the organisation's website. The strategy focused on the holistic and overall direction of the business. Its details were published in different press releases and organisational reports. Besides, in October 2019 the new approach "Strategy 2025" was published and the latest online communication referred to this enhancement of the original strategy (*Logistics Company* redacted, 2019a:online). The strategy is embraced amongst all divisions of the company, which is highly fragmented with respect to different divisions which focus on different logistic products (*Logistics Company* redacted, 2020:online). As part of the press releases mentioned, the organisations referred to keywords such as *employee experience* and *training*. The strategy itself was still developed upon the organisation's three pillars: 'Employer of Choice', 'Provider of Choice' and 'Investment of Choice'. In addition, the topic of Employee Engagement and the KPI results were presented in the suitability report of the organisation (*Logistics Company Group* redacted, 2019). The strategy targets three key aims and the related target groups of the organisation which are shown in *Figure 12: Three aims of Strategy 2025*.

Figure 12: Three aims of Strategy 2025



Source: *Logistics Company AG redacted* (2020:online)

However, not many details were published about the strategy's content with respect to activities to push Employee Engagement. The organisation supported various social activities and encouraged its employees to support these activities and also referred to the term Employee Engagement in its online communication. Besides, when reflecting on an increase in *motivation* and *productivity* the company referred to training and diversity activities as well as *health management* and *safety at work* (*Logistics Company Group redacted, 2020a:online*).

"Inspire crew and management" – 109

The author searched for further insights into the international gastronomy employer's Employee Engagement strategy which is operated in fast food. It was identified that the strategy was less present on the company's website (*Fast Food Company redacted, no date*). This website referred to various awards the company had achieved as an employer, but overall, it was mainly designed to address potential new employees and talents. Therefore, it focused on open positions. In addition, the website introduced the visitor to various social media channels which host career profiles and are called "[Company name] Deutschland Karriere" (*Fast Food Company Deutschland Karriere redacted, 2020c:online*). On Facebook, for example, the organisation's focus was mainly on employees' day-to-day stories and their experience working for the company (*Fast Food Company Deutschland Karriere redacted, 2020b:online*).

However, when analysing the company's corporate website instead of their customer brand website, details on leadership, corporate responsibility and also community engagement were

provided. There, the company referred to its long history when it came to employee networks and diversity (*Fast Food Company* redacted, 2017-2019:online)

“Celebrating our people” – I10

The US-hotel chain for which I10 worked did not name the strategy ‘celebrating our people’ on its career website (*Hospitality and Gastronomy Company* redacted, 2020:online). Instead, their key message on the career website was based on ‘family’, which reflected the company’s theme ‘celebrating out people’ and related to its organisational culture, too. However, further online research led to different sources referring to the programme (Rajpal, 2014:online).

Further investigation showed that some international hotels presented their ‘celebrating out people’ activities on social media platforms which were available to the public. For example, the Dubai team (*Hospitality and Gastronomy Company* Dubai redacted, 2019:online) presented their activities in a slide show with pictures of different activities and their staff to the audience. Besides, the Birmingham team also used a YouTube video to ‘celebrate’ their people (Thanos:online) in 2014. However, additional material was also available from other international locations which was published under the ‘celebrating our people’ slogan including Goa (Viva Goa, 2014:online), Bangalore (Bedi, 2016:online), Kathmandu (New Business Age, 2019:online) and New Delhi (Studio, 2018:online). The international usage of the theme and the concept supported that the company had developed a global strategy, as stated by the interviewee, too.

The oldest source identified in connection with the Employee Engagement programme was published in 2011, indicating that the programme referred to a long company history.

“[Company name] cares” – I14

The fashion brand presented its programme ‘[Company name] cares’ very prominently on its career website (*US Fashion Company GmbH* redacted, no date:online). In addition, the programme was presented on a designated sub-page (*US Fashion Company* Global Image redacted, 2020:online). However, it was not commonly presented in independent sources.

“Values and Purposes” – I15

The author analysed the fashion brand’s website to understand if there was any reference to the Employee Engagement programme mentioned by the interviewee. However, there was no data identified which referred to this theme, except for information on the company’s own website.

As well as analysing the programmes named by the participants, the author also reviewed the websites of the other interviewees’ employers to understand if they referred to Employee

Engagement strategies, which were not mentioned by the interviewees. However, no particular strategies were mentioned. Instead, the author analysed the documentary data published by those employers and added the details of the next section to the findings. Next, the author looks into the participating organisations' inventions of Employee Engagement.

5.3 The invention of Employee Engagement in the participating organisations

5.3.1 How and if Employee Engagement is defined

In this section, the author outlines the different understandings and views of Employee Engagement according to the participating organisations. Therefore, the author presents findings from different sources which were published by these companies on their Employee Engagement strategies. However, as pointed out before, none of the employers defined their understanding of the phenomenon in one of the communication channels analysed. However, the author reflected on the different communication channels with the purpose of attracting new recruits for the organisation and to present the company as a place where people want to work. Consequently, the author looked into the different aspects presented which may drive Employee Engagement in organisations.

As stated before, the logistics employer of I08 and former employer of I03 referred to Employee Engagement in various publications, such as in its sustainability strategy (*Logistics Company* Group redacted, 2019:54-55). In comparison to other organisations, the topic was addressed most prominently in this case. Here, the topic was covered in the employee matters section of the document. It showed the result of the annual Employee Engagement survey and the impact of *leadership* as a driver of the phenomenon, along with general hygiene factors such as safety at work and human rights. Besides, in this report the organisation also presented the corporate performance on employee development in the same section as the Employee Engagement results. While other interviewees also claimed that their employers ran employee surveys, matching data was not identified. However, other publications on sustainability (*Logistics Company* Group redacted, 2020a:online) were also identified which the organisation had published. In this German document the company showed a strong link between *engagement* and its German meaning of working in an honorary capacity. According to this source, the organisation supported various social activities and encouraged its staff to do so, too. Moreover, the organisation presented itself as an employer (*Logistics Company* AG redacted, no date:online), who is proud of its workforce and offers a wide range of development possibilities to its employees to continuously improve. In addition, the logistics company outlined the company *culture* on its website which was based on "Respekt, Wertschätzung und Chancengleichheit" (engl. translation 'respect, appreciation and equal opportunity').

Other companies, such as I01's employer from tourism, travel and leisure, also referred to *culture* when it came to the key message on the organisation's website. There, in the career section of the website, it was stated that the *culture* of an organisation "is defined by its people" (*Tourism Travel and Leisure Company redacted*, 2020:online). Furthermore, *passion* was mentioned as one of the main keywords on the company's career website. The employer from the travel industry (I04) stated that the "fun people culture" of the organisation was the reason "why people join" the company (*Travel Company redacted*, 2020:online). Both fashion brands put culture as a key message on their websites. While I14's employer referred strongly to the "company culture of positivity, support and inclusiveness" (*US Fashion Company GmbH redacted*, no date:online), the fashion brand originating from the UK referred to its "[company name] Persönlichkeit" [engl. '[company name] personality'] which was performance-driven and strongly influenced by the founders who were still the owner of the company (*US Fashion Company Europe GmbH redacted*, no date:online).

A term which was commonly used by different employers such as the organisations of I01, I04 and I10 was *family*. The documentary analysis showed that other employers also used *family* in their communication towards potential new employees. The luxury hotel chain of I10 referred prominently to *family* on its website for talent recruitment (*Hospitality and Gastronomy Company redacted*, 2020:online) stating in its main slogan: "Find your place. When you join the [company name] family, you are joining a world of possibility". The employer from the travel industry (I04) also used *family* to attract new employees (*Travel Company redacted*, 2020:online). In addition, the company also added keywords and phrases such as "fun people culture" and "family atmosphere" in their online communication. "Family atmosphere" was also used by the construction employer (I06) when presenting how it felt to work for the company (*Construction Company redacted*, 2017:online). The retail brand (I05) did not refer to *family* in its communication towards potential employees, but instead used *friends* as an emotional trigger (*Retail Company redacted*, 2018:online). The fashion brand for which I14 worked also referred to family in its communication and put a strong focus on brand identification by stating "We are [company name]" (*US Fashion Company Europe GmbH redacted*, no date:online). Furthermore, the emotional trigger of family was visualised by sharing a video from the "[Company name] family day" which was, according to the company, initiated on an annual basis for its staff and their families (*US Fashion Company redacted*, no date:online).

On the other hand, the documentary analysis highlighted that the organisations' understandings of Employee Engagement were strongly driven by the presentation of their different awards which they had received for their work environment and employer qualities. Besides, many of them used their employee benefits to position themselves as responsible and good employers. When comparing the different awards which were presented by the organisations on their career websites, "Great Place to Work" was commonly used. An

example was the logistics employer of I03 and I08 (*Logistics Company AG* redacted, no date:online). However, also the “Charta der Vielfalt” [Engl. ‘*Charta of diversity*’] was listed by the company from the defence and automotive industry (*Automotive and Defence Company* redacted, 2020b:online), the fast food chain (*Fast Food Company* redacted, no date:online) and the bank (*Bank Company* redacted, no date:online). The “Top Employer” award was named by the employers of I03, I08, I09 and I11 (*Logistics Company AG* redacted, no date:online; *Fast Food Company* redacted, no date:online; *Bank Company* redacted, no date:online) amongst many other awards and certificates. These awards were also presented on the companies’ professional profiles such as Xing. The fashion brand from the United States listed its awards there, too (*US Fashion Company* redacted, 2020:online). However, also other awards were mentioned which were less common, such as “C&IT Best Places to Work” to which I01’s employer (*Tourism Travel and Leisure Company* redacted, 2020:online) referred to. Besides, organisations, which did not have an Employee Engagement strategy in place also presented their international employer awards such as the retail company of I05 (*Retail Company* redacted, 2018:online) and the automotive and defence employer (*Automotive and Defence Company* redacted, 2020c:online).

When looking further into the different constructions of Employee Engagement, it became clear that some organisations constructed and also reconstructed their invention of the phenomenon equivalent to the concept of a *family*, as outlined previously when analysing the companies’ views, in order to attract new employees. The retail brand, on the other hand, used *friends* as emotional trigger to attract employees, which could be seen as extension of family. This reference to *family* and *friends* when it comes to the relationship of an organisation and its employees as well as the connection between employees can be seen as an individual reconstruction of Employee Engagement, symbolising the organisation’s role in the life an employee. This topic is further discussed in the upcoming *Discussion Chapter*.

The relationship aspect between organisations and their workforces was also underpinned by the fact that many organisations put particular focus on work-life-balance in their communication strategies. According to the automotive supplier (I02), “Mitarbeitermotivation” was driven by the organisation’s support for the employees when needed, for example when it came to “Gesundheit, Familie, private Finanzierungen” (engl. ‘*health, family, private financing*’) (*Automotive Company* redacted, 2019a:online). In addition, it was stated that the organisation backed up and supported its employees when needed to create “Mitarbeitermotivation”. Furthermore, the company’s Employee Engagement programme “We are [company name]” was also designed to provide employees with a good work environment which also allowed them a proper life (*Automotive Company* redacted, 2019a:online). Work-life-balance was also used by other employers such as the defence and automotive company (*Automotive and Defence Company* redacted, 2020b:online). The logistics provider did not

actively refer to work-life-balance on its website. However, the evaluation of additional sources displayed that employees named this as a benefit of working for the organisation, for example linking work-life-balance to “flexible remote working options” (Anonymous (2020e:online); Anonymous (2015a:online)). The retail company (I05) pointed out on its website that they put particular focus on flexible working times (*Retail Company* redacted, 2018:online) while I18's employer from health-care referred to various benefits such as company cars and phones which employees were allowed to use outside of work, too (*Health-care Company* Pflagedienste & Residenzen GmbH redacted, 2020:online). Additionally, the participating bank also had a strong focus on benefits to attract employees (*Banking Company* redacted, no date:online). Even though these aspects were not named under the tag of work-life-balance, it could be argued that they are strongly linked to it.

Besides, many of the organisations used *diversity* on their career websites. From the author's perspective, *diversity* can also drive Employee Engagement, as it goes along with providing all employees with the same opportunities. *Diversity* as a driver of Employee Engagement is discussed in the next section.

The logistics employer stated “we value loyalty” (*Logistics Company* Group redacted, no date-b:online) on its website. Besides *loyalty*, the company also drew a link to other terms such as “nurture talent”, “encourage progression” and “reward and promote”.

However, the documentary analysis showed that it is difficult to identify the organisations' construction of Employee Engagement based on the data available to public when only reviewing for the term itself. Independent from this lack of explicit reference to Employee Engagement, the data revealed that the organisations addressed Employee Engagement. This was identified in particular through the analysis of the drivers and output factors, which the organisations and their Employee Engagement strategies and/or activities aimed for. They are presented in the following sub-section.

5.3.2 The drivers of Employee Engagement

As presented in the previous section, many organisations mentioned awards to underpin their quality as an employer. Additionally, many organisations also referred to work-life-balance in their communication and how much they valued work-life-balance for their employees, which is a concept of its own and partly obligated legal obligation through the contractual agreement between the employee and the employer. However, when it came to the drivers of Employee Engagement, the author also considered aspects which were stated by former or current staff, such as the employees' input on work-life-balance. For this section, the author added further data to the analysis by reflecting on different insights from the previously mentioned online forum Glassdoor, including employee feedback and other aspects pointed out by former or current staff from the organisations.

Diversity and opportunities

Many companies included their diversity and the opportunities which they provided to their staff in their online communication on career possibilities and advantages as an employer. When addressing the different roles within the company, the logistics employer stated that they “are as diverse as the people who do them” (*Logistics Company* Group redacted, no date-b:online). A diverse team as a driver for a positive attitude towards the employer was also supported by former employer of the pilot organisation (Anonymous, 2017b:online). The importance of diversity was also reinforced by the travel industry employer of I04. According to the company, diversity was important for company performance (*Travel Company* redacted, 2018:online). Besides, I12’s employer also referred to the importance of diversity and that the organisation provided employees with “Raum für Entfaltung” [engl. ‘space to development’] which led to “Chancen für ein erfülltes Berufsleben anzubieten” [engl. ‘chance to offer a satisfied professional life’] (*Education Company* redacted, 2019:online).

Diversity as a driver of Employee Engagement was also underpinned by the gastronomy employer (I18) who stated on its website that “jeder Mitarbeiter bei [company name] soll sein, wie er ist – denn wir lieben Vielfalt!” [engl. ‘every employee at [company name] should be him/herself – because we love diversity!’] (*Gastronomy Company* redacted, 2020a:online). Furthermore, the organisation linked diversity to the company’s family spirit which it initiated with its employees.

Appreciation

Appreciation was very frequently mentioned as an important driver of Employee Engagement, which was also mentioned by Bechtel (2012) in his German publication of Employee Engagement in the health-care sector. Further evidence from Anglo-US sources was not identified. Therefore, it can be argued that the previously discussed impact of language caused this appearance of appreciation in German literature and the documentary data. It was identified that many former and current employees included appreciation in their evaluation of employers. The previously mentioned former employee of the pilot interviewee’s organisation rated the organisation positively (4 of 5 stars) on Glassdoor and listed positive aspects such as a positive learning environment, good support and a diverse team, but also stated that s/he experienced less appreciation as an IT professional in comparison to client-facing roles (Anonymous, 2017b:online).

Recognition

The participating hotel chain, which established its Employee Engagement strategy around the theme ‘celebrating our people’, aimed to “recogniz[e] hotel associates and their contribution to providing authentic hospitality” (Saipantribune.com, 2011:online). Therefore, they established various team activities which, according to the brand’s marketing communications assistant

manager, aimed for “fun” and “excitement” (Saipantribune.com, 2011:online). Rajpal (2014:online) supported this recognition-driven approach by stating:

For one week, every year, [company name] comes together globally to Celebrate Our People by recognizing and acknowledging the most important asset to the company, our associates. This annual event reinforces the [Company Name] people first philosophy through various team-based activities and events.

According to this source, the focus was on recognition and acknowledgment, which built the key drivers of the Employee Engagement activities established by the company. Besides, one of the fashion brands (I14) also referred to recognition on its company website, stating (US Fashion Company GmbH redacted, no date:online):

We believe hard work should be recognized which is why we cultivate a company culture of positivity, support and inclusiveness.

Furthermore, a link was made between recognition and the respective outcomes of Employee Engagement performance and the development of culture.

Leadership

According to the automotive employer (I02), the management team was an important factor with respect to “helping to mould our 240 staff members into one powerful team” for which the company developed management guidelines (Automotive Company redacted, 2019b:online).

According to the organisation’s sustainability report (Logistics Company Group redacted, 2019:online), a key component of the Employee Engagement strategy was a survey to evaluate employees’ engagement levels. Here, the company referred strongly to the KPI *leadership*, which was based on employees’ ratings of their direct managers’ leadership skills. Therefore, it can be argued that leadership is one of the key drivers of Employee Engagement according to the logistics company in particular.

Pride

As previously presented, *pride* is a targeted output factor of Employee Engagement initiatives. However, the employer from the logistics field referred to pride from a different perspective. Nevertheless, the employee of the logistics company, I08, saw an issue regarding the meaning of pride in Germany (code: “Germans always have a problem with the term ‘stolz’), due to the country’s history. According to the company’s career website, the organisation was proud of each employee (Logistics Company AG redacted, no date:online). In comparison, the fashion brand for which I14 worked used *pride* in its slogan (US Fashion Company GmbH redacted, no date:online):

Proud to be [company name]" stating further "we're proud of aligning our actions to our ideals. One example of this is [company name] Cares, our employee-led volunteer program.

While the first part of the slogan reflects on the perspective of an employee being proud of the organisation, the second part of the quote takes the perspective of the organisation being proud of its employees.

Barriers and negative factors

However, the documentary analysis also showed that there are factors which have a negative effect on Employee Engagement. These might not be named by the companies themselves, but they are shared by the employees.

According to an employee of the logistics company, who was working for the company when the statement was made, the organisation's focus on financial targets such as the reductions of staff costs causes a loss in focus on employees and customers (Anonymous, 2020a:online). A similar statement was made by a former employee of the automotive company (I02). There, an employee who left the company raised his concern that the increasing pressure caused by new investors was experienced by staff through appraisal interviews, targets and linked incentives (Anonymous, 2019b:online).

After looking into the drivers of Employee Engagement and also the factors which have a negative impact on the phenomenon, the next section reflects on the companies' inventions of the phenomenon and the outcome according to the documentary analysis.

5.3.3 The Employee Engagement establishment and its outcomes

To identify the establishment of Employee Engagement according to the interviewees' employers, the author based her documentary analysis on the different sources introduced to gather a holistic picture.

I02's employer from the automotive industry aimed for a "powerful team" with its established management guidelines (*Automotive Company* redacted, 2019b:online). On the other hand, an employee stated that this was not the case at all (Anonymous, 2017c:online) while another employee pointed out the positive communication throughout all levels in the organisation (Anonymous, 2019a:online). Besides, according to another employee, the positive atmosphere in the organisation was influenced by the employer (Anonymous, 2019c:online). The individual perception of the invented activities strongly varied as this example showed.

According to Rajpal (2014:online), who referred to the 'celebrating our people' activity of the international hotel chain, the previously introduced team activities were "not only help[ing] relationship building but also fosters better understanding [sic.] and empathy".

I12's employer from education identified a link between Human Resource Development and performance. According to the organisation, the increase in staff development resulted in greater learning success of the students (*Education Company* redacted, no date:online):

Als Vorreiter in der Digitalisierung von berufsbezogenem Lernen und der Personalentwicklung verbessern wir nachhaltig, effizient und messbar den Lernerfolg im Vergleich zu allen Wettbewerbern und profilieren uns mit anwendungsorientierter Forschung. [Engl. 'As pioneer of the digitalised work-related learning environment and staff development we are constantly improving the success of the learning results sustainably, efficient and measurable in comparison to our competitors and distinguish us with our application-oriented research.']

The resulting improved learning experience for the students can be seen equal to other companies' financial performance results, for example.

It was stated on the website of I14's employer that a key aim of the organisation's Employee Engagement strategy was to become a *family* (*US Fashion Company Europe GmbH* redacted, no date:online). Aiming for a stronger team spirit by developing a *family* atmosphere was also mentioned by many other organisations and was discussed previously. Besides, the fashion brand's (I14) Employee Engagement programme was strongly based on the activities in accordance with the main keyword "care". The company expected the Employee Engagement initiatives to result in "individual's well-being and build a sense of togetherness" (*US Fashion Company Global Image* redacted, 2020:online).

Previously, the author reflected on the different Employee Engagement programmes which were named by the interviewees. Based on the documentary data, the author identified that many organisations aimed to drive Employee Engagement by providing various benefits to their employees. One way in which they established Employee Engagement strategies was a strong focus on benefits related to Health Management. The automotive company, employer of I02, initiated a health campaign with a focus on health for backs and spines which was mentioned by local media including the statement "die Aktion ist Teil einer großangelegten internen Kampagne zur Mitarbeiterbindung" (engl. *'the activity is part of a large internal campaign to increase employee loyalty'*) (Mülders, 2012:online). The employer from the construction industry (I06) also named examples of benefits such as "flexible Arbeitszeiten, Gleitzeit, Mitarbeiterbefragungen und -Beteiligungen, Home Office, Parkplätze, betriebsärztliche Untersuchungen, bewegte Pause und und und..." [engl. *'flexible working hours, flexitime, employee surveys and involvement, home office, parking, care of company doctors, flexible breaks and and and...'*] (*Construction Company* redacted, 2017:online).

Others, such as the example of I02's employer, published news with management regards for employees' summer vacations on Facebook (*Automotive Company* redacted, 2020:online). In

these posts, the organisation included the name of the Employee Engagement programme as a hashtag (#wiirsind[*companyname*]). Furthermore, the company used its social media profile very strongly to communicate with its staff on topics which were less work-related, but much more linked to community, such as lunch arrangements on Thursdays (*Automotive Company GmbH* redacted, 2020b:online) and design completions for masks to stay healthy during the Covid-19 crisis in 2020 (*Automotive Company GmbH* redacted, 2020a:online). Besides, the company had also established activities in connection with international events, such as a prediction game during the European Football Championship in 2012 (Gnoth, 2012:online).

The Employee Engagement activities established by I04's employer were strongly driven by talent management activities which focused on empowerment of employees (*Travel Company* redacted, 2017a:online) including enhanced training possibilities (*Travel Company* redacted, 2020:online). To underpin its successful talent management activities, the employer referred to the golden Stevie Award, which the company was awarded for its achievements in the field (*Travel Company* redacted, 2017b:online). However, according to a former employee, the staff were not motivated by the company (Anonymous, 2015b:online), even though the company stated that it had "Mitarbeiterprogramme, darunter Sponsoring-, Mentoring-, Schulungs- und Coaching-Möglichkeiten, helfen [...] Mitarbeitern dabei, ihre Fähigkeiten und Karrierechancen zu verbessern" [engl. '*employee programmes, including sponsoring, mentoring, training and coaching opportunities help [...] employees to improve their abilities and career chances*'] (*Travel Company* redacted, 2018:online). Creating empowerment through "personal growth and professional development" was also pointed out by I14's employer, the fashion brand (*US Fashion Company GmbH* redacted, no date:online).

When it comes to the establishment of Employee Engagement, the logistics employer referred to its "First Choice" programme as follows (*Logistics Company Group* redacted, 2020b:online):

First Choice provides employees with tried-and-true methods (for e.g. Performance Dialogs, Gemba, Problem Solving Techniques, DMAIC, etc.) for identifying problem areas and developing solutions to right them.

Furthermore, the company encouraged its employees to develop further by means of "professional and personal development opportunities" (*Logistics Company Group* redacted, no date-b:online). Nevertheless, in 2020 the company launched its new strategy "Strategy 2025" and according to the company it was "designed to enhance customer and employee experience as well as improve operational excellence" (*Logistics Company* redacted, 2019b:online). Looking at this reference showed that the company valued the employee experience in a similar way customers' experience with the company.

The 'Celebrating our People' Employee Engagement initiative of the international hotel chain aimed for recognition. Therefore, the organisation had established different activities according to Saipantribune.com (2011:online):

These activities included an island-style breakfast where members of the executive committee served breakfast to employees, arts and crafts, dodgeball, obstacle course, and tangan-tangan baseball.

The activities showed a strong link to the location of the employees and were designed as team activities while also recognising staff for their daily work.

However, besides these particular examples, many organisations tried to create Employee Engagement based on benefits (*Retail Company* redacted (2018:online), *Automotive and Defence Company* redacted (2020c:online)), a reasonable work-life-balance (*Automotive Company* redacted, 2019a:online), *Travel Company* redacted (2020:online)) and health management activities (Mülders, 2012:online).

In the next section, the author presents the different findings with respect to organisations' views on Employee Engagement before closing the *Documentary Analysis Chapter* with an overview on the employees' perception of the organisations' Employee Engagement and the key findings of this chapter.

Next, the author reviews the documentary data for employees' perception of Employee Engagement.

5.3.4 Employees' perception of Employee Engagement

The number of posts and comments from former and current employees of the organisations which this study focuses on are immense. It can also be argued that the 'representativeness' of the presented statements is not given, as it is only a fraction of the material available. Therefore, the author focused in particular on findings which linked directly to the invented Employee Engagement initiatives with respect to their 'meaning'. Furthermore, the author presents further findings in addition to the previously outlined comments from the companies' workforces.

When talking about the atmosphere at work, an employee (Anonymous, 2019c:online) of the company from the automotive sector commented:

Ich fühle mich wohl und komme gerne zur Arbeit. Es wird aber auch einiges von Firmenseite aus gemacht um das Betriebsklima positive zu halten! [engl. 'I feel comfortable and like coming to work. But many things are also done by the organisation to keep a positive work atmosphere.']

This person based the statement on the activities the organisation had established to increase employees' willingness to work for the company and had a positive attitude towards work.

An employee from the logistics company rated the company very highly. The person put particular emphasis on the ensured job security, even during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, salary, development opportunities and the possibility to work internationally (Anonymous, 2020b:online). Another employee also perceived the benefits, salary and security as positive (Anonymous, 2020a:online).

With respect to the previously mentioned aim of being a *family* or being part of the *family*, which organisations aim for, employees also used this terminology when reflecting upon their employer (Anonymous, 2020c:online). However, the logistics company itself, did not put vigour on *family*.

Besides, employees also evaluated their work-life-balance when rating their employers. The author looked into two references from current employees of the participating logistics company which both referred to work-life-balance by stating: “Great work life balance including flexile remote working options” (Anonymous, 2020e:online) and “Zusatzleistungen sind okay soweit, gute Work-Life-Balance [sic.], Gehalt [sic.] auch okay” [engl. ‘*Additional benefits are okay, good work-life-balance, salary is also okay*’] (Anonymous, 2015a:online).

The author also identified data on the perception of leadership which was named by different organisations as driver of Employee Engagement. An employee (Anonymous, 2020d:online) commented:

Das, was an der Konzernspitze gepredigt wird, kommt nicht immer ganz unten an der Basis an, da ist noch Einiges zu tun bis sich auch dort flächendeckend die Mentalität und Einstellung von Management und Mitarbeitern ändert. [engl. ‘What is said at top management level does not always reach the bases. There is still a lot to do to get a wider coverage of the mentality and attitude and management and staff level changed.’]

In addition, employees also referred to health management as a benefit in their evaluation of the employer. An employee (Anonymous, 2020d:online) of the logistics company pointed out that the company offered a wide range of health management activities and rated this very positively.

A former employee of the pilot interviewee’s organisation indicated that the acquisition of the company had led to many employees leaving. Furthermore, this person alluded that there was a “lack of direction” and s/he “fe[lt] undervalued” (Anonymous, 2018:online) which was also supported by another employee who referred to the changes ahead (Anonymous, 2017a:online).

Before discussing the different findings from the primary and documentary data in the upcoming *Discussion Chapter*, the author summarises the key findings in the following section.

5.4 Overview of the chapter findings

The documentary analysis indicated that the level of maturity, when it comes to the communication of organisations' Employee Engagement strategies, strongly varies. While some larger organisations such as the logistics provider which participated in this study also refer to the Employee Engagement and its concept in their external communication, other organisations only refer to particular elements of the Employee Engagement concept.

The analysis revealed details on the different understandings, drivers and expected outcomes of Employee Engagement by reflecting on sources published by the organisations themselves and the perception of employees of these organisations. However, the analysis also showed that many organisations referred to the same drivers of Employee Engagement such as work-life-balance and many other benefits. In addition, many organisations try to position themselves as good employers by presenting achievements and awards in their communication to employees. Besides, culture and family are common triggers which are used frequently by organisations to position themselves as great employers. Overall, it can be stated that the differentiation between organisations is rather limited, as they commonly rely on the same communication. Only a few larger organisations communicate about their individually shaped understanding of Employee Engagement in publicly available data. Consequently, external audiences are challenged when trying to distinguish between the different organisations.

At the same time, the documentary data also highlighted that there was a major lack of published documents with respect to the definition and view on the phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the data gathered from the documentary analysis provided rich results which will help the author to reflect on the understanding and construction of Employee Engagement in large German organisations, which is further discussed in the following *Discussion Chapter*.

6. Discussion

6.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings from the in-depth interviews and the documentary analysis in order to compare them with the presented results of the literature review.

The structure of the chapter returns to the research objectives which are added as a recap to the 'aim and purpose' section of this chapter. After reflecting on the overall aims and purpose of this chapter, the author moves on and discusses the impact of the interviewees' roles and professional backgrounds on the study. Additionally, the author explores how the organisations' construction and invention of Employee Engagement shape the individual views of the interviewees concerning the phenomenon.

Afterwards, the main discussion of this chapter is presented, deliberating on the understanding of Employee Engagement based on the interviewees' input, the documentary data and the literature review findings. As part of this argument, the interpretation of the phenomenon by the various stakeholders, its definitions and drivers as well as its output factors in large German organisations are discussed. Furthermore, the individual creation and 'invention' of the existing phenomenon in each participating German organisation is taken into account and the different views and German equivalents are outlined and compared in connection with their establishments according to the interviewees and their employers.

Following this, the importance and role of Employee Engagement in large German organisations is presented. For this purpose, the author refers to key points from the previous discussion and compares them with the literature review findings from the United Kingdom and the United States. Afterwards, the results of the discussion on cultural differences are presented. Here, the focus is on the impact of the country of origin and how organisational differences have an influence on the phenomenon.

The chapter closes with an overview of the key findings. Next, the author will present the aim and purpose of the *Discussion Chapter*.

6.2 Aim and purpose of the chapter

The superior aim of the *Discussion Chapter* is to answer the research objectives of the study by comparing the findings of the primary research and the documentary analysis along with the gathered insights from the literature review.

Therefore, the chapter is structured in accordance with the three research objectives, which were first introduced in the *Introduction Chapter*:

RO1: To review the current adoption, understanding and conceptualisation of Employee Engagement in Germany;

RO2: To investigate the evolution of the Employee Engagement concept, by paying attention to its proliferation in the German context;

RO3: To examine the parallels of the Employee Engagement construct between Anglo-US countries and Germany.

As the analysis of the primary data revealed that the organisation's Employee Engagement invention strongly shaped the individual's view, this relevant aspect is discussed first. Here, the ways in which other social interactions shape the interviewees' views and how they learn and consequently change their invention of the phenomenon are also outlined.

The first research objective is tackled by a discussion on the various invented definitions, adaptations, views and conceptualisation of the phenomenon. Besides, its implementation along with its drivers as well as the output factors of the Employee Engagement phenomenon are discussed. This is followed by the arguments on the creation of Employee Engagement in German organisations and how it supports business, especially in comparison to the findings from the US and the UK literature. Finally, the author reflects and argues how cultural differences may influence the view on Employee Engagement in Germany, aiming to provide an answer to the third research question. In this section, the author also discusses the cultural differences in organisations which may also influence the individual Employee Engagement realities in German organisations.

As de Mello e Souza Wildermuth et al. (2013:19) stated, "understanding the antecedents and dynamics of employee engagement may be critical to effective organizational leadership". Therefore, in this chapter the author aims to discuss and put the identified findings into perspective for practitioners and their implementations of Employee Engagement. For this reason, the discussion firstly looks at the social construction of the phenomenon in the next section with a particular focus on its dependency on the interviewees' roles and professional backgrounds.

6.3 The interviewees' reconstruction of Employee Engagement and its influencing factors

In the following two subsections, the author discusses the role of external influences and how they shape the interviewees' views on Employee Engagement. For this purpose, the author looked into the details of the interviewees' Employee Engagement awareness. The analysis of the in-depth interviews and the documentary analysis showed that the employer's discourse on the construction of the phenomenon had a major influence on the individuals' Employee Engagement awareness' and views in particular. First, the author reflects on how Employee Engagement is shaped by external influences. Second, the role of the employer is investigated and discussed in more detail.

6.3.1 How the interviewees' Employee Engagement views are shaped by external influences

During the analysis of the primary data gathered from the in-depth interviews, various factors influencing the interviewees' views and perceptions on Employee Engagement were identified. In particular, the analysis of the different Employee Engagement definitions and views showed a common pattern, which indicated that the interviewees' perceptions were strongly influenced by various external factors. This section reflects on these factors by discussing the relevant data identified during the analysis of the primary findings. The respective data provided a good understanding on how social interactions influenced the Employee Engagement view of the individual participants. In addition, these findings from the primary research were compared with the findings of the documentary analysis.

As introduced previously, the participants for this study were chosen based on their employers' profiles (mainly large German organisations with references to Employee Engagement initiatives on their web profiles) and the interviewees' individual roles in the companies. To identify interviewees from this target group, the author evaluated potential participants' social media profiles. The full scope of the identification process of the research and the acquisition of the interviewees is detailed in the *Research Methodology Chapter*. During the identification process, the author followed the introduced concept "areas of HR management" by Schulz and Böhm (2008:167) and the definition for HR Business Partners of Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2019b:online) to identify individuals with the required profiles. Hence, the author reflected on the tasks and responsibilities of HRM in organisations to classify the right contacts in large organisations in Germany meeting the criteria for the study introduced earlier.

As the same time, the further analysis of the interviewees and their profiles revealed their diversity, with respect to their tasks, experiences and their centre of expertise in the field. Moreover, as presented in the "Primary research observations" of the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter*: "The interviewees' perception of the Employee Engagement phenomenon", all participants had a strong Human Resource background or were at least strongly involved in HR-topics at the time of research due to their senior management role. These attributes made the interviewees good or even excellent matches for this study, as they would be able to contribute on their perception and understanding of the Employee Engagement phenomenon and its organisational context in connection with their employers.

Independent of their professional backgrounds, the aim of the study was to understand whether their perspectives on the phenomenon and the emerging overall conceptualisation of Employee Engagement might be affected by other factors such as their employers' Employee Engagement concepts or other realities which might have influenced the interviewees during their higher education or during a previous role in another organisation. Based on the data

collected, the author developed a table with the different origins of the individuals' Employee Engagement awareness discussed. The result is shown in *Table 9: Origin of Employee Engagement Awareness*.

Table 9: Origin of Employee Engagement Awareness

Origin of Employee Engagement Awareness	
Literature	<p>I01: "I know about it from literature which I read during my free time as a HR person."</p> <p>I14: "Every now and then I read an article about it in a HR magazine."</p>
Education	<p>I03: "I wrote my Bachelor's thesis about this topic."</p> <p>I13: "Well... actually, already during my education. Somehow, everything we are discussing is just old wine in new skins, isn't it?!"</p> <p>I18: "At university", "During my Master's degree."</p>
Employer	<p>I01: "And from some activities which we are implementing under the umbrella of this sub-term within the organisation."</p> <p>I02: "Because we have developed a large Employee Engagement programme (Interviewee uses German term: 'Mitarbeiterbindungsprogramm')."</p> <p>I03: „Well, originally I had started my internship in the [company name - logistic] department for Employee Engagement and that's how I got in touch with the topic and started to like it. That was the first time I really got in touch with the Employee Engagement topic."</p> <p>I08: "It is [...] the topic which we are dealing with."</p> <p>I09: "It is the term which describes my department. My department is called "Employer Engagement", for us "Employee Engagement" is part of it."</p> <p>I11: "Well, I am working in Human Resources and there it comes up again and again."</p> <p>I12: "Well, we actually use the term in our organisation when we talk about our employee survey called an Employee Engagement survey by our management."</p> <p>I15: "We actually run an Employee Engagement survey every year."</p>
Other external influences	<p>I07: "There are also different studies from Gallup which are look at those who are committed to their organisations and others who just do their job and others who even do their job poorly."</p> <p>I15: "We have implemented "Great Place to Work" and that's how I heard about it."</p> <p>I17: "There are different events with respect to "Mitarbeitermotivation" [Engl. translation "Employee Motivation"] and for me as an employer it is interesting to understand which activities get official support during such events."</p>

Source: Developed by the author

During the interview, each participant was asked about the origin of his or her Employee Engagement awareness (questions: "Have you heard about the term Employee Engagement?")

and “In which context have you heard about Employee Engagement?”). The statements presented above were collected by asking these questions. Additional statements made throughout the interviews were also added to the analysis. The researcher identified that some of the interviewees misunderstood the question. Instead of providing details on the origin of their awareness, they shared further insights on the contextual meaning of the phenomenon. It needs to be pointed out that the German question asked in all German interviews was more precise than the English translation, which allowed more interpretation of the question. The interview with I04, which was conducted in English, showed that the question could be misleading. The interviewee referred to the conceptual approach of Employee Engagement and his perspective on the phenomenon as a derivative of Employee Satisfaction. This perspective matches Erickson’s statement that “engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer” (2005, cited in Macey and Schneider, 2008:7) as introduced during the literature review. Still, others, such as Chapman et al. (2018), identified satisfaction as one of the output factors of Employee Engagement.

The table outlines and clusters the different origins of the interviewees’ Employee Engagement awareness identified during the analysis. It provides the basis of the discussion on how these interactions influence the creation of the phenomenon. As shown, the interviewees’ awareness was driven by literature, education and different external influences in some cases. The latter includes commercial studies and award concepts of profit organisations in the respective field. However, the origin identified as most common and therefore also the strongest influencer, is the interviewees’ employers. Therefore, the focus is on how the construct of Employee Engagement is presented and re-presented in the empirical data. How the employers’ views determine the interviewees’ understanding of Employee Engagement is discussed further in the next section.

When looking back at the literature review findings, different faults concerning Employee Engagement were identified. The findings of this study focus on the perception through a conceptual-bound according to which the interviewee’s perception is influenced by the employers’ conceptualisation of the phenomenon. The influence of the employers is shown in the data collected, as the employer was commonly named as the source of the interviewees’ Employee Engagement awareness and also by the manner in which the interviewees phrased their arguments.

As *Table 9: Origin of Employee Engagement Awareness* shows, eight of the 19 interviewees referred to their employer when they outlined the origin of their Employee Engagement awareness. Only five of the interviewees referred to alternative origins. I11, for example, referred to his daily business as a human resource manager during which he had touch points with Employee Engagement in general. However, in his further statements, he referred to a

translation which his employer initiated for Employee Engagement and which influenced his perception on the phenomenon, too. However, he did not specify which alternative sources had shaped his Employee Engagement awareness, as the author aimed to collect the first feedback the interviewee shared on this question, without supporting the interviewee by providing further alternatives to choose from to answer the question. Therefore, the author added his statement to the employer category only, as shown in Table 9: Origin of Employee Engagement Awareness. In comparison, I01 also referred to her employer, too, but also highlighted that she read about the phenomenon in literature. I03 first got in touch with the concept of Employee Engagement during her internship at the logistics company where she continued to work later. As a result, she researched the topic as part of her Bachelor's thesis. I15, who worked in fashion, referred to her employer as well. First, she pointed out that her organisation ran an Employee Engagement survey and second, she added that she first got in touch with it through "Great Place to Work", which the company had established. Besides, her references made were phrased from a subjective perspective including her employer and herself by using "we" when referring to organisational activities in the field, but she did not name or refer to her employer directly.

As outlined before, the author executed the interviews amongst a group of practitioners. Most of them were working in senior human resources and management positions and had already established their careers in the field. Due to their roles and the development of their careers, which was evaluated based on their professional profiles on LinkedIn and Xing during the sample selection, it can be argued that these people were already well established in the field. Only one of the interviewees, I03, was less experienced and enrolled as a student at the time of interview, but she contributed in-depth knowledge and shared her perspective from two of her former jobs in large organisations based in Germany before she went back to University to complete her Master's degree. As the literature review showed, the Employee Engagement concept has developed over the past decade, and had its peak around 2010 when considering the number of publications around that time. At the same time, it is also less prominent in Germany, as indicated by the lack of Germany-specific literature. Additionally, only two interviewees referred to their university education when outlining the origin of their Employee Engagement awareness. Both interviewees, I03 and I18 were completing their higher education at the time of interview. Consequently, they referred to the latest curriculum. Still, none of the other participants were actively asked if they had studied the topic during their university education.

I10 did not answer the question by sharing the origin of her awareness; instead she referred to the context in which she has heard about Employee Engagement. I06, on the other hand, was not aware of the term Employee Engagement at all. Consequently, the interviewer did not

ask about the origin of the interviewee's awareness. Personnel officer in public service, I16, was not aware of the term Employee Engagement either.

While only two interviewees, I01 and I14, stated that they knew Employee Engagement from literature, three interviewees, including I07, I15 and I17, learnt about it from a study executed by Gallup on Employee Engagement (Gallup Inc., 2020b:online), the employer's participation in "Great Place to Work" – an international company which evaluates individual organisations quality as an employer (Great Place To Work Institute, 2020a:online) – and from different topic-related events. Others, such as I11, stated that Employee Engagement was a topic which frequently came up in human resources, while others, such as I12 from the educational sector, compared the phenomenon with Employee Engagement surveys.

Consequently, it can be argued that external factors had less impact on the interviewees' construction of the phenomenon while the influence of the employer was rather strong. The role of the employer is further discussed in the upcoming section. However, looking back at the different external factors, including literature, education and other factors such as events, it can be argued that the lack of German Employee Engagement literature and the missing diffusion into academia was reflected in the interviewees' lacking construction.

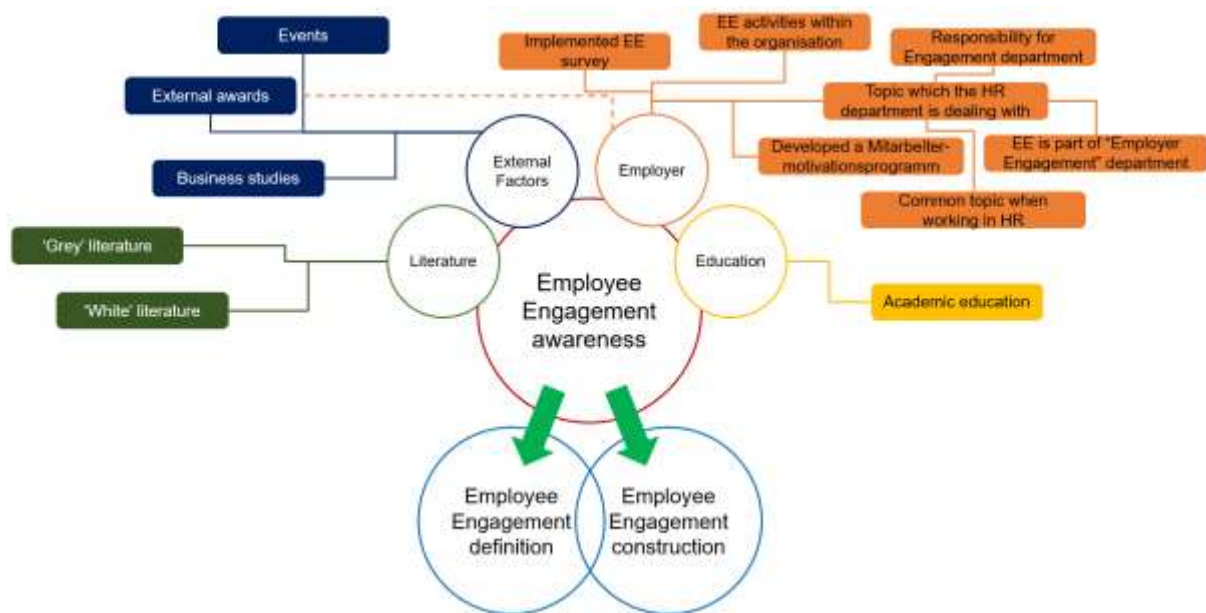
As the organisation as employer of the interviewee was identified as key influence factor on the interviewee's understanding of Employee Engagement, its role is further discussed in the next section.

6.3.2 How the employer's view determines the interviewee's understanding of the phenomenon

As previously outlined, the interviewees' perceptions of Employee Engagement, including its definition, are often influenced by other factors or even by other stakeholders such as their employers. In this section, the author will reflect on how the understanding and consequently knowledge about Employee Engagement of the interviewees is constructed through their interaction with their organisations.

Emerging from the previously introduced analysed data shown in *Table 9: Origin of Employee Engagement Awareness*, the following *Figure 13: Employee Engagement awareness and its impact on definition and construction of the phenomenon* was developed. It outlines the different natures of the interviewees' Employee Engagement awareness shared during the interviews. Along with the previously discussed factors such as literature, external factors and education, it included the employer. The influence of the employer was identified as a key influential factor according to the analysis of the interviewees' statements. Here, the different interactions with the employer are outlined during which the interviewees were introduced to the phenomenon.

Figure 13: Employee Engagement awareness and its impact on definition and construction of the phenomenon



Source: Developed by the author

During the interviews, the author asked each participant to define Employee Engagement him/herself. The aim was to understand their individual views on the phenomenon and allow the drawing of links between the different perspectives. However, with their answers, the interviewees also provided details about factors which influenced the interviewees' Employee Engagement views, which were not directly asked for. Additionally, the interviewees were asked to share the origin of their Employee Engagement awareness. Both questions were asked at an early stage of the interview to ensure that the participant shared his or her own Employee Engagement view and the origin of their awareness without addressing the employers' Employee Engagement establishment. This way, it was meant to ensure that the interviewee did not refer back to the organisation's establishment. The expectation was that most interviewees would be aware of Employee Engagement through their education or from specialised press, trade fairs or any other HR-specific channels.

However, as the primary research and the resulting *Figure 13* showed, many of the interviewees referred actively to their employers when discussing the nature of their Employee Engagement awareness. Additionally, the previously introduced definitions also showed strong references to the employer. Therefore, the employer and its influence on the participants' perceptions and views is further discussed here.

As previously presented, many of the interviewees referred to their employers when sharing details on the nature of their Employee Engagement awareness. HR Business Partner for EMEA from the international tourism, travel and leisure company (I01) was one of these participants. Besides, she also referred to non-peer reviewed literature in the arena. According

to her, the field is diverse and reproducing the details of what she had heard and read about the phenomenon was a challenge for her. This case showed that her perception of Employee Engagement was driven by her employer's view, but it was also influenced by other factors, while it was still lacking preciseness with respect to the conceptualisation of the phenomenon. This lack in Employee Engagement understanding matches the previously introduced challenges caused by the number of definitions (MacLeod and Clarke, 2011) and their lacking precision (Guest, 2014a), which causes confusion according to Cole et al. (2012). The interviewees, who picked up on other factors such as Gallup (I07) and Great Place to work (I15), referred to some of the common non-academic commentators which were identified during the literature review, too. This indicates the popularity of these sources amongst the HR target group and at the same time underpins the lack of German references with regard to Employee Engagement.

Still, other interviewees, such as the HR Manager of the automotive company (I02), also first came across the Employee Engagement phenomenon when developing their own Employee Engagement strategy in the organisation. The interviewee's understanding of Employee Engagement was driven by her organisation's demand for a respective strategy which she called a "Mitarbeiterbindungsprogramm", and which had been invented by the organisation. Here, the company's demand to drive Employee Engagement by implementing an organisational strategy needs to be understood in more detail. As Chapman et al. (2018) pointed out, an organisation's intention to implement HRD activities, which also includes Employee Engagement initiatives, needs to be understood, as the question of whether the intention is only driven as it is fashionable, for example, arises. Even though the interviewee explained that the company's need for an Employee Engagement strategy was driven by the demand to strengthen employee retention, in her statement on the nature of her Employee Engagement awareness she strongly referred to its importance by pointing out the increasing interest in the phenomenon by consulting companies. Therefore, the intention could also be influenced by Chapman et al.'s (2018) statement that it is chic to establish Employee Engagement activities. However, the analysed documentary data indicates that the organisation was not only performing lip service, but instead also initiated activities and communication matching the overall idea of their Employee Engagement strategy to ensure employee retention.

Besides, also I08, Expert for EOS and Stakeholder Management, simply stated when asked about the source of her Employee Engagement awareness: "It is [...] the topic which we are dealing with". Besides, she frequently referred to the establishment of the organisation's Employee Engagement strategy by using phrases such as "we defined" and "it is a definition which we have developed with our internal experts from the different divisions". These phrases are either an indication for her strong identification with her employer and its view on the

phenomenon, or they show that she simply mimicked the phrases which the employer had developed for its official communication. The first assumption was supported by Welch's (2011) perspective on 'absorption' and 'dedication' according to which this behaviour strongly matched the characteristics of an engaged employee. Additionally, the documentary analysis presented similarities in the communication strategy which relied on similar terminologies, especially with respect to the drivers of Employee Engagement and the expected output factors, including *commitment*, *development* and *appreciation*. As introduced in the documentary analysis, the company also picked up on the importance of staff development and referred to the value of loyalty (Anonymous, 2020e:online). Kumar and Pansari (2015) identified a dependency between a committed employee and loyalty which leads to pride, while Crawford et al. (2014) referred to development as a driver of Employee Engagement, as it ensures meaningfulness. These findings were also supported by current and former employees of the organisation, as the documentary analysis of Glassdoor showed. The second assumption, according to which the interviewee might have mimicked the acceptable wording from the organisational perspective, was supported by the previously mentioned request of the organisation to review and adjust the transcript of the interview, before approving its usage in the study. Here the question arose whether the interviewees' behaviour could be seen as basic loyalty, matching I04's perspective of a true soldier, which was discussed before. This basic loyalty was also criticised (Macey and Schneider, 2008), as it leads to blindness on the employee's side and does not embrace the development of involvement, but only satisfaction without allowing employees to develop the extra mile and to increase their contribution towards the organisation's performance and success.

Similar to the previous discussion, I09's Employee Engagement awareness was also shaped by the role she fulfilled in her organisation. According to her, Employee Engagement is part of their department called "Employer Engagement". From an ontological perspective, the employer defines the nature of the phenomenon, when reflecting on Guba's (1990:18) question of "what is the nature of "reality"?".

The different examples and the previously introduced analysis of the in-depth interviews and the documentary findings indicate that the employer can have a strong influence on the interviewees' Employee Engagement awareness. This awareness is shaped by the reality created by the organisation and if the employer is the only source of knowledge for the employee, it can be argued that the interviewee's level of knowledge concerning the phenomenon is primarily constructed through interaction with the employer. This is also underpinned by the fact that many of the interviewees struggled to define the phenomenon or refer to terms and examples from their organisations to outline their individual views. As the documentary analysis showed, in their external communication the organisations are lacking the provision of a clear view on the phenomenon, too. These observations are in line with

Berger and Luckmann's (1967) perspective on how particular constructions of the phenomenon become habituated into knowledge.

From the author's perspective, the issue connected with defining Employee Engagement was even more strongly impacted when the number of sources available to the interviewee was limited. If the employee referred to different sources, the individual perception, view and construction of Employee Engagement was shaped by the different concepts the individual had embraced. If an employee's conceptualisation of Employee Engagement relies on the employer's construction of the phenomenon, the perception is only based upon one perspective. This was also supported by the results of the documentary analysis. One strong example was I14's definition of the phenomenon, which was driven by the emotional trigger *family*. The documentary analysis showed that the employer's communication was also strongly based on its "We are family" approach (*US Fashion Company Europe GmbH* redacted, no date:online). Similarities in the conceptualisation of the phenomenon and its drivers were also identified in the case of the luxury hotel chain. The responsible Human Resources Manager (I10) stated that the organisation's Employee Engagement approach focused on appreciation and recognition. The company itself referred to the same terms with respect to the strategic aim of the approach (Saipantribune.com, 2011:online).

When reflecting further on the definitions shared by the interviewees, it became clear that I08 provided a comprehensive overview of her Employee Engagement understanding in comparison to others. However, the interview still revealed that the participant was unable to provide a definition of the phenomenon. Instead, she outlined her expected behaviours from an engaged employee, including motivation and willingness. Considering Guba's (1990:18) epistemological perspective means that here the interviewee, "the knower", shapes the "known", which in this case is the definition of the Employee Engagement phenomenon, but also the author of this study. This perspective was identified in the case of the fashion brand with origins in the US and I14, too. The knower, the author of the career website, drives and emotionalises the previously discussed Employee Engagement view (the known) by using the trigger *family* (*US Fashion Company Europe GmbH* redacted, no date:online). The analysis of I14's interview, also showed that the interviewee explained the family-related activities of the organisation in great detail. Furthermore, the analysis of the company's communication strategy through the documentary analysis displayed that this emotional trigger was not only used in their wording, but also in visualisation by sharing videos of their family events (*US Fashion Company* redacted, no date:online).

These findings underpin the author's perspective of Employee Engagement as a socially constructed phenomenon. The lack of unified definitions in literature and the number of views by practitioners and organisations reinforces that it is socially constructed, too. As the literature review showed, the phenomenon was discussed in various publications concerning the

phenomenon itself (Purcell, 2014) and also regarding the superior field of HRD (Truss et al., 2013). Still, the review of literature also indicated the lack of one precise definition, which was also identified by authors such as MacLeod and Brady (2008), Kumar and Pansari (2015), Holbeche and Matthews (2012) and others. Instead, most definitions reviewed and presented in the *Literature Review Chapter*, are based on a concept identified by Kahn (1990), which established the foundation for various constructions and reconstructions of the phenomenon. Besides, the outlined findings of the primary research also support the previous assumption that the reality of Employee Engagement is strongly driven by external factors. As Welch (2011) identified based on the historic evolution of the phenomenon, these factors include changes in the work environment, amongst others. In this study, the employer and the business environment as well as individual views of HR managers were identified as factors which shape the reality of the organisational culture and consequently the Employee Engagement phenomenon. The previously identified link in literature between the organisational culture, the company's business strategy, the resulting strategic HRM and HRD approaches and finally the Employee Engagement strategy showed the dependency of different views and how they shape the reality of the phenomenon. This is also supported by the previously discussed perspectives on the role of organisational culture, especially with respect to the transmission of beliefs and values from one generation to the next as in Huczynski and Buchanan (2007), the effect of organisational culture on an employee's motivational level (Brown, 1998) and consequently also on staff's engagement towards the organisation. This importance of organisational culture when creating Employee Engagement was also supported by I07 and her debate about the difference between a naturally grown organisational culture which fosters Employee Engagement and the strategic need to establish Employee Engagement.

These influences impact the views and perspectives of staff including their understanding of the phenomenon and consequently the resulting view.

After discussing the role of the employer as the knower and its impact on the known, the author will discuss the interviewees' understanding of Employee Engagement in the next section. There, she will also put it into perspective by comparing the results of the analysis of the in-depth interviews and the documentary method with the literature review findings.

6.4 Research objective 1: To review the current adoption, understanding and conceptualisation of Employee Engagement in Germany

As previously introduced, in this section the adoption, understanding and conceptualisation of the phenomenon according to the participants of the study and their employers is discussed. The aim is to put the results of the study into perspective with the previously introduced findings of the literature review. Additionally, the observations from the documentary analysis on the interviewees' employers and their construction of Employee Engagement are considered, too. Here, the focus was on the analysis of sources published by the organisations themselves,

especially with a focus on their human resource strategies and activities as well as views and understandings of the researched phenomenon.

Therefore, this section focuses first on the lacking consistency in the Employee Engagement definition, followed by a discussion on the adoption of the phenomenon based on benefits, surveys and employer awards as well as the role of leadership with respect to the conceptualisation and adoption of Employee Engagement in large German organisations. Beyond this, the analysed critique on the Employee Engagement phenomenon in comparison to culture is debated.

As previously discussed, the employer was identified as a strong influential factor upon the interviewees' understanding and view on the conceptualisation of Employee Engagement. Nevertheless, the detailed analysis of the primary and documentary data showed that the employers provided no comprehensive definition of the phenomenon either. With respect to the interviewees, while some of the interviewees, such as I05, struggled to define the Employee Engagement phenomenon, only a few were able to share more detailed views on the Employee Engagement conceptualisation when comparing their definitions with the findings from the literature review. Here, in particular I03 and I08 as well as their (former) employer, the logistics company, provided insights into the conceptualisation which matched the literature review findings. In particular, *emotional commitment* and *motivation* as well as *organisation success* were mentioned as output factors. With their views on emotional commitment, they matched Kahn (1990) and De Mello e Souza Wildemuth et al.'s (2013) views on the connection between the employee and the organisation. Moreover, the literature review showed a long list of definitions for Employee Engagement was available which cannot be shared in a single piece of research (Albrecht, 2010). The number of varying definitions was also mentioned by MacLeod and Clarke (2011), while Cole et al. (2012) concluded that this number of definitions created confusion. The study relied on Welch's (2011) previously introduced definition of Employee Engagement. Her perspective of the phenomenon along with the views of other commentators in the field, such as Schaufeli et al. (2002), Kumar and Pansari (2015) amongst others, was built on Kahn's (1990) central components of psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability. Reflecting further on the interviewees' definitions, it became clear that only a few of the primary research participants were able to share more precise views on their Employee Engagement understandings. However, the analysis also showed that *brand identification* was acknowledged as a key factor in the adoption and conceptualisation of Employee Engagement according to the interviewees. I04's concept of Employee Engagement relied on the idea of identification with the brand, by mirroring "how much [...] you [are] the brand", "how long... how far you are willing to go for the brand", "how engaged [...] you [are] in the company" and how much an employee identifies "the wellbeing of the company as part of your own wellbeing". When including the documentary

findings into this discussion, it became clear that the employer also referred to identification in its communication. The travel company's communication was driven by the idea of perceiving the employer and its staff as *family* (*Travel Company redacted*, 2020:online), which was discussed in greater detail in previous chapter. The concept of family as an emotional trigger was also used by the international hotel chain (*Hospitality and Gastronomy Company redacted*, 2020:online), independent from the travel company and its reference to *family*. Besides, the documentary review of employees' feedback on the company also showed that employees used *family* in their feedback when referring to the organisation in their evaluation of the employer (Anonymous, 2020c:online). However, this anonymous employee, who referred to family, was working in human resources. Consequently, it can be argued that this employee was familiar with the company's employee strategy and the organisational aim of being a *family*. The idea of naming a business relationship between an employee and an organisation, which is managed through a contractual agreement, was in line with Kahn's (1990) idea of safety. Another synonym used besides *family* was *friends*, used by the retail company, aiming to trigger the emotional commitment of staff, too. The social construct of a family or close friends as extended family was based on the idea of safety and trust, which employees also perceive in a good relationship with the organisation, their co-workers and their manager. This was also addressed by Welch's (2011:335) definition, which referred to the "cognitive, emotional and physical role performance" and which was supported by Schaufeli et al. (2002), too. This again results in engagement, as Schneider et al. (2010:160) indicated in *Figure 4: "Antecedents and consequences of experienced trust in work organizations"*, which was discussed in the literature review. Furthermore, the interpretation and conceptualisation of Employee Engagement according to the travel company was driven by the empowerment of its people (*Travel Company redacted*, 2017a:online) and their willingness, which ought to result in their commitment towards the brand. Both attributes, empowerment and commitment, are also presented in Macey and Schneider's (2008:6) "*Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement*" (*Figure 3*), which was introduced in the *Literature Review Chapter* of this study. Perceiving Employee Engagement as a framework was also supported by some of the interviewees. The pilot interviewee, in particular, saw the Employee Engagement construct as a framework, which met Kahn's (1990) reflection on personal engagement and disengagement as a conceptual framework, too.

When further reflecting on the organisations' conceptualisation and view on Employee Engagement, the general findings from the documentary analysis showed that the participating organisations did not provide a clear view of Employee Engagement in their communication. For sure, it can be stated that an organisation's corporate website is not the right forum to share the organisation's view and understanding of the phenomenon. However, on the other hand, sharing a clearer picture on how Employee Engagement is understood in the company

and how it is linked to the initiated activities can help an organisation to attract employees with a fitting mindset. Still, with respect to their adaptation of the phenomenon, many organisations put their focus on communicating their staff benefits, which they use to drive Employee Engagement. As introduced during the literature review, Chapman et al. (2018) pointed out that the positive effects of Employee Engagement led to an increase in practitioners' interest in the topic. It was also identified that they assumed that organisations copied competitors' successful Employee Engagement activities and also both of the analysis of the in-depth interviews and the documentary analysis showed that companies (even independent from their industry) rely on similar approaches. However, some interviewees, such as I13, also actively referred to Chapman et al.'s (2018) approach and pointed out that there was the need to understand competitors' positioning and to identify the challenges which competitors are facing (I11). This approach was also actively mentioned by I09, who stated that from her employer's perspective the phenomenon itself was of less importance. Instead they analysed other company's approaches to identify which approach could and would work for them and their people. Yet, due to the immaturity of the conceptualisation of the phenomenon and the incomplete adoption of it in German organisations, which was commonly reflected in ad hoc activities and strategies under development as well as adoptions based on the execution of Employee Engagement surveys amongst the workforce according to the interviewees (I03, I08, I12, I15). Due to the incomplete conceptualisation and adoption of the phenomenon, it is still too early to consider Chapman et al.'s (2018:539) perspective on the "increasing standardization of HRD practices concerning employee engagement" with respect to its implications for Employee Engagement in Germany. Even though the analysis of the conceptualisation by the companies indicated many gaps, it also revealed that in many cases the organisation aimed to create engagement by creating benefits for their staff. These benefits could be monetary incentives (I08, I17), development such as trainings (I05, I08), mobility (I11), financial security (I11) and childcare (I17) amongst others. However, an engaged team was also named as a benefit (I04). This reward-based concept was also introduced by Brown (1998), who also pointed out the negative effects on those who are not rewarded through this practice. Still, some of these benefits, such as training, mobility, financial security and childcare support, aim to secure "meaningfulness, safety and availability" which Welch (2011:335) defined as an important physical condition to drive engagement which needs to be ensured. As the analysis of I05 and I17's interviews showed are these benefits of value to the retail industry and the health-care sector in particular, as both sectors were facing a staff shortage at the time of research. The need to drive engagement even further within particular employee groups was also stated by Purcell (2014:238):

Managers and professional workers are expected to have higher levels of engagement than those in jobs which emphasize routine efficiency, where there are low levels of

involvement and little opportunity for discretionary behaviour, often found among from-line service workers in fast food outlets, supermarkets and high-volume call centre.

This underpinned the approach of I05 and I17 to ensure safety amongst their front-line workers. Considering Purcell's statement further, it also led back to the fast food industry, which aimed to attract and retain new employee through communication activities to increase the brand identification according to I09. At the same time, references to benefits formed a key element of these organisations' communication strategies. As the analysis showed, these strategies rely on similar benefits, which support the previously stated idea of Chapman et al. (2018) with respect to HRD practice standardisation. As there is no clear differentiation between HRD practices and Employee Engagement activities, a seamless transition from HRD into Employee Engagement was identified. While Brown (1998) criticises the establishment of rewards and punishments and questioned their success, Crawford et al. (2014) discuss the negative and positive effects of bonuses and rewards and come to the conclusion that their success depends on the situation and format in which they have been established. Additionally, Brown (1998:90) adds that supporting intrinsic motivation, including making "their work meaningful and enjoyable", creating identification and making sure that "they feel valued and secure" increases the level of employee motivation. In this study, the analysis of the in-depth interviews showed that most of the participant's views obtained in the in-depth interviews also contained individual elements of the cognitive, emotional and physical roles which Welch describes. For example, I14 referred to the identification with the organisation, the "willing[ness] to work actively" and involvement while the pilot interviewee added purpose to the discussion and named "feel[ing] more valued" and recognition as part of the definition, as well as her conceptualisation of the phenomenon. Others also referred to willingness (I07) as a required cognitive state, while some named salary (I13) and job security (I05 and I15) as physical conditions. Openness, recognition, involvement and transparency (I07) as well as appreciation (I13) were further named, supporting the cognitive as well as the emotional state of an employee. The documentary analysis showed that creating acknowledgment for staff Rajpal (Rajpal, 2014:online) and recognition (*US Fashion Company GmbH* redacted (no date:online); Rajpal (Rajpal, 2014:online)) were also used by the employers and other commentators in the studied organisations' Employee Engagement strategies. These different roles were identified as links to the respective drivers of Employee Engagement, as each of these factors does not only allow an employee to be engaged, but also actively pushes this person's engagement level within the organisation. However, according to Albrecht (2010:5), it is essential that "definitions of engagement need to clearly differentiate engagement constructs that are better conceptualized as antecedents or "drivers" of engagement". This underpins the fact that there is a strong difference between the academic conceptualisation of the phenomenon and its adoption and establishment in organisations, which is commonly

based on the implementation or the adjustment of drivers of Employee Engagement. Along with the approach discussed concerning the fostering of Employee Engagement through the adoption of benefits in organisation, the analysis also showed that many Employee Engagement approaches in the organisations analysed relied on paid certificates. These certificates have been developed and are sold by commercial companies. Many of the organisations analysed in this study present their institutions as an outstanding employer by listing different employer awards on their websites (I01, I05, I07, I08, I09, I14). During the in-depth interviews, only the Head of Recruitment (I15) referred to the certificate “Great Place to Work”, which is one of the commonly named awards according to the documentary analysis. On the other hand, I07 criticised that this kind of award provides no indication of the culture of an organisation. However, even though the different awards were identified as common elements of the organisations’ employee strategy, aiming to underpin their quality as an employer to talents interested in the company, the majority of the interviewees did not refer to them. It can be argued that the use of awards in their communication strategies, such as the ‘Charte der Vielfalt’, indicates that an organisation values diversity (I07, I09, I11), which was presented as a key area of responsibility of HRD (Rigg, 2015). However, the question remains how diversity is interpreted in the organisation as well as how much impact diversity has on Employee Engagement and vice versa.

A third factor identified as key influence on the conceptualisation and adoption of the phenomenon in the participating organisations was leadership and its role in driving Employee Engagement. The important role of the manager or supervisor was introduced in detail based on Schneider et al.’s (2010:160) “Antecedents and consequences of experienced trust in work organizations” as part of the *Literature Review*. As introduced in the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter*, many of the interviewees defined their views by referring to the drivers and expected output factors of Employee Engagement. I08 was one of the interviewees, who referred to the importance of *leadership* as a driver, along with management responsibility by responsible managers in charge and also those managing the teams in the countries. The findings from her interview were also underpinned by the statements her employer, the logistics company, made in its sustainability report (*Logistics Company Group* redacted, 2019:online). The findings evaluated are equivalent to I03’s perception of *leadership* as a driver of the phenomenon. I03 went into further detail in her statement, pointing out that the manager was a strong driver, which matched the organisation’s view in valuing the manager as an important factor in the adoption of the phenomenon, too. Therefore, the logistics company evaluated and trained its managers to ensure their continuous improvement. The importance of leadership with respect to the conceptualisation, but also in the adoption of Employee Engagement, was also evaluated in the literature review findings. Smythe (2013) and McCarthy (2005), for example, saw leadership as an Employee Engagement driver. Besides, the role of leadership

with respect to human resource decisions, to which Employee Engagement indeed belongs, has also been discussed in the wider organisational leadership arena (Yukl, 2019). Additionally, the documentary analysis revealed that the employer (*Logistics Company* Group redacted, no date-a:online) stated on its website that the organisational culture was driven by “Respekt, Wertschätzung und Chancengleichheit” (Engl. ‘respect, appreciation and equal opportunity’). With respect to *appreciation*, the author identified similarities between the organisation’s statement on the website and the drivers mentioned by Bechtel (2012) in the context of *Mitarbeitermotivation*. In comparison, the travel company put its focus on *empowerment* (*Travel Company* redacted, 2018:online) matching Macey and Schneider’s (2008:6) “Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement”, which is according to Guest (2014b:224) an “integrative framework”. The feedback of the practitioners confirmed Guest’s (2014b) perspective on the framework.

Another relevant observation on the conceptualisation of the phenomenon was a statement made by I13, who questioned the Employee Engagement concept: “Somehow, everything we are discussing is just old wine in new bottles, isn’t it?!” (Tjalf N., 2018). Similar statements were identified during the literature review, including Albrecht (2010). Therefore, it can be argued that the Employee Engagement concept exists in a flexible shape, which is not new, but organisations reconstruct the phenomenon to ensure it matches their requirements and business aims.

In the next section, the author moves on to discuss the findings related to the second research question of the study.

6.5 Research objective 2: To investigate the evolution of the Employee Engagement concept, by paying attention to its proliferation in the German context

This section of the *Discussion Chapter* tackles the second research objective of the study: *To investigate the evolution of the Employee Engagement concept, by paying attention to its proliferation in the German context*. Based on the findings from the analysis of the in-depth interview and the documentary method, the key findings presented are discussed along with the results of the literature review.

The main focus of the section is on the proliferation of the phenomenon and its equivalents, the challenges caused by different generations and how to approach them, as well as the evolutionary change in HR caused by different situational factors within the organisations. Moreover, the different drivers which emerged from the evolutionary development of the concept are discussed, before the role of organisational culture and the country of origin’s effect on the proliferation of the phenomenon is deliberated upon. Finally, the author discusses how

challenges and country-specific developments have influenced the evolutionary development of Employee Engagement in Germany.

The different views and conceptualisations of the Employee Engagement phenomenon amongst the participating organisations, which have already been discussed, have also influenced the implementation of their Employee Engagement concepts. When reviewing the different conceptualisations of the participating organisations, the author identified that many companies created their own strategy based upon their organisational demands. There, parallels to the findings from literature were identified, especially with respect to the same drivers of Employee Engagement. The need for Employee Engagement initiatives originated from the requirement to solve organisations' HR issues, as I02 stated. At I02's organisation, it resulted in an Employee Engagement strategy called "Wir sind [company name]" (Engl. 'We are [company name]'), which they called a *Mitarbeiterbindungsprogramm* (Engl. 'Employee retention solution'). This initiative was designed to address the demand to recruit new staff on the one hand, while on the other hand it aimed to fulfil the need to retain existing staff. At the same time, the interviewee experienced Employee Engagement initiatives as an on-top task for HR departments. Nevertheless, according to the interviewee, the Employee Engagement topic was experiencing a growing interest amongst consulting companies, too. Along with I02, I13 also reflected on the change in human resource management and the new requirements for staff and their organisations. He referred to the change in management styles and the shift in career management and employee rewarding nowadays. Their perception of the change in their organisations with respect to human resources matched Jackson's (1997) view on change in organisations, which appears in waves. This change in waves was also picked up by I01 when she referred to the different workforce generations, which changed along with the organisation and cause organisations to face different challenges with respect to expectation management across different generations. Her perception of the different target group expectations was also supported by Bardwick (2008), who also reflected on the differences in generations at work, as detailed out in the *Literature Review Chapter*. Furthermore, I01 added that from her perspective, "good employee engagement" should be able to address the different audiences within the organisation to ensure that the company's aims with respect to staff retention and performance increase are addressed. Suggestions on how to achieve this were left open. Bardwick (2008:7) identified a decrease in Employee Engagement across all generations as a consequence of previous management decisions and performance deficits. Yet, she in particular pointed out that "the young and educated" did not feel valued, which resulted in a lack of engagement. By reflecting on I01's statement on the necessity of inventing an Employee Engagement approach which addresses the different target groups equally and Bardwick's (2008) statement on the different generations in US companies, it became clearer why the implementation of Employee Engagement initiatives should address the wider

employee-base of a company. At the same time, this causes challenges due to the different expectations of the target groups. Furthermore, Bardwick (2008:68) pointed out that younger generations were more open to new technologies and “not face-to-face is comfortable for them”. The study showed that this generational change allowed new dimensions of Employee Engagement approaches, such as the pilot interviewee’s social recognition tool “Bubble”, which was managed exclusively online or on the social intranet as suggested by I13. At the same time, the new generations’ requirements cause difficulties with older generations, who value face-to-face discussion highly for example, which the pilot interviewee’s organisation managed via personal interactions with the senior management team. However, this format required adjustments for the German market. As the review of McCarthy’s paper from 2005 showed, German employees valued the concept of management exchange arranged through open door policies, but preferred pre-defined open door hours, which the pilot interviewees’ organisation managed by establishing pre-defined office visits by the senior management team. When looking further into the topic of diversity at work, it became clear that the amount of research on diversity with respect to gender was still limited. This was also supported by Truss et al. (2013:2665), who pointed out that the existing studies on Employee Engagement mainly concerned the “male industrial worker”.

Generational change leads to evolutionary change in Human Resources and the resulting transformation in Employee Engagement. This topic is also considered by Welch (2011) in her reflection on the evolution of Employee Engagement. Welch (2011) assumed that Employee Engagement was “dependent upon the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability” (Welch, 2011:335), which Kahn (1990:693) also referred to. In addition, Kahn (1990:693) added that “individual differences and situational factors [...] influence the psychological importance of work to people’s identities or self-esteem”. These *situational factors* mentioned are one of the aspects, which I02’s employer has to react to in the invention of her company’s strategy to retain staff and attract new employees. This includes ongoing “budget discussions” and resource availability with respect to the time required to initiate the defined activities. The challenging situation regarding available resources was also pointed out by the pilot interviewee. Furthermore, I02 shared an example during her interview to support the challenging situation of a mid-size employer in comparison to a multinational brand and its strategy. She recapped a situation she faced when her organisation met the company Henkel during a topic-related event. She described how differently the two organisations approached the inventions of their Employee Engagement strategies to fulfil their individual organisational needs and to react to their *situational factors*, while they “still us[ed] the same wording”. In its strategy, Henkel focused on “international development perspectives for young professionals to reach the next level”, while the automotive company offered “complimentary tickets for the local swimming pool” to increase the Employee Engagement level. As part of this example,

she outlined the invention of their “Wir sind [company name]” (Engl. ‘*We are [company name]*’) strategy by stating that the company labelled everything they provide as additional service to their employees as an Employee Engagement initiative, including coffee machines, free entrance to the local swimming pool, etc. The findings of the documentary analysis showed that employees of the automotive company also perceived these activities positively as they improved the atmosphere at work (Anonymous, 2019c), which reflected Holbeche and Matthews’ (2012) benefits of Employee Engagement for organisations. Besides, I05, I10, I15 and I17 also addressed the *situational factors* mentioned, which influenced the evolutionary establishment of the phenomenon in organisations. I05’s organisation tackled the changes in human resources and recruitment as well as the staff shortage by establishing permanent contracts to push the engagement level. I10 also saw the link between Employee Engagement and the increase in service-oriented staff, which Holbeche and Matthews (2012) had pointed out. The employee survey of I15’s company showed that employees missed being rewarded for the organisation’s success, which was also contributed to by the employees. So, the organisation reacted to this situation and implemented an initiative whereby employees could get company shares. Additionally, they extended their benefits portfolio by offering more days off and supporting pension schemes. I17 stated that her company reacted strongly to the individual situations of its employees. This is also reflected on the company’s website (*Health-care Company Pflegedienste & Residenzen GmbH* redacted, 2020:online), which highlights the various benefits and individual solutions such as additional health-care, childcare benefits, etc. These four examples showed that each of the organisations had invented a very individual Employee Engagement strategy by reacting to their company’s requirements and their target group’s expectations. At the same time, all of them targeted the same output factors, such as ensuring staff retention, improving service quality, decreasing fluctuation and attracting new employees. Furthermore, their examples also picked up on factors such as work flexibility and part-time working, which again linked back to the previously discussed generational change at work and how new generations expect organisations to be much more flexible in their work agreements. Besides, these different output factors are of benefit to the organisations as they have a positive influence the organisation’s performance through employees’ contributions to the success of the organisation (I12, I11) and ensure the success of the business (I15), which according to Finney (2008) can be contributed by an engaged workforce. Consequently, the phenomenon is of great interest and benefit to employers, as the overall interest of the participants showed and which met Welch’s (2011) perception of the interest in the phenomenon. I13 stated that even engaged alumni can still support an organisation by being a positive reference for their former employers and to potential new employees. As mentioned before, the Global Head of Strategic Talent Management and HR, I04, saw a connection between “the wellbeing of the company as part of your own wellbeing”. The organisation’s

wellbeing is directly influenced by a company's performance and results. This means that if the organisation's wellbeing is ensured by achieving the targets set, employees will also benefit through job security, less pressure and a good work atmosphere. This again leads back to I05's example of permanent contracts for the retailer's staff as a result of the company's wellbeing, which allows employees to experience job security and therefore results in their own wellbeing (Celma et al., 2018). This was also supported by Holbeche and Matthews (2012:6), who not only pointed out the employee's impact on business success, willingness to embrace tasks above their level of knowledge and grow with these tasks, but also highlighted their roles as "advocates of their organization". Nevertheless, the analysis of the interviews also showed that other drivers such as *recognition*, *employee retention* and *brand identification* amongst others were mentioned, which were also identified throughout the literature review.

Moreover, the proliferation of Employee Engagement fostered through organisational culture also needs to be discussed further. As the previous literature review findings showed, an organisation's work culture has an impact on Employee Engagement (Kalliath and Kalliath, 2012). Therefore, HRM allows organisations to manage this culture (Wilkinson et al., 2017) and by implementing strategic HRD they have the possibility to influence culture (McCracken and Garavan, 2015). During the interviews, I07 shared her perspective on the importance of culture and the need for a functioning and intact organisational culture, which automatically fosters and drives Employee Engagement. Her case underpinned the previous findings from the literature review on the impact of culture on Employee Engagement. According to her, Employee Engagement which emerges from culture "comes from the people" and requires the support of the organisation. Valentin (2014:477) also pointed out that "engagement cannot be commanded; it is offered by employees if conditions are right". Still, it is questionable whether a designed Employee Engagement strategy can also support companies where the culture is not (yet) developed and/or lived to ensure that it grows further, the change is embraced or different cultures of sub-brands and divisions are tied together. This perspective was supported by the example of I08's employer from the logistics company. In this case, the Employee Engagement strategy was established throughout all countries and divisions to achieve the targeted mission of the company, while the local managers still had the opportunity to drive its implementation depending on the local requirements. I05 from retail, on the other hand, shared a critical perspective by stating that only specific companies with a long history or those with modern technologies were interested and focused on Employee Engagement. However, he finally concluded that his company, as a fast-growing business, was facing challenges such as fluctuation, which could be tackled by Employee Engagement activities. This view matched Kalliath and Kalliath (2012), who also referred to the topic of fluctuation and the higher level of willingness to leave amongst well-trained employees and workers – independent from the industry. Nevertheless, the link between organisational culture and its influence on the

Employee Engagement strategy, was also pointed out by other participants such as the fashion brands (I14 and I15), the bank (I11), the hotel chain (I10) and the employer from education (I12). At the same time, the literature review supported their views on the influence of Employee Engagement with respect to the leaders' and co-workers' influences on the organisational climate (Schneider et al., 2010), the contribution of brainpower (MacLeod and Brady, 2008) and also the opposite of basic loyalty (Macey and Schneider, 2008), which allows an employee to not only question the organisation, but also contribute to shaping the organisation. This again results in Huczynski and Buchanan's (2007) idea of the heritage of organisational culture, which is handed over from one generation to the next. Therefore, both organisational culture and Employee Engagement stay in a symbiosis to each other. This symbiosis was also supported by Holbeche and Matthews (2012:17) with respect organisational culture and the role of managers. They stated: "while the people within it (especially senior managers) create the culture, they are also shaped by it". The interview with I07 underpinned this perspective, as the interviewee from automotive and defence pointed out that there was no need for a designed Employee Engagement strategy if the corporate culture had developed accordingly. According to her, this is the crucial component which needs to be ensured, but it is implied by its people.

Another factor, which was identified as relevant with respect to the evolution of the phenomenon within Germany, was the impact of the country of origin on the Employee Engagement strategy of the participating organisations. The analysis revealed that some interviewees, including the pilot interviewee, I02, I06, I08, I10, I11 and I18, saw an impact of the country of origin on both – culture and Employee Engagement strategy. One example analysed was the international luxury hotel chain. I10, Human Resource Manager in one of the brand's German locations, referred to different activities for the local team to achieve Employee Engagement. The analysis of the published material presented in the *Documentary Analysis Chapter* highlighted that the different international hotels belonging to the brand followed a similar strategy to the team in Cologne. The interviewee pointed out that engaged employees are key for the service industry, which is also supported by Yee et al. (2010). The organisation's Employee Engagement was strongly driven by its US-roots, as the interviewee reflected. Still, the international teams changed the activities so they would collaborate with the local target groups. 'Celebrating our People', as the hotel chain's Employee Engagement strategy was called, aimed to recognise staff by providing them with unique experiences and treats. This approach was also reflected in the findings from the documentary analysis outlined previously. The brand tried to mirror the experience it creates for its customers in their employee activities, aiming to treat staff as family (*Hospitality and Gastronomy Company* redacted, 2020:online) and use synergies between the employee and customer experience. However, due to the interviewees' extensive description of the Employee Engagement strategy, the author

expected that the company would use this approach and the emotional trigger of *family* more strongly in its career communication, which was not identified during the documentary analysis. Still, the value of the phenomenon to the industry sector, which the hotel chain targeted across all markets, was also supported by Kumar and Pansari's (2015:68) publication on the effect of Employee Engagement on profitability growth. They state that:

Well-known service-focused companies, including Whole Food Market, Starbucks, Marriott International and Southwest Airlines, have long invested in initiatives focused on maintaining a holistic framework of making both their customers and their employees happy.

However, other industries also developed the concept of Employee Engagement further to target to tackle their industry-specific issues. The interview with I17 revealed that the company from the health-care sector also developed the phenomenon to drive recognition and engage its employees through targeted activities addressing each employee individually. They labelled it *Mitarbeitermotivation*. As the literature review showed, this approach in health-care was also discussed by Bechtel (2012). The example of the international fast food chain exposed that the country of origin impact was less prominent in some cases. The interviewee, I09, working for the US-brand in Germany, stated that the country of origin had no impact on Employee Engagement, but she perceived some US-impact on the organisational culture. Looking further into the data, it was identified that the German subsidiary ran its own HRD activities for Germany independent from the US headquarters. Instead, they managed their own website along with various social media channels which host career profiles and are called “[*Company name*] Deutschland Karriere” [Engl. [*Company name*] Germany career] for Germany only. The company focused strongly on day-to-day stories from their employees in the German restaurants and they presented vacant positions in their different locations (*Fast Food Company Deutschland Karriere* redacted, 2020a:online). In this case, the German team had developed a strong strategy, which they drove themselves for the German market. According to I09, the team had also established WhatsApp groups to bring employees from the different locations closer together and always cast actors for their marketing campaigns from their own employee-base to ensure they increased staff retention, but also ensured brand identification. This internal approach was in line with the brand's external social media activities and was shaped by the responsible German team to aim for the expected outcome.

Looking at the evolution and the current establishment of the phenomenon in Germany from a wider perspective, the analysis showed that German organisations reinvented their individual Employee Engagement strategies in a rather rudimentary way either due to the lacking definition or the expected outcome. As outlined in the literature review, German employees are well paid and highly protected. Therefore, the general conditions in Germany differ to those abroad and therefore the expectations in Employee Engagement strategies differ to those from

organisations in Anglo-US countries. Nevertheless, according to I13, the Employee Engagement strategies established in Germany today are reaching their peak, as the German job market is also changing and younger generations have different expectations of their employers, as the literature review showed. The documentary analysis also showed that other very rudimentary indicators are also used to show a company's quality as an employer: Employer awards and certificates. These grants are not only used to indicate how well the company is perceived as an employer, but are also seen as a kind of Employee Engagement invention. As outlined in the previous section, most of the organisations place their certifications at the centre of their communication strategies with existing or potential staff. However, they played a less prominent role in the interviews. Therefore, it can be stated that it is expected that organisations show them on their website or refer to them in their external communication, but a real benefit of these awards is not perceived by staff.

At the same time, a key statement with respect to the invention of Employee Engagement and its benefits in organisations as well as potential names for the phenomenon was made by I09, Head of Employer Reputation and Engagement at an international fast food chain. She stated that the focus was less on the phenomenon's name, but instead on its drivers in her organisation. She pointed out that "understand[ing] what does people motivate to work in a specific company" was essential. This approach strongly matches the KIA-example by Tomlinson (2010), which was introduced as part of the literature review and is driven by the organisation's goals and targeted behaviours. However, even though I09 saw the advantages of Employee Engagement, she also criticised that the differentiation between Employee Engagement and other activities was often not made. She shared an example from her organisation where other activities such as Christmas parties were suddenly also assigned to the team which was responsible for the invention of the phenomenon and the establishment of the resulting activities. She stated that the challenge was in "set[ting] the line on what is Engagement and what does not belong to Engagement". Besides, I13 also criticised the German development of the Employee Engagement phenomenon, which often includes just "cosmetic things" – according to him. This issue links back the previous discussion on the understanding of Employee Engagement. Due to the lack in consistency with respect to its definition and the different views, the phenomenon allows certain flexibility with respect to its conceptualisation and reconstruction based on the organisation's requirements.

It needs to be pointed out that the author expected the interviewees to state different challenges besides time and resource issues with respect to the establishment of Employee Engagement in Germany. Based on the literature review findings and the preparation calls with the interviewees and potentials, the author expected concerns regarding the targeted performance improvement and concerns from the workers' councils. As presented in the literature review, the impact of the works council was discussed by Moran et al. (2011) and

Hübler (2003) amongst others. However, the analysis of the in-depth interviews showed that the challenges named had completely different origins. Issues and challenges of Employee Engagement, its invention and sustainability, according to the interviewees, were linked to the lack of time and resources, additional tasks for the HR department and differences in target groups, amongst others (pilot, I14, I02). Besides, according to Harris et al. (1999), the presented importance of 'objectivity', also plays a key role in many German companies, especially in large organisations, to avoid a conflict of interest. Additionally, German organisations have identified which value Employee Engagement brings to them and their staff, but it still presents various challenges for companies. Consequently, strategies created outside Germany might not meet German requirements and Employee Engagement strategies could be perceived as a conflict of interest.

In the next section, the author will discuss the findings on the third research question and continues to discuss the parallels of the phenomenon's construction in the researched country and the Anglo-US countries from which most of the literature emerged.

6.6 Research objective 3: To examine the parallels of the Employee Engagement construct between Anglo-US countries and Germany

After discussing the invention and establishment of Employee Engagement in German organisations, this section focuses on the comparison with the findings from Anglo-US literature. The author will debate how cultural differences influence the construction of Employee Engagement and will address the third research objective: *To examine the parallels of the Employee Engagement construct between Anglo-US countries and Germany.*

The topics discussed include German-specific issues when implementing Employee Engagement strategies, parallels and differences when defining it and how target group differences impact the conceptualisation in Germany in comparison to Anglo-US countries. Moreover, the cultural differences between Anglo-US countries and Germany are discussed further, as well as the meaning of family systems to both societies and the impact on the establishment of the phenomenon.

First of all, it needs to be pointed out that there is a difference between German organisations and German-based organisations. As introduced in the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter*, more than half of the participating organisations had their origins in Germany. Still, many of the organisations had their origins abroad, such as the company from tourism, travel and leisure (I01), the travel company (I04), the fast food chain (I09), the luxury hotel brand (I10), two companies from the fashion industry (I14 and I15) as well as the pilot interviewee's professional service provider. The other organisations analysed in this study had their origin in Germany. Some, such as the logistics employer (I03 and I08) and the construction company (I06), the automotive and defence company and the bank (I11) also had large international

employee bases, while others such as I13, I16 and I17 operated only in Germany. The other employers (I02, I05, I12 and I18) employed smaller teams abroad, but the majority of staff was based in Germany. The full overview of the country of origin is provided in *Table 7: Overview of interviewees' and their organisations' demographic information*. As previously discussed, the country of origin can impact the organisational culture. Companies operating in Germany face specific issues, which also influence the implementation of Employee Engagement in Germany. As outlined in the *Literature Review Chapter*, the author referred to Terpstra and David's definition of culture used by Morrison (2006). Their holistic definition established the foundation for further discussion on culture and how organisational culture and a country's culture influence the invention and establishment of Employee Engagement. As stated previously, Finney (2008) also referred to the influence of organisational culture on Employee Engagement as well as its relationship (Hofstede (1982); Venaik et al. (2013)). Besides, further discussion also indicates that there are many parallels and links between both influencing factors. The cross-cultural difference was also identified in non-peer reviewed literature (Kenexa (2012b); Kenexa (2012a), which was of interest to the wider audience of practitioners, too. According to I18, the country of origin has a bigger impact on companies with a longer history. It can be argued that the long history of an organisation also forms the culture of the organisation and the resulting activities, which matches Morrison's (2006) perspective. From this point of view, the country of origin strongly shapes the organisational culture, which again has an impact on strategies such as Employee Engagement amongst others. As presented in the analysis of the in-depth interviews as well as the documentary analysis, the Employee Engagement strategies established relied on the organisations' missions and visions, which fits with Huczynski and Buchanan (2007) previously introduced understanding on organisational culture. In comparison, the automotive and defence employee, I07, referred to a natural relationship between organisational culture and Employee Engagement. According to her, the company needs to "allow[...] this things to develop", otherwise people would not accept the culture and the activities created. The importance of a strong relationship between employee and organisation in order to drive the phenomenon was also supported by Hallberg and Schaufeli's (2006) perspective. Consequently, Employee Engagement stays in accordance with organisational culture, which means both have an impact on each other. Others, such as the logistics employer (I03 and I08), perceived the organisational culture as the driver of Employee Engagement, while Holbeche and Matthews (2012) identified a symbiosis between organisations and employees causing Employee Engagement.

When reflecting further on the previously outlined issue concerning the definition of the phenomenon identified during the literature review, some of the interviewees also felt challenged to find a definition when asked. Some felt challenged to find the right words (I14) to define Employee Engagement. Others used unprecise compound sentences (I13) or had to

reconsider their answers (I01, I05), while some defined it by using other concepts such as *Mitarbeiterbindungssystematik* (I02), *Mitarbeiterbindung* or *Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit* (I14) and *Mitarbeiterengagement* (I08) (French notation ‘an·ga·je·man’) amongst other English and German terminologies. These observations matched the author’s previous notes on the inconsistency of the Employee Engagement definition according to literature. In particular, the lacking precision and the missing unified definition of Employee Engagement were observed. However, even though the analysis indicated that the utilisation of the English phenomenon’s name amongst the German participants was limited, the analysis of the drivers and output factors mentioned indicated that the interviewees were aware of the overall Employee Engagement concept. Still, the previously discussed definitions collected did not only vary with respect to the views shared, but also with respect to the level of detail contributed. It can be argued that these challenges are related to the number of different definitions, which was mirrored in their incoherency and the resulting confusion. Instead it could be stated that the interviewees had learned about the phenomenon from their employers, thus absorbing their construction of the phenomenon. This second assumption is also underpinned by the fact that the interviewees referred mainly to their employers when they were asked about their awareness of Employee Engagement, which was outlined in greater detail earlier in this chapter. The different German terms mentioned were an indication of the importance of language, here the German language, in the organisations to ensure the different stakeholders’ acceptance. The pilot interviewee underpinned the importance of keeping the local language by stating that the UK part of her organisation used the term ‘Employee Engagement’ to refer to the phenomenon. However, she also indicated that the local variations with respect to naming the phenomenon were of less importance, as the output was the essential aspect (Vicky E., 2015). Others, such as I14, referred to the name of the Employee Engagement strategy established by the organisation, and less to the phenomenon’s actual terminology (Isabel R., 2018). The pilot interviewee stated that the organisation did not force the international teams and colleagues to use the Employee Engagement term (Vicky E., 2015); instead they supported the usage of a term the local colleagues felt familiar with. Here one needs to differentiate between Employee Engagement as a term used as a label for the activities targeting the phenomenon and Employee Engagement as a framework as outlined in the *Literature Review Chapter*.

As shown in the previous chapters, along with the definition of the phenomenon, the drivers and expected output factors are commonly discussed. As discussed previously, there interviewees mentioned different drivers during their interviews. According to the interviewees, Employee Engagement creates an increase in support between colleagues (I07), employee satisfaction (I12, I10, I17), strong brand identification (I02, I18) and involvement (I11), increasing productivity (I03), a raise in quality (I11) and stabilisation (I17). These different

Employee Engagement drivers were also discussed by Macey and Schneider (2008) referring to satisfaction, Kumar and Pansari (2015) identification and Busse and Weidner (2020) the overall performance increase and the resulting benefits for organisations.

While satisfaction was named as a driver of Employee Engagement, I04 referred to the researched phenomenon as the evolution of employee satisfaction instead. According to him, the pure interest in employee satisfaction had actually decreased within the conceptualisation of Employee Engagement. The difference between the phenomenon and satisfaction was also highlighted by Erickson (2005, cited in Macey and Schneider, 2008:7) “engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer”. However, the author was not able to identify any academic data to backup I04’s perspective on the lacking or at least decreasing interest in satisfaction as a driver of Employee Engagement. The only difference identified was the combination of different drivers (including satisfaction), which lead to Employee Engagement, instead of relying only on one particular driver. Even though satisfaction is seen controversial, it is, along with the other keywords stated, used by Kumar and Pansari’s (2015:68) in their approach “five dimensions of Employee Engagement”, which they developed as basis for their qualitative study on the phenomenon’s impact on performance:

- a. *Employee satisfaction*
- b. *Employee identification*
- c. *Employee commitment*
- d. *Employee loyalty*
- e. *Employee performance*

Still, Kumar and Pansari’s (2015) approach underpinned the findings that Employee Engagement relied on more than one driver rather than satisfaction on its own. Even though many of the interviewees were unable to provide a definition of Employee Engagement as previously outlined, the results of the analysis showed that the interviewees still referred to the same drivers of Employee Engagement, which are also presented in literature. Some of the interviewees, such as I04, even used terminologies, which were also reflected in academic sources. The Global Head of Strategic Talent Management and HR, defined Employee Engagement as something “beyond Employee Satisfaction”. Furthermore, he stated that an employee “can be satisfied without being engaged”. This interpretation of Employee Engagement matched Erickson’s statement: “engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement” (2005, cited in Macey and Schneider, 2008:7). Furthermore, I04 specified that it was about ‘brand identification’ including mirroring your own wellbeing with the brand’s wellbeing as well as bringing in ‘willingness’ and being a ‘promoter’ of the brand. Here, it needs to be pointed out that I04 was one of the two participants not based in Germany. The Danish manager requested that the interview was executed in English, which

was granted due to his responsibility for Germany. Still, the company's online communication was minimal when it came to defining Employee Engagement.

Another topic identified during the analysis of the primary and documentary data and the literature review was the design of the Employee Engagement strategy based on the target group. The author identified that the diversity of the workforce was one of the topics keeping some of the interviewees occupied. According to the interviewees, the organisations focused on the Employee Engagement strategies addressing all employees. The documentary analysis also showed that there were significant differences in how employees perceived the organisation and what was initiated for the different target groups depending on their roles. This was the case in organisations with a very diverse employee-base in particular. While I01 referred to the generational differences discussed previously, I18, Head of Human Resources in gastronomy, placed particular focus on the various different types of jobs in his industry and the resulting unlike target groups. According to him, the difference between the groups of employees in his organisation was caused by difference in education, including unskilled staff and more highly educated employees. Furthermore, he indicated that due to people's different roles and backgrounds, a strategy was needed to address the different employee types which was, according to the interviewee, difficult to create and establish. The difference between target groups was also considered by Kahn (1990:693), who stated that "jobs, roles, and work contexts" influenced the engagement level of an individual. The diversity of roles adds an additional level of complexity to the reconstruction of Employee Engagement in organisations to match the organisational culture, its needs and the target groups' expectations. This also applies to German-based workforces.

Looking at the evolution and the establishment of the phenomenon in Germany from a wider perspective, the analysis showed that German organisations reinvented their individual Employee Engagement strategies in a rudimentary way focusing on benefits as drivers and awards in comparison the previously introduced frameworks from Anglo-US literature. As also outlined in the literature review, German employees are well paid and highly protected. Therefore, the general conditions in Germany differ to those abroad and therefore the expectations in Employee Engagement strategies differ to those from organisations in Anglo-US countries. Nevertheless, according to I13, the Employee Engagement strategies established in Germany today are coming to an end, as the German job market is also changing and younger generations have different expectations of their employers, as the literature review showed. The documentary analysis showed that other very rudimentary indicators are also used to show a company's quality as an employer: Employer awards and certificates. These grants are not only used to indicate how the company is perceived as employer, but are also seen as a kind of Employee Engagement invention. As outlined in the previous section, most of the organisations place their certifications at the centre of their

communication strategies with existing or potential staff. However, they played a less prominent role in the interviews. Therefore, it can be stated that it is expected that organisations show them on their website or refer to them in their external communication, but a real benefit of these awards is not perceived by staff.

Besides, the analyses of the in-depth interviews as well as the documentary data showed that an engaged workforce is of similar importance to a large organisation in Germany as for an organisation in an Anglo-US country. This is also supported by Busse and Weidner (2020:540-541), who state:

Regardless of socio-demographic characteristics, high levels of EE are an important leverage for an enterprise's future success, especially when displayed in the course of a paradigm shift away from a "traditional" to a "modern" leadership take.

On the one hand, it can be argued that the competition within the workforce in Anglo-American countries differs from the situation in Germany. This could be caused by the more competitive environment in the employment market in the US or also in the UK, caused by temporary contracts and less protection by the government and employment laws. However, the support during unemployment and the financial protection in Germany have also changed, as Jung and Kuhn (2014) present in their cross-cultural study reflecting on Germany and the US. On the other hand, it can be claimed that the more secure work environment in Germany also causes fewer eager employees, as their protection within the organisation is better than in an Anglo-American country. Consequently, German organisations need to invest more into their work force to keep them engaged and ensure they contribute to the company as expected. This is touched upon by Moran et al. (2011:421), who stated that "the Germans are among the highest paid workers in the world, and enjoy a high standard of living." Additionally, they also pointed out the state's support for Germans amongst other benefits such as their pensions, leave entitlement and medical care, which also underpins the argument that Employee Engagement is required to develop pure employee satisfaction further into a more holistic concept, which also allows organisations to benefit from their satisfied and engaged employees. As the logistics company included the topic in its annual sustainability report (*Logistics Company Group* redacted, 2019:online), this shows that the topic is valued by the organisation. This is also reinforced by the company's strategy, which not only addressed investors and suppliers, but aimed to become the "Employer of Choice" (*Logistics Company AG* redacted, 2020:online). The importance of managers and leadership when driving Employee Engagement was also identified in literature.

Another relevant finding identified during the analysis was the previously introduced reference to the emotional trigger of *family* in organisations' Employee Engagement communication. It was especially used in the context of acquiring new employees. As pointed out in detail, the

communication of the luxury hotel chain contained the idea of *family* (*Hospitality and Gastronomy Company* redacted, 2020:online), but also the travel company mentioned it in its online career communication (*Travel Company* redacted, 2020:online). Besides, also the gastronomy chain used *family* in its communication (*Gastronomy Company* redacted, 2020a:online), even though they had not invented or established an Employee Engagement strategy, as they relied only on ad hoc activities in the different regions. Moreover, the fashion brand of I14 and the construction company of I06 also emotionalised their communication by referring to *family*. Alternatively, the retail company, for which I05 worked, referred to “working with friends” (*Retail Company* redacted, 2018:online) in its career communication, even though the organisation had not established an Employee Engagement strategy. How strong this emotional trigger of *family* and *friends* is, becomes clear when looking at it from a wider perspective and by considering their meanings in the German language. As Moran et al. (2011:421) pointed out:

The German language is a key to understanding their national personality. The Germans make a strong distinction between an acquaintance (Bekannte [sic.]) and a friend (Freund [sic.]). Germans will only use Freund [sic.] when they really mean it; otherwise it is a Bekannte [sic.]. Close family ties are also cherished.

This shows that the organisations aim for a strong employee relationship by referring to communication, which relies on the concept of *family* or *friendship* in German, aiming for a strong bond with their staff and to increase the identification between the company and the employees. The importance of this relationship between the parties was also reinforced by I14, HR Business Partner of one of the participating fashion brands. She stated that the identification with a brand's values caused a positive effect on employees' behaviour and an increase in loyalty towards the brand. The literature review showed that the conceptualisation of Employee Engagement did not rely on the emotionalization of bonds between colleagues through the use of an emotional trigger such as family or friends. However, here it can be stated that the meaning of family and friends in a business environment in Germany had a much stronger meaning to the German employees than to Anglo-US employees, as their family system may vary from the German family system. Looking in particular at the family system in the US, Casper and Bianchi (2002) pointed out that the known concept of the American family had changed over the years. Here it can be argued that people's perceptions and understanding of the family system had also changed and consequently their understanding on the synonym of family in a business context varied to the earlier understanding. Still, similar changes with respect to a decrease in marriages (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2020c:online), an increase in divorces (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2020b:online), increasing marriages with the same gender (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2020a:online) etc. could also be observed within Germany. Therefore, it can be argued that each potential

employee who received the organisations' messages focusing on family had a different perception of its meaning, which also shapes the employee's expectations and perception of the work environment and the relationship with managers and colleagues.

With respect to the influence of the German culture on Employee Engagement, Moran et al. (2011) flagged that employees in Germany were involved in various organisational decisions, which can also mean involvement in decisions on staffing including terminations. The author expected that the interviewees would address these aspects along with the challenges caused by the German taxation for benefit in kind, but they did not name them. Instead they focused on other issues specific to the German market and its organisations, including issues related to the "Mittelstand" in Germany, which, according to Schenkenhofer and Wilhelm (2020:75), still lacked a clear definition, but was commonly associated with "family-owned German SMEs". According to the interviewees, this was less international (I12) and challenged by unilateral German management and resulting German-thinking (I13). Additionally, the Danish participant I04 pointed out that he perceived the Germans as "slow adopters". Besides, I14 stated that "the German market is not yet as Employee Engagement-oriented as other countries are". The employer of I14 from fashion industry had its roots in the USA. The interviewee, who was partly Dutch, perceived Germany as "really traditional", while in comparison, Employee Engagement was "quite modern", which did not fit together from her perspective. However, at the same time the interviews revealed that in different reconstructed set-ups, the phenomenon had been established in many of the participating organisations. Therefore, it can be argued that the Employee Engagement concept does exist in German organisations, but might be named differently and has been reconstructed based on the companies' needs with respect to their workforce engagement.

When analysing the challenges of international organisations further, many parallels between Anglo-US organisations and German companies were identified with respect to the cross-cultural operations and employees. Hoecklin (1994) declared that companies confronted by the challenges of working with international operations, try to encourage pre-defined behaviours through the leadership of their management to tackle these challenges. In practice, this approach was identified in the Employee Engagement strategy of the hospitality brand. The responsible Human Resources Manager (I10) pointed out that her employer's Employee Engagement strategy was designed in accordance with the company's customer philosophy. The strategy was developed internationally and each region had further customised the establishment of the strategy. According to the interviewee, the American approach was "a bit more flowery" including "battle calls when [they] start [the] shift". On top, she added that "the Germans would laugh about it", underpinning how the Anglo-US perspective of Employee Engagement differed to its set-up in a German organisation or at least German-based subsidiary. In the given case, the company changed its interaction with the employees in the

local markets to reconstruct the approach and invent a matching solution on a local basis. This approach was also supported by Rothmann (2014:171), who stated that a “one-size-fits-all approach will be doomed to failure”. When reflecting on the primary research findings concerning the logistics employer (I03 and I08) and the related documentary analysis, it became clear the organisation drove a global strategy. The strong mission and vision of the company was designed under the branding of the previously established Strategy 2020 and the lately launched Strategy 2025 and was applied similarly in all parts of the world. By comparing the two Employee Engagement strategies created by the luxury hotel brand and the version of the logistics employer, it became clear that both organisations had specific aims which they wanted to achieve with their strategies. Both of their Employee Engagement strategies were driven by their target groups ‘customer’ and ‘employee’, but their implementation of their individual Employee Engagement inventions differed. While the international hospitality brand focused more strongly on an overall approach, which was restricted in the different countries, the logistics company leveraged a pre-defined approach into the different international teams. Still, I08 also pointed out that there was a country of origin impact by the local teams in the individual countries when the invented strategy was implemented. According to her, the different international stakeholders and their different international backgrounds influenced this strategy. Here, she identified a particular influence of the local leaders, which shaped the local invention of their Employee Engagement strategy, too. This local adjustment matched I10’s statements on the local adjustments, which were made based on the respective requirements of the audiences. The perspective on the managers and leaders by reconstructing the global strategies based on the local needs was also supported by McLeod and Brady’s (2008:129) statement that leaders and their leadership have the “most direct impact on the culture of an organization and its capacity to change”. Some organisations tried to avoid or at least reduce the impact of the country of origin on their Employee Engagement strategies by making use of international teams, which developed their strategy on a global basis, including I04’s employer from the travel industry and the logistics employer of I03 and I08. The importance of managing cultural risks properly was also identified during the literature review (Ditta, 2020). According to I08, the logistics industry aimed to manage the cultural risk by developing its strategy with the different sub-brands of the organisations and their experts. However, as previously stated, the local implementation in the countries relied on the local management teams and was therefore also changed depending on the needs of the local target group and the interpretation of the individual division. The adjustments in the local implementation are supported by the findings from the documentary analysis on material from the German subsidiary. The author identified that this material referred to *engagement* from a charity perspective (*Logistics Company* Group redacted, 2020a:online). These findings matched the statement introduced earlier by I08, who pointed

out that “in German you soon interpret the term with ‘Ehrenamtliches Engagement’ [engl. charity work]”. In connection with the local adjustments, it can be argued that independent from the country of origin and the destination country, adjustments are very common. While the hotel chain allowed local adjustments for the German Employee Engagement strategy which originated in the US, the German logistics provider granted local adjustments of the international strategy in the countries. Therefore, independent from the origin and the destination country, the local teams which implement the cross-country strategy rely on modifications and the reconstruction of the phenomenon in accordance with the destination country’s requirements. In comparison, the fast food brand followed a local approach, which meant each country ran its own Employee Engagement. However, as interviewee I09 pointed out, the global Employee Engagement strategy of the brand was still under development when the interview was being conducted, consequently the example of this global brand was not further discussed along with the US hotel chain and the German logistics provider.

Before the Conclusion of this research is provided, the overview of the findings of the chapter is presented in the next section.

6.7 Overview of the chapter findings

The discussion of the findings of the in-depth interviews, the documentary data and the results from the literature review revealed an overall challenge in defining Employee Engagement. However, due to the influence of the employers on the interviewees’ views and perceptions of the phenomenon discussed, the Employee Engagement understanding of most interviewees was limited to the conceptualisation of the phenomenon as provided by the employers, whose construction of the phenomenon was driven by their organisational demands as well as the workforces’ requirements in their work environment. Consequently, the construction of the phenomenon based on the findings from the in-depth interviews differed from the constructions identified throughout the literature review.

The *Discussion Chapter* not only revealed the influence of the employer with respect to the conceptualisation, views and definitions of the phenomenon, but it also addressed the three research objectives of the study.

The findings on the first research objective: “*To review the current adoption, understanding and conceptualisation of Employee Engagement in Germany*” showed many parallels between the research findings and results of the literature review with respect to the lacking definition and conceptualisation of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the author discussed benefits which were mentioned commonly as drivers of Employee Engagement by different interviewees. Here, it was identified that these benefits were used to ensure safety, which was one of the three central components introduced by Kahn (1990) to drive Employee Engagement. As the

analysis exposed the importance of leadership and managers, this driver was also discussed in detail. While on the one hand, direct managers and leadership teams have a direct impact (positive and negative) on the level of Employee Engagement, they were also identified as key stakeholders with respect to the conceptualisation, establishment and also reconstruction of Employee Engagement in organisations. Besides, also critique on the Employee Engagement construct was identified and discussed. Here, parallel views on the dubiety of the phenomenon were identified during the interviews and in literature, questioning if the phenomenon was only “old wine in new bottles”.

The second research objective: “*To investigate the evolution of the Employee Engagement concept, by paying attention to its proliferation in the German context*” was primarily discussed based on the findings connected to generational differences and new work generations’ influences on the evolution of Employee Engagement. The focus was on new communication channels such as social intranet, WhatsApp groups and social media channels, but also with respect to employees’ expectations in their work environment including flexible working, work-life-balance and other changes on the traditional work relationship. Besides, the different drivers, which were already revised as part of the discussion on the first research objective, were also discussed and their influence on the evolution of Employee Engagement debated. Here, a debate on the difference between organisational culture which has developed naturally and designed and constructed Employee Engagement strategies emerged. Therefore, the different perspectives from the interviewees were put into contrast to allow a better understanding. In addition, the impact of the country of origin was discussed and it was identified that in some cases a strong reference to the original country required local adjustments to the Employee Engagement strategy to ensure acceptance amongst the workforces. Finally, German-specific challenges, including the influence of workers’ councils, taxation for benefit in kind amongst others which had already been identified during the literature review were compared and discussed along with the findings from the interviews by focusing specifically on the evolution of the phenomenon in Germany and its implementation amongst the participating organisations.

Finally, the third research objective “to examine the parallels of the Employee Engagement construct between Anglo-US countries and Germany” was addressed. The resulting discussion covered the different backgrounds of the participating the organisations and their target groups and the influence on organisational culture and therefore, the emerging Employee Engagement strategy. There, parallels and differences between organisations with their origins in Germany and the US were discussed and how cultural differences in the destination country were equally managed by the organisations, resulting in local reconstructions of Employee Engagement to address the target groups accordingly. As the analysis of the documentary data revealed a common use of *family* and *friends* as a figure in

companies' communication to address new employees in particular, the difference between the role of family in the US environment and in Germany as well as its impact on the Employee Engagement construction was discussed. This resulted in the author's statement that the social construction of family strongly differed between the individuals addressed and therefore does not provide a clear picture of what the concept family means to the employer and its relationship to staff.

Next, the *Conclusion Chapter*, is presented.

7. Conclusions and Contribution

7.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter aims to outline the key findings of the research and presents its contribution to the field of Employee Engagement research, especially with respect to its conceptualisation within German organisations. Therefore, the conclusions are drawn from the previous discussion of the in-depth interviews and the underpinning insights from the documentary analysis. These findings are put into perspective by identifying parallels as well as differences to the findings from the literature review.

As the literature review showed, a large amount of research and many studies have emerged within the HRM and HRD arena concerning Employee Engagement. Still, this study not only underpins the findings from the literature review regarding the understanding, conceptualisation and definition of the Employee Engagement phenomenon by focusing on its concept amongst German organisations; its contribution also lies in the field of the phenomenon's establishment and reinvention within large German companies. Therefore, it provides suggestions for practitioners in the field of human resources.

The author's view on the Employee Engagement concept is driven by Welch (2011) and Kahn's (1990) perspectives on its conceptualisation. However, various other commentators and their statements and perspectives on the phenomenon were also identified and evaluated. These findings from the literature review influenced the further analysis and discussion on the research concerning the drivers and output factors by putting particular focus on the parallels and differences between Anglo-US literature and German studies, too. Consequently, cultural difference, organisational culture, the impact of the country of origin as well as the difference amongst generations were analysed. Both the data gathered from the study conducted based on in-depth interviews and the documentary research support the author's perspective on the phenomenon as a social construct.

This chapter outlines this study's contribution to knowledge by providing an overview of the key research findings and implications emerging from the research. To ensure the research objectives of this study are addressed adequately and in full detail, the chapter recaps on each of the three research objectives and summaries the related key findings. Afterwards, implications for literature with a particular focus on Germany are provided, followed by implications for the methodology based on a multiple method approach, before sharing implications for practitioners in the field of Employee Engagement in general with a particular focus on the German market. Next, the chapter provides an overview of the limitations of the study, before concluding with suggestions for further research and reflections on the research.

Next, the chapter focus on the key research findings by going back to the three research objectives.

7.2 The research findings

This section summarises the key findings of the research carried out. The detailed findings were presented in the *Analysis of the in-depth interviews Chapter* and debated in the previous *Discussion Chapter*. To allow a detailed overview on the findings and the conclusion of this study, each of the three research objectives are addressed:

RO1: To review the current adoption, understanding and conceptualisation of Employee Engagement in Germany;

RO2: To investigate the evolution of the Employee Engagement concept, by paying attention to its proliferation in the German context;

RO3: To examine the parallels of the Employee Engagement construct between Anglo-US countries and Germany.

Based on these three research objectives, the key findings emerged from the empirical data of the study, which was gathered via in-depth interviews and documentary research. The aim was to contribute to the field of HRD and Employee Engagement. Recent findings from practice with a specific focus on the German market are shared, which contributed to the under-researched field of Employee Engagement in Germany. The research field of Germany contributed to the originality of this study.

As outlined in detail throughout the research, the author followed a social constructivist perspective and applied a multiple method approach to gather the data and to contribute knowledge to the field. The key findings are related to the definition and conceptualisation of the phenomenon, its establishment and evolution within Germany as well as the parallels and differences between Employee Engagement in Germany and Anglo-US countries.

7.2.1 Research objective 1: To review the current adoption, understanding and conceptualisation of Employee Engagement in Germany

The study answered the first research objective by confirming that no unified definition of Employee Engagement could be identified from the in-depth interviews. It was acknowledged that on the one hand, the interviewees struggled to define the phenomenon, while on the other hand, the in-depth interviews as well as the documentary analysis exposed references to various influential factors, such as benefits in the form of flexibility, child-care and other kinds of support which create a safe environment for employees and which the organisations established to drive Employee Engagement. Moreover, the empirical study outlined that the participating German organisations referred to similar drivers of Employee Engagement as the those identified in literature, including empowerment, development, communication, satisfaction, purpose and recognition, which were also recognised in Anglo-US literature and Employee Engagement frameworks (Macey and Schneider, 2008). At the same time, the in-depth interviews revealed that the participating organisations aimed to conceptualise the phenomenon in a way which suited their organisations' needs in order to increase performance

and loyalty as well as to create brand identification and employee involvement. Additionally, organisations aimed to fulfil employees' expectations of their employer to ensure staff retention through development possibilities, recognition and appreciation of employees as well as communication to the workforce to increase employees' trust, identification and contribution to the company. However, the study uncovered that only a few of the organisations addressed Employee Engagement strategically, while many relied on ad hoc activities, which addressed particular challenges and issues the organisations were facing. As a result, the recognised conceptualisation of the phenomenon according to the interviewees showed only a few parallels to the Employee Engagement frameworks as identified in literature, including the view to secure safety for employees. Instead, the interviewees even added additional components to the meaning of safety to the literature's view of safety at work. For example, the interviewees referred to benefits in their interpretation, including financial and social benefits such as salary, company cars and insurance, but also permanent contracts were perceived as being a safety aspect. This observation indicated that there are different views on the meaning of safety which might also be related to culture or the environment the organisation operates in. Additionally, the previously outlined role of workers' councils and unions in securing employees' rights and leveraging the employees' voice also needs to be taken into account when considering safety as a driver of Employee Engagement. Therefore, HR managers and others in charge of Employee Engagement need to understand organisations' expectations of the phenomenon and at the same time consider local possibilities and legal options when implementing the respective initiatives.

Nevertheless, driving Employee Engagement through benefits was also criticised by some of the participants, who perceived this approach as less effective. Similar concerns were identified during the literature review, resulting in an extension of Storey's (1991:7) "human resource management cycle", which was introduced in *Figure 2*. The documentary analysis also revealed that some of the participating organisations' communication approaches were based on the emotional triggers of *family* and *friends*. This reference was made to support the concept of trust and safety between the employer and its staff, matching the concepts and views of Schneider et al. (2010), Kahn (1990) and Welch (2011), amongst others. Furthermore, the importance of a naturally grown organisational culture, which encourages employees to engage with their employer, was pointed out by some interviewees. One participant in particular stood out, as she stated that the company had no designed Employee Engagement strategy in place, but a very engaging organisational culture. The positive effect of safety on the Employee Engagement level of a workforce can be used by practitioners when implementing their strategies, depending on the expectations and outcomes of the individual organisation's Employee Engagement initiative. Therefore, practitioners need to understand the strategic expectation in the Employee Engagement strategy while at the time they need to

understand the kind of safety which their employees expect. Otherwise, the initiative created might not create the desired level of Employee Engagement, as it does not address employees' understanding of safety (e.g. permanent contract, child care). This study outlines a different interpretation of safety and the related initiatives when compared to the existing Anglo-US literature, but it needs to be pointed out that the successful implementation of Employee Engagement is strongly driven by the workforce's requirements which may vary between different industries and organisations.

Furthermore, the study confirmed that Employee Engagement initiatives were being implemented amongst German organisations in contrast to the relatively low level of coverage in the existing Anglo-US literature about the phenomenon. However, international organisations consider a wider perspective with respect to the adoption of the phenomenon, more commonly matching findings from Anglo-US literature, especially with respect to addressing cognitive, emotional, and physical role performance of employees. However, Employee Engagement as a framework as identified in Anglo-US literature was not (yet) identified amongst German organisations. At the same time, the study also provided evidence that the adoptions and establishments of the concept neither follow distinct organisational definitions nor conceptualisations of Employee Engagement models as identified during the literature review; instead, they were designed based upon academia such as Kahn (1990) or Hofstede (2005) as well as from non-peer reviewed sources, including Gallup (2020b). Still, the construction of the phenomenon in the individual organisations showed parallels with respect to the implemented initiatives and the expected results of the Employee Engagement activities. Depending on particular challenges, the organisations put particular focus on certain initiatives, which should for example ensure staff retention. However, many organisations faced similar challenges, independent from the sector they were operating in, which they addressed similarly by providing development, permanent contracts, communication, empowerment and by improving leadership.

As a result, the study showed that Employee Engagement is socially constructed by society and relies on a similar conceptualisation, which is only modified with respect to the target group specific initiatives. Consequently, it matches the previously introduced view of Easterby-Smith et al. (2012:23) according to whom reality is "social constructed and given meaning by people". However, while the Employee Engagement phenomenon had its peak in the United Kingdom and also other Anglo-US countries more than a century ago, it is still not completely developed within the German environment. Nevertheless, the study provided detailed findings on the phenomenon's conceptualisation amongst German organisations independent from the organisations' industries, which so far has been the focus of the German-based Employee Engagement research. Consequently, this work addresses the identified lack of literature and provides key information to practitioners with respect to the conceptualisation of Employee

Engagement in different organisations and branches. Besides, it underpinned that organisations aimed for Employee Engagement by adopting different approaches, but this adoption shows similar inconsistency to the reviewed Anglo-US definitions. This resulting level of complexity of a social phenomenon, here Employee Engagement, was also supported by Blaikie (1993). Overall, it can be stated that the name and the definition of the phenomenon are of less importance to the results of the study, which contribute detailed knowledge on the Employee Engagement establishment in German organisations, which is of interest to other practitioners facing similar needs to establish the phenomenon.

Next, the evolution of the Employee Engagement concept and its proliferation are addressed.

7.2.2 Research objective 2: To investigate the evolution of the Employee Engagement concept, by paying attention to its proliferation in the German context

The research showed that the Employee Engagement concept has indeed found its way into German HRM and HRD practice. However, the study also revealed a lack of in-depth understanding of the phenomenon amongst the participating organisations in Germany, which indicated many parallels to the overall German market. Similar limitations were identified with respect to academic sources concerning other European countries and the phenomenon's proliferation amongst these countries. Nevertheless, along with Germany, many European countries were of interest in non-peer reviewed literature. Furthermore, the literature review also showed that the phenomenon faced similar constraints with respect to its definition and conceptualisation in Anglo-US countries.

The study confirmed that German organisations had implemented the Employee Engagement concept and reconstructed the phenomenon to meet their purposes, independent from the lacking German translation and the misleading meaning of the engagement term in the German language. As the study focused on large organisations based in Germany with the required resources to run Employee Engagement initiatives, it was not fully revealed whether the phenomenon was similarly present amongst SMEs in Germany. However, some of the findings from some of the smaller organisations participating in this study indicated the demand to drive employees' engagement level through respective initiatives.

The lack of a German translation added further complexity to the discussion. While some organisations used the English term to refer to the phenomenon, other organisations had created their own term or referred to equivalents in English and German including *Employer Branding*, *Culture*, *Mitarbeiter-Engagement* and *Mitarbeitermotivation*. Overall, the organisations aimed to use terminologies, which would be accepted by their workforces to increase the acceptance of the phenomenon amongst the employees. In many cases, they had even created a slogan or brand to name their Employee Engagement strategy to increase employees' acceptance further. The social construction of the phenomenon provided organisations with the possibility to re-create and name the phenomenon, while the missing

consistency in literature and the number of definitions (Purcell (2014); MacLeod and Clarke (2011); Cole et al. (2012)) supported its reconstruction on demand even further.

Therefore, independent from the name, the study confirmed many parallels to Anglo-US literature with respect to the Employee Engagement definition, but also with respect to challenges caused by globalisation and generational shifts. Similar to Bardwick's (2008) US-focused discussion on the generational shift at work and how it affected Employee Engagement, some of the interviewees also named these challenges with respect to the proliferation of the phenomenon in Germany. Even though the phenomenon has found its way into German Human Resource Management and Development according to the results of the study, it also needs to be pointed out that independent from the changes in the work environment the study participants still saw many challenges with respect to cultural differences and the German way of working, which challenges the evolution of the phenomenon in Germany, especially its implementation.

Consequently, the study contributed knowledge on the establishment of the phenomenon in Germany, but also added key details to the proliferation of the phenomenon in Germany, which allows other practitioners to gather knowledge for future implementations of Employee Engagement approaches. Additionally, the study contributes to the little researched field of Employee Engagement in Germany, which provides a basis for further studies in Germany and on other European countries. Suggestions for further research are made in a later section of this chapter.

After concluding on the evolution and proliferation of the phenomenon in Germany, the third and last research objective is addressed in the next section.

7.2.3 Research objective 3: To examine the parallels of the Employee Engagement construct between Anglo-US countries and Germany

As previously presented, the Employee Engagement concept faced key challenges in Germany with respect to its definition, but also its translation into the German language. Still, the study has revealed that the phenomenon has indeed found its way into large Germany-based organisations. Additionally, the research showed that organisations with German origins allowed their international subsidiaries enough flexibility for the implementation of Employee Engagement activities to increase the local acceptance of their Employee Engagement approaches. It was identified that the management and leadership teams in the home countries and the destination countries played a major role in successful implementation. Leadership as a driver of Employee Engagement was also identified during the literature review (Schneider et al. (2010); Smythe (2013); McCarthy (2005)). The same level of flexibility with respect to the reconstruction of the phenomenon and the emerging conceptualisation of Employee Engagement initiatives was also identified amongst German subsidiaries of international

companies, including some Anglo-US organisations, too. The overall aim was to ensure acceptance and to improve employee performance, staff retention, increase trust and brand identification, which grants the local human resource departments with the required flexibility to evaluate and react to cultural differences. Here, the social construction of the phenomenon and the emerging reconstruction increased the acceptance and focused on the joint target of the organisations, but less on the immutable transfer of the conceptualisation from the home country to the different countries of the subsidiaries. Nevertheless, not all organisations analysed as part of the study had reached the same level of maturity with respect to the implementation of the phenomenon. In many cases, its adoption relied on very rudimentary approaches, such as the implementation of benefits, and was still under development at the time of research.

The study did not only reveal parallels to existing theories with respect to the challenges of defining Employee Engagement. It also showed that the German participants referred to similar drivers and output factors of the phenomenon as identified in literature, including Welch's (2011) "psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability". This included meaningfulness, safety through permanent contracts and better work conditions, improved leadership skills allowing open communication, and so on. At the same time, the organisations aimed to achieve a better work environment, performance increases and higher employee involvement. Still, the imprecise definition of the phenomenon led to some intermixture of other concepts in connection with the Employee Engagement phenomenon. Amongst other concepts, these included work and job engagement, which formed the ancestors of the discussed phenomenon according to Welch (2011).

Besides, the study revealed many parallels with respect to the conceptualisation of Employee Engagement amongst German organisations and consequently the third research objective was also confirmed by the study. Based on previous experience in the field and the literature review findings, especially with respect to employees' voice, it needs to be pointed out that the author expected slightly different challenges with respect to the establishment of the phenomenon in large organisations in Germany. As identified during the literature review, a major difference between companies in Germany and in Anglo-US countries is the involvement and influence of the employees' voice on business decisions, commonly represented and elaborated on through deep-seated workers' councils and unions as well as governmental regulations. Consequently, the role of the factor safety and the impact of the employees' voice with respect to secured employment, overall work conditions and how these factors drive Employee Engagement in Germany differs to its understanding in other countries. Therefore, practitioners who are aiming to implement Employee Engagement initiatives need to reflect on the local law as well as on the existing safety standards predetermined by stakeholders such as the workers' councils, which ensure the implementation of safety, before developing and

implementing new strategies. However, the study revealed that the participating organisations faced other challenges such as the need for resources and time to drive Employee Engagement initiatives.

Therefore, based on the findings introduced in the *Literature Review Chapter* and the findings from the in-depth interviews and the documentary analysis, it can be concluded that Fox's (2001) perspective on the creation of the knowledge applied for both the Anglo-US and German environment. With respect to this study, the different participants in the study and their organisations gained their knowledge of the phenomenon during their internal interaction with their demands to improve their employer-employee-relationship, which again led to knowledge. This finally resulted in an overall construction of the phenomenon, which still allowed adjustments according to the different requirements and their characteristics.

Beyond this, another parallel between the Anglo-US literature and the findings on Germany was uncovered by the study: the critique on the phenomenon's uniqueness and its potential retrogression (Guest, 2014a) and the question on its innovation (Albrecht, 2010) was also flagged by some of the interviewees. Still, the participants referred to the importance of driving Employee Engagement or its equivalents through organisational culture or other organisational initiatives. The interviewees' critique led back to the questions whether the phenomenon's conceptualisation, with a particular focus on its drivers and output factors, already existed in Germany, but simply under a different name or different names, which finally emerged under the umbrella of Employee Engagement.

In conclusion, the study revealed that the conceptualisation of Employee Engagement in Anglo-US literature, including the academic frameworks presented showed many parallels to the establishment of the phenomenon in Germany. Still, some differences with respect to the establishment of the phenomenon were identified, too.

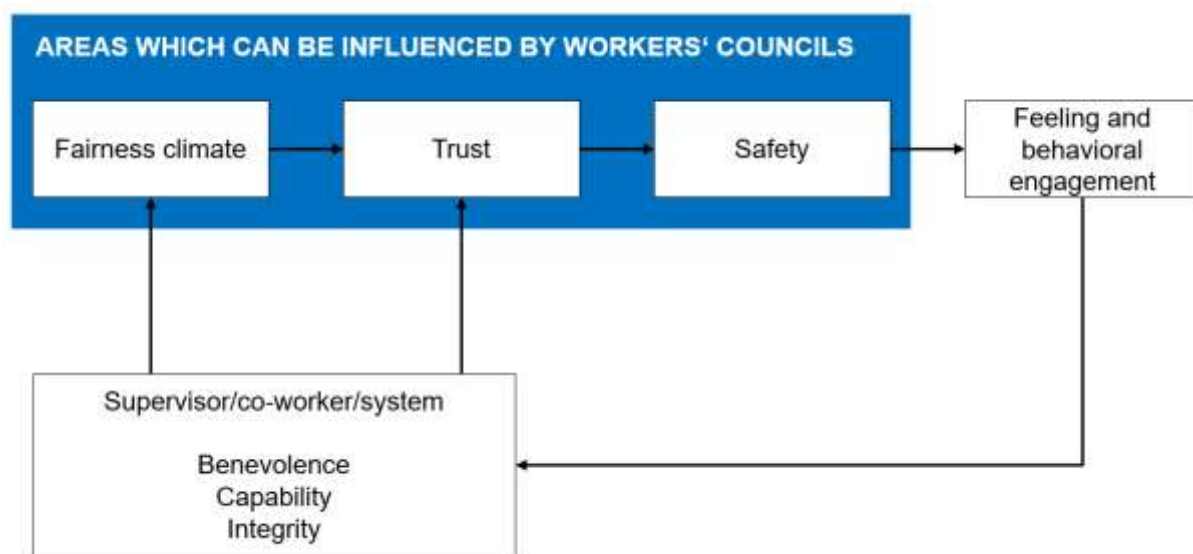
The emerging research implications for literature, methodology and the establishment of Employee Engagement in general and in Germany are presented next.

7.3 Research implications for literature and theory

This paper contributes to Employee Engagement literature, with a particular focus on the phenomenon's conceptualisation and establishment in Germany. The key focus is on large German and international companies in Germany and their Human Resource Development approaches. Yet, similar to the various sources reviewed and discussed in the literature review, it does not provide a unified definition for Employee Engagement – neither in English, nor in German. However, the study identified many parallels to Anglo-US literature with respect to the drivers of Employee Engagement identified and organisations' implementation. Consequently, it supports the conclusion that the findings from Anglo-US sources with respect to the effect of Employee Engagement on the emotional, physical, and cognitive role

performance of an employee also apply to the phenomenon's conceptualisation in Germany. Still, cultural differences need to be considered when applying the existing Employee Engagement frameworks to German audiences. This results in adjustments of conceptualisations such as Schneider et al.'s (2010), which would need to include the impact of the workers' council on organisational climate, trust and safety, but also on the overall system through the codetermination of the workers' council. Based on this, *Figure 14* shows the extended framework including the impact of workers' councils in Germany.

Figure 14: Extension of Schneider et al.'s "Antecedents and consequences of experienced trust in work organizations"



Source: Based on Schneider et al. (2010:160)

However, this study contributes in particular to the practitioners' understanding. As Truss et al. (2013:2661) stated, the Employee Engagement phenomenon is of "significant level of interest amongst the practitioner community". This statement was supported by the study and at the same time revealed that participants from different branches and industries referred to similar expectations in the phenomenon. Therefore, practitioners need to take on an entrepreneurial role in their organisation, managing change through tools available such as Employee Engagement initiatives, and start to add value through their strategies and activities which let them become Scholz and Böhm's (2008:167) "'Designer' for the internal social partnership" (*Figure 8*). By doing so, they will also be able to address topics and fields of improvements such as fairness, trust, and safety, which are common fields of interest to workers' councils. To ensure support and backup from workers' councils, HR managers and those in charge of Employee Engagement initiatives in their organisations need to ensure that they consider the involvement and intentions of their workers' councils straight from the beginning and address initiatives jointly. Additionally, the findings from the different industries contribute to the literature about these industries, while at the same time they also provide a contribution to the

German perspective on the Employee Engagement conceptualisation, independent from the industry or sector.

As previously outlined in the *Literature Review Chapter*, Truss et al. (2013) identified a gap in management and HRM-driven Employee Engagement implementations. This research contributes findings on the different views of Employee Engagement and the resulting implementations, which Truss et al. (2013:2664) called “‘doing’ engagement”. In the field of Employee Engagement practice the largest impact of this study is documented.

Still, there are also further implications for the research methodology, which are outlined next.

7.4 Research implications for the research methodology

The research executed is based on a multiple method approach, which combined in-depth interviews and the documentary method to collect rich insights and put further depth into the primary findings gathered through the interviews. Additionally, it is a useful approach for researchers, whose studies are limited due to external impacts or access restrictions, similar to the challenges the author of this research faced with respect to the limited access to the organisations’ workforces.

As identified through the development of the documentary method, the approach holds many advantages for business researchers, even though it emerged from the educational studies (Grant et al., 2012). Therefore, this study shows that the advantages of the documentary method as a research methodology also contribute to the field of business research. As identified in the literature review and described in the *Research Methodology Chapter*, documentary research enables the gathering of additional information, which was originally not collected for the purpose of the study and therefore provides an objective picture and allows the development of a wider perspective (Denscombe, 1998) while still supporting the social constructivist view of respective research (Bryman and Bell, 2003). However, at the same time it needs to be ensured that reliable sources are identified and considered (Denscombe, 1998) and that the researched critically reflects upon whether the data collected is of relevance to the study to avoid getting lost. With respect to this study, the multiple method approach allowed the author to collect a wide range of data, which could further be used for additional research on the establishment of Employee Engagement in organisations in Germany.

In conclusion, even though the focus of this study was on the primary data collected through the in-depth interviews, the documentary data added extra details and also further perspectives to the discussion and contributed to the Employee Engagement research in Germany. Additionally, it demonstrates how the multiple method approach can support business research.

7.5 Research implications and contextual implications for Employee Engagement practice in Germany and beyond

As previously stated, this study contributes in particular to the field of Employee Engagement practices and HRD professionals in Germany. Similar to previous research, this study does not provide a definition of the phenomenon, but it provides a detailed overview on the understanding, the different views and especially the establishment and adoption of the phenomenon amongst practitioners in the German business environment. Besides, it also supports most of the findings, which were revealed in Anglo-US literature. Most importantly, it outlines approaches for practitioners when adopting Employee Engagement activities on global level. Here, both perspectives were considered: first, how a multinational organisation from Germany adjusts its Employee Engagement initiatives abroad and second, how international organisations modify their Employee Engagement conceptualisation to successfully establish it amongst German-based workforces. Consequently, its contribution is mainly related to Employee Engagement practice.

Additionally, the study showed that Employee Engagement is also established in German organisations, independent from its name or definition. However, the initiatives in the organisations studied relied mainly on benefits as well as an open culture through communication, appreciation and recognition. The study revealed that organisations designed their initiatives based on the expectations and requirements of the target-groups and they also referred to a name for Employee Engagement, which is accepted best by the audiences, including German terms such as Mitarbeitermotivation, Mitarbeiter-Engagement and also their own names for their Employee Engagement strategies.

In summary, the study contributes knowledge in the field of the Employee Engagement establishment in organisations in Germany, while at the same time it confirms that the phenomenon also exists in German human resource departments, commonly under a different name and reconstructed based on the requirements of the initiating organisations.

After presenting the implications for literature, the research methodology and Employee Engagement in general and with particular focus on Germany, the next section outlines the limitations of the study and shares suggestions for further research.

7.6 Limitations and suggestions for further research including their purpose

Throughout the research process, limitations were identified: firstly the design of the interview questions, secondly the source selection and timing of the documentary analysis and thirdly the sample selection of the study including its focus on large organisations in Germany. Moreover, the following suggestions for further research emerged from the study, too: the longitudinal analysis of the long-term establishment by considering organisations' overall

business strategies, analysis of measurability approaches amongst German organisations, the role and the adoption of Employee Engagement in German *Mittelstand* businesses [Engl. Small and medium-sized businesses] and finally, further research on different target groups.

The first limitation was identified while creating the interview transcripts and conducting the analysis of the data gathered. It was evaluated that additional interview questions would have been of benefit to the study to provide further insights into the interviewees' Employee Engagement awareness as well as addressing the answers of some of the interviewees, who perceived the questions differently. Therefore, the author should have made use of the applied laddering technique (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012) to gather these additional insights. Besides, the extended use of this technique would have supported the author in managing the topic of language and the understanding of the question, too.

The second limitation, which emerged during the study, is related to the documentary method. The study was mainly developed upon the analysis of the primary data collected through the in-depth interviews. However, the documentary analysis revealed many interesting and relevant findings, which were not further analysed, especially with respect to the HRM, HRD and Employee Engagement activities in comparison to the wider mission and vision of the organisations. As the amount of data and channels saw consistent growth, the author focused in particular on a selection of channels as previously discussed. With respect to social media channels, Facebook was used most, as the evaluation of the different social media channels indicated that the organisations also pushed the same communication they used on Twitter or Instagram via Facebook. Consequently, the focus was on this channel in order to manage the amount of data and avoid information flaws. Here, it also needs to be pointed out that a large amount of information was available, which was contributed by current or former employees. For this study, only a small amount of data was analysed. In a longitudinal study, a richer set of data could be considered to address a wider perspective on the establishment of Employee Engagement in relation to the organisations' overall strategic positions.

As previously outlined in detail, the study's focus was on large organisations in Germany, as these companies have the resources to establish Employee Engagement initiatives. This focus on large organisations resulted in the third limitation. However, the author included three companies, including the automotive company (I02), the company from the education sector (I12) and also the employer of the pilot interviewee, which were either internationally or nationally of smaller size with respect to their workforce size. Still, the preparation calls showed that these organisations also initiated Employee Engagement activities to target the goals of their human resource departments. Nevertheless, the study did not consider the *Mittelstand* for which Employee Engagement initiatives could be of particular interest, as it supports these organisations in completing MNCs with respect to becoming the employer of choice for staff (I02). Besides, due to the different industries the participating companies of the sample

belonged to, it was not possible to compare the findings between different companies within the same industry. Both the study on the German *Mittelstand* and its establishment of Employee Engagement and the comparison of different organisations from one industry could be relevant cases for further research.

The following suggestions for further research partially emerge from these three limitations. The first suggestion is the possibility to evaluate the establishment of Employee Engagement in German organisations further, through longitudinal research. This study would allow a detailed analysis of the understanding and adoption of the Employee Engagement phenomenon in relation to organisational strategy. Similar advantages were identified by Lähteenmäki et al. (2006), who also pointed out that they saw a need for longitudinal research including in-depth identification of the different influential factors to understand their impact. Still, their quantitative study on the correlation between HRM and performance showed minor relationships between the factors analysed. Here, the author suggests a qualitative approach based on a similar setup to the current study, extended by a detailed analysis of the strategic approach of the organisation including an evaluation of the as-is situation and the changes to performance, amount of sick leave and employee rotation, for example. Furthermore, a wider documentary analysis of data available on Glassdoor and Kununu would enable further reflection on employees' perceptions of the Employee Engagement initiatives in order to consider the perception of the target audiences. Here, the sources would not only provide rich insights into the development of Employee Engagement initiatives from employees' point of view, but they would also enable the analysis of historic data including detailed information about the time of creation and the relationship of the commentator to the organisation could be evaluated.

Another interesting field of research would be the different Employee Engagement measurement approaches used amongst organisations in Germany. During the preparation process of the study, the author identified a particular interest and demand amongst the participating HR managers to measure the success of their Employee Engagement activities. Still, as the study also revealed that no clear definition was given by the interviewees, which could be used to select measurement criteria, an extended study of the targeted drivers and the organisations' output factors could help to develop a reasonable measurement approach for Employee Engagement in Germany.

The third suggestion for further research is related to the German *Mittelstand*. As stated during the reflection on the limitations of the study, an in-depth comparison of companies within one sector or industry could be of interest for further research, too. This study looked into competitor approaches when identifying the nature of the themes of the Employee Engagement initiatives. However, no general pattern of the reviewed industries was identified due to the lack of information available to public. Still, the results could be of particular interest

in a longitudinal study, as previously described, using a multiple method approach, too. Besides, a similar study on the German *Mittelstand* could contribute additional insights for practitioners from the *Mittelstand*, who compete against the Employee Engagement initiatives of large organisations, as I02 pointed out. In this case, a mixed method approach, which was originally considered for this study, could also be considered, as the *Mittelstand* is also organised in workers' councils, but they might be more open and approachable for a study including their staff. At the same time, their data for a documentary analysis might be less extensive than the data analysed from the large organisations involved in this study. Consequently, the insights could be gathered through such methodology to allow a rich and contributing study.

Finally, the author identified that research on age groups and different target groups such as female workers is limited overall, but in particular with respect to the research on Employee Engagement in Germany. The need to differentiate between target groups was also supported by the interviewees, who saw particular need in understanding the different age groups, but also the different employee groups with respect to their jobs and qualifications. A mixed-method approach combining in-depth interviews with HR managers and a questionnaire amongst different employee groups within the same organisations could provide research with rich details concerning the organisational approach and targets as well as the employees' perceptions per target group.

In the next and final section, the final reflection on the research is presented.

7.7 Reflection on research

In this section, I provide a personal reflection on the research, hence it is written in the first person. Therefore, I will reflect on the nature of my interest in the field, my individual experience throughout the duration of the study, the challenges and emerging concerns I faced and finally, how this research has shaped my own personality as a researcher and practitioner.

This study was conducted over nearly seven years and was influenced by two factors: first, my wish to challenge myself by conducting research of this kind as part of the highest possible academic degree I would aim for after finishing my Master's degree. Second, it was influenced by my promotion at the time, which a short while later made me Director of Employee Solutions and Customer Engagement at the German subsidiary of a British company, which developed and managed all kinds of Employee Engagement initiatives for international brands. At the time, I decided that knowledge was a key factor in this service industry to succeed and for me the only way to meet these requirements was by carrying out my own research, which would contribute to the field. At the time when I started my PhD journey, Employee Engagement was a hot topic in HR forums, mass media and other non-peer reviewed sources, as well as in many large organisations in Germany, which had started to establish Employee Engagement

strategies and activities. Even though many organisations approached me and my team and asked for solutions, the amount of academic knowledge on Employee Engagement in these organisations was very limited. Consequently, my interest in the topic grew even further and finally, I decided to contribute knowledge to the field by conducting this study. Today, I work in a different field and industry, but my passion for Employee Engagement is still there and many of my findings contribute to my daily work.

When I started my part-time PhD journey in 2013, it soon became clear that research on Employee Engagement in Germany would hold many challenges. Moving away from conducting a mixed method approach, towards the execution of a multiple method approach was one of the challenges I had to face. Besides, also the in-depth interviews held many encounters for me. The involvement of the employers for which the interviewees worked was constantly present and had a major impact on the time management of the study and the approval process of the interviews. In addition, the language challenge was something which I considered, but its impact on the interviews, the transcriptions and the analysis were more time-consuming than expected. The amount of data collected resulted in additional tasks, such as the translation of the German interviews into English.

By growing up in Germany and working for multinational companies in my home country, I thought I knew how Germans ticked. However, reflecting on this phenomenon and my study as a German, analysing the information Germans provided me with on a phenomenon, which does not even have a German translation, was the biggest challenge for me. Taking a step back and reflecting critically on the data gathered, the impact of being German and researching this un-German phenomenon made me grow academically, but also personally and professionally. Today, I look very differently at the Employee Engagement survey my own employer runs and question what is behind it. I also critically reflect on what some of the interviewees stated at the time when I visit their shops and stores today.

From my perspective, the phenomenon had a late start under the Employee Engagement name in Germany, but this study has ensured me that it is there and might have already been there under a different name. 2020 is a challenging year for all of us and independent of the economic developments caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic, Employee Engagement will remain important for organisations in Germany and for their employees.

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#Geschäftsführer Ralf Burmester daher neue Wege beschritten und heute eine Videobotschaft mit Feriengrüßen an die #[Automotive-Company]Mitarbeiter/innen über unser Intranet versendet. Wir vom [Automotive-Company] #Social #Media Team finden das #Video super! Was haltet ihr von der Idee?Hinterlasst uns gerne eure Meinung in den Kommentaren.Und jetzt: Genießt das Wochenende! #weekend #friyay #sommerferien #vacation #ferien #wiiirsind[Automotive-Company] #abindenurlaub #kompetenzinelektronik #heiligenhaus #nrw. Facebook.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: “Key SHRD characteristics – Garavan (1991) versus McCracken and Wallace (2000a)”

SHRD factor	Garavan (1991)	McCracken and Wallace (2000a)
Organizational missions and goals	1. Integration with organizational missions and goals	1. Shaping organizational missions and goals
Role of senior management	2. Top management support	2. Top management leadership
Understanding the external environment	3. Environmental scanning	3. Environmental scanning by senior management
HRD strategy and policy development	4. HRD plans and policies	4. HRD strategies, plans and policies
Role of line management	5. Line manager commitment and involvement	5. Strategic partnerships with line managers
Complementary HRM activities	6. Existence of complementary HRM activities	6. Strategic partnership with HRM
The role of the trainer	7. Expanded trainer role	7. Trainers as organizational change consultants
Culture issues	8. Recognition of culture	8. Ability to influence culture
Evaluation of HRD activities	9. Emphasis on evaluation	9. Emphasis on cost-effective evaluation

Source: McCracken and Garavan (2015:32)

Appendix 2: Summary of Employee Engagement findings

	Authors	Findings	Discussion
Definition	MacLeod and Brady (2008)	To ensure a detailed understanding of EE the author used Anglo-American literature as a starting point. While there are different definitions on the EE term, the British guru David MacLeod (MacLeod and Brady, 2008) defines that EE: <i>Is an employee's willingness to put discretionary effort into their work in the form of time, brainpower and energy, above and beyond what is considered adequate.</i>	Clustering the findings of different commentators to identify synergies and fields which need additional research. At the same time further questions arise around the definitions itself and motivation, which is often used to define EE but is also an indicator of EE. The disaccord regarding EE definitions in the Anglo-American literature is partly contradictive or even misleading and therefore requires further research.
	Welch (2011) Smythe (2013) Finney (2008) Kenexa (2012b) Chughtai and Buckley (2011) Kruse (2012)	MacLeod and Brady's (2008) definition is also supported by these other authors and sources. Kruse (2012) defines that "Employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals"	
	Dalal <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Dalal <i>et al.</i> 's (2012) review academic definitions of EE provide more depth. The so called: <i>Organizational citizenship behavior is defined as employee behaviour that is at least somewhat volitional and that improves the functioning of the organization"</i> Furthermore, they review terms which are often used to define EE including involvement, commitment, absorption in and work enthusiasm.	
Drivers and Indicators	Smythe (2013)	According to Smythe (2013) there are different EE indicators, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work enthusiasm • Commitment 	These drivers and indicators helped the author to define the further research. They will be used to identify if a workforce – independent of the financial number of the

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction • Pride to be part of the organisation • Alignment with goals and values of the organisation • Willingness to put in additional effort 	subjective feedback of a manager – is engaged.
	Kenexa (2012b)	Similar indicators are also repeated by this practitioner research.	
	Tomlinson (2010)	Case studies such as the example of KIA in the UK between 2006 and 2009 support the defined indicators if employees are engaged.	
	Kenexa (2012a:no page)	<p>The drivers of employee engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee • Team • Direct manager • Year • Country • Industry • Organisation • Senior Leaders • Job 	
Other influencing factors	Smythe (2013)	There are various factors influencing EE such as leadership and leadership styles.	This first review shows that there are various influencing factors which need to be taken into consideration for further empirical work.
	McCarthy (2005)		
	Weyland (2011)	Generational difference between target groups (e.g. Generation Y vs Baby Boomers)	Especially cultural differences, translations or perception may have a big impact on transferring the Anglo-American concept to the German market.
	Hofstede (1982)	Another important influencing factor which may have an impact on comparing EE in England and Germany are cultural and organizational differences.	
	Venaik <i>et al.</i> (2013)		
	Ixaris (2013) (2013)	Also the economic situation of a country has an impact on EE.	
	Kenexa (2012a)	And the industry sector also influences the level of EE.	
Implementation	Fisher (2005)	An integrated approach helps to ensure the successful implementation of an EE programme.	Fisher's implementation process might be of relevance to the German implementation process; therefore, there is a need to focus

			more on the implementation process of EE programmes.
Evolution	Welch (2011)	<p>Welch (2011:330f.) defines the evolution of EE in four waves. During these waves, commentators used different terminology to describe EE:</p> <p>Pre-wave (pre 1990)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement in general (Katz and Kahn (1996)) <p>Wave 1 (1990-1999)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal engagement (Kahn (1990,1992)) Employee engagement (Buckingham and Coffman (1999)) <p>Wave 2 (2000-2005)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job burnout/job engagement (Maslach <i>et al.</i> (2001)) Employee engagement (Luthans and Peterson (2002)) Employee engagement (Harter <i>et al.</i> (2002)) Job engagement (Schaufeli <i>et al.</i> (2002) and Schaufeli and Bakker (2004)) Work and employee engagement (May <i>et al.</i> (2004)) Employee engagement (Hewitt Associates LLC (2004)) <p>Wave 3 (2006-2010)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee engagement, job engagement, organisation engagement (Saks (2006)) 	Welch's paper introduces various authors and papers which need to be reviewed to ensure the fundamental understanding of the EE evolution.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee engagement (Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2004)) • Employee engagement (Truss <i>et al.</i> (2006)) • Employee engagement (Fleming and Asplund (2007)) • Employee engagement (Macey and Schneider (2008)) • Work engagement (Schaufeli and Bakker (2010)) • Employee engagement (Albrecht (2010)) 	
Trends	WorldatWork (2013) Ixaris (2013)	The author also reviewed future trends on EE and its tools. As well as future potentials of EE.	The results will support defining the direction of the future research.

Source: Based on Wylegala et al. (2016:32-35)

Appendix 3: Pilot Interview

- AW: Thank you very much for participating in this interview. Within the next 60 minutes I will ask you a couple of questions on the Employee Engagement strategy in your organisation. The questions and answers will be recorded. If you want me to make the transcription anonymous please say so before we start with the interview.
- P01: That's okay.
- AW: For your information: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am part-time student at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the faculty of Business and Law.
- My PhD "Understanding Employee Engagement" focuses on the Employee Engagement strategy of large organisations in Germany. When I am not engaged with my PhD I am working full-time for Grass Roots Germany. The world's leading provider of Employee- and Customer Engagement solutions. I am in charge of the Customer and Employee Engagement division. Together with my team we help client to inspire their employee and customers.
- Could you please state your name and tell me a bit more about your role in the organisation you working for?
- P01: Yes, sure. So, Vicky E. I'm Chief People Officer for *[Company name]*. So, my responsibility is everything to do with our employees across the globe, including responsibility for HR, reward and recognition, communications, our pay role, benefits, social theme in the UK and relating with our international offices to get that information from their systems in order that we can report and analyse on a group-wide basis. And I also have responsibility for encouraging employee engagement which in my world is ensuring that we provide communications and initiatives to help our employees get the most of their work with *[Company name]* and to help us to ensure that we provide the right level of support to our clients by ensuring that our people are on board with what we are trying to do as an organisation and have the tools and the support that enables them to do that.
- AW: In which industry is your employer operating?
- P01: We would describe it as professional services so that's where we create solutions for clients across a number of disciplines. In our instance which is Customer and Employee Engagement solutions, so that is anything where we trying to influence behaviour change in order to achieve a particular goal, if that is with customers in terms of loyalty or employees in terms of engagement and incentives, rewards.
- AW: And how many employees does your organisation employ globally?
- P01: Currently 914.
- AW: Okay, and how many employees does your organisation employ just in Germany?
- P01: In Germany it is around 65.
- AW: Where is your company or the organisation originally from?
- P01: So, it is from the UK. And our business is still predominately in the UK. About 600 of our employees are based across six offices in the UK. And then we being growing globally through acquisition or identifying markets where we want to have a presence and creating an offer in that market.
- AW: Do you think that the British influence – as it is a British company – has a strong effect on your organisational culture?
- P01: I would say yes, but maybe more about influencing or maybe being cognisant of the fact that we are a UK organisation and that the things we do from a cultural engagement perspective are not going to be appropriate for all of our offices. So, when we talk about culture in my approach to that we create a framework and define the outputs that we looking for but then each of our international offices we enable them to approach things appropriate to their global organisation. So, we don't have a prescriptive approach to everything that we do. We define what we looking for as an outcome and we provide what works in the UK and then enable the international businesses to engage with their own employees in the way that works for them.
- AW: So, in general, your organisation does have an overall Employee Engagement strategy?

P01: It does. Yes.

AW: How has this been designed and who designed it?

P01: The strategy, I suppose, was designed by myself, my team and the Executive Leadership Team in concept. But then using our employee forum and our international offices to ratify if this is an appropriate strategy for all of our businesses. So, we will design what we feel is the right thing to do but we will then go out to the businesses internationally to check if this is going to work and if this something which is going to work for everybody.

AW: So, as it was designed by you and your team and the ELT is, I assume it is mainly designed in the UK?

P01: It is a framework. It is not an entire programme. What we have done is identify what we believe are the levers to Employee Engagement. So, what are the key things that influence Employee Engagement and those are the things that we have created are our strategy around what we then went out with and talked to the businesses about. So, yes, it has. The idea come from British perspective, but the strategy has been ratified by our international colleagues to ensure that it is not completely UK centric.

AW: There are various different understandings of the term employee engagement and some countries it might be defined slightly different. Do you think that the English approach on how it is defined has a strong impact on that strategy?

P01: I think, yes, it is defined differently in different countries but I think that actually that the core principles are appropriately. And then, we see this though the surveys we do that actually that they are kind of basic principles that are actually what most organisations want to have in some way anyway. So, it is not something which is brand new or revolutionary. These are things that good organisations have in place and I think Employee Engagement is a term that has gained some attraction and that a lot of people talk about. But my believe is that a lot of the principle on which Employee Engagement is defined are actually just very good practices in an organisation. And good organisation that do these things got good employee who do these things and are engaged. So, I don't think that the Employee Engagement term drives the activity. The activities bundled together give you Employee Engagement.

AW: Okay.

P01: Does this make sense?

AW: Yes, absolutely. I personally see it as a social construction as well. It's less about the term itself, it is more about the perception and the behaviours and that is what I want to figure out with the interviews.

Do you have examples on how the local markets, for example Germany, have modified the concept – so the overall approach down to the local market?

P01: So, yes. I suppose that in Germany the pulse survey is a good example. I know that Germany does a monthly pulse-type with the employees. So, for me the importance for us is that we regularly measure how our employees feel about working for us as an organisation. In Germany, this is done monthly. In the UK we participate in the best company survey, which is a national engagement survey with lots of other organisations. In Australia they have adopted social recognition, which works in their particular environment. So, people are using the tools that we have created and using them for different purposes. So, in Germany with the monthly survey we don't include Germany in the overall pulse survey as they are already surveyed once a month.

AW: To go a bit more into detail of the engagement strategy which *[Company name]* is driving. Can you describe the strategy and which elements it includes?

P01: So, my overall people strategy focuses on recruit, develop, retain and engage. The recruitment piece sits probably outside of Employee Engagement. But I see that develop, retain and engage are all sitting under the Employee Engagement banner, because for me once we have employed somebody everything that we have done builds to that point on how engaged they are and how satisfied they are with us as an organisation. So, the role of engagement for me is around: the first piece, the communication. Helping people to understand what we stand for as a business, what are our visions, our strategy, our behaviours. So, they understand how they need to behave in the work environment. Looking at objectives and KPIs. So, individual objectives and KPIs. So, how does their individual role deliver against the overall company vision and values. So,

you got the overall performance excellence piece. That for me is around how we help people to understand how and what role they play in the overall business strategy. So, that's that piece. And then from an ongoing perspective: what and how we're performing as a business. Regular communication from people like Richard B. and our ELT members visiting our offices that is about engagement. Ensuring that people have the opportunity to speak to them and interact with the leadership team within the group. So, the communication strategy is around ELT office visits, quarterly senior manager updates, monthly performance on how we're doing against our Key Performance indicators. The Bubble officially plays a big part in that. Because that is the vehicle to quickly get communication out to the people. So, that's the communication piece. Then you got the development aspect of people's role. That's what we're currently focusing on in terms of global role outs. So, how do we identify training needs? How do we give people skills and the tools to do their role effectively and to see the opportunity to have a career within *[Company Name]*. So, that is our key focus at the moment. And then ensuring that the reward and recognition aspect. So, that people are rewarded fairly for the job they do. That they have the opportunity to be recognised and given discretionary rewards and then bonuses as part of that package. So, everything from understanding the business and goals are, how we're doing against the role that people play in living that vision, are they rewarded fairly for the role they're having and do they have the tools to do this role effectively and to develop and grow a career in *[Company name]* if that's the role they want to go. And it is an in-combination of that retention, development and communication aspects that forms the overall strategy.

AW: You mentioned it as a people strategy: Well, is there a specific organisational term you use to describe or define or name employee engagement such as "job engagement", "work engagement" or the one you used "people strategy?"

P01: Well, no. I think in the UK we use Employee Engagement as the term, because that is what we're selling to the clients and we use the term for ourselves. For me people strategy is the strategy that I am delivering for our people and that includes the kind of attraction and recruitment piece. If we have an engaged workforce, we provide an environment that is conducive to helping people to enjoy their time at work well. That provides us with a very powerful story to attract new and good talent into the organisation. This attraction and recruitment piece is a bit outside of Employee Engagement but it influences how attractive we are as an employer. Yes, there is a slight divide between that and Employee Engagement that forms our overall people strategy.

AW: From an international perspective: are you referring to Employee Engagement or do the local markets translate it into their local language? Such as in Germany "Mitarbeitermotivation" which is kind of "employee motivation" and which would be the most equivalent translation for it.

P01: I would want our international offices to call it what works for them. Also with respect to the framework I mentioned before. For me I want us to be measuring for happy our employees are with our environment and the resources they get. This is for me the non-negotiables. We must measure that. How we do it and how we call it; that should be localised. From my perspective, taking the terminology Employee Engagement it is about having a conversation that does not work if we force people to call it something they do not recognise in their own offices. It needs to be in a language that works and in a terminology that works in their office. Your 'employee motivation' that is actually what it is. And I assume when you flip it to the customer environment, we refer to this as customer loyalty, so, actually it is employee loyalty. So, why are you loyal, because you are motivated so you know it is what you're getting that helps you to give your best and feeling you are part of something. So, that works for me.

AW: When did you start to implement an employee strategy? What was the purpose or the driver of that step to get it running?

P01: From my perspective, I got into that role January last year, we didn't have any group, people function. So, that was the point when we started to pulling together the entire people strategy. I would say... it is an interesting one. I didn't do it because it was something that was missing in its definition. I did it because it was needed. It wasn't like somebody said you do not have an Employee Engagement strategy, you need one. I took on the role and said what we need is a strategy for our people. Because that is the piece really for me through the *[Company name's]* history; we have done many of these programmes for our clients. We haven't really done them for ourselves. It wasn't like we had all of the other things, but we hadn't an engagement strategy, we actually didn't have a people strategy. So, the reason for doing that was to just pull together what we actually need to do for our people in order that we can help them to be the best that they can and I suppose if you take our strapline "Inspiring People to reach their full potential" so

it actually wasn't a discussion if we need one or not. It was a no-brainer as we called it. You have to communicate with our employees and help them to understand why they doing it and that it is all worth it and then, you know, we not doing right by our own people.

AW: You mentioned various aims around the strategy and why you doing it? Could you summaries it or give me five key words on what are the main aims and why you doing it?

P01: Oh. That's challenging.

AW: Sorry about that.

P01: That's okay. The first words I would think of is "Engagement". But that not right.

So, why we doing it: I think people feel connected to an organisation if they understand what its purpose is and what we trying to achieve. So, in terms of all the things we doing around the people strategy is helping them to see their role. So, give them purpose; why they come to work and that they should come to work every day. We all spending a lot of time at work these days and it is only getting quicker and demanding. Helping people to enjoy the time they are at work is important and if they do enjoy and understand why they are there and they do give as much as they possibly can. So, sort of that discretionary effort.

I think it is difficult to say in five words, but it gives people purpose, it helps them to feel more valued, to be recognised for their expertise and the effort that they're putting in. And for us as an organisation, it helps to attract and retain the best talent in the industry by providing the right environment for people to thrive.

Does this answer the question? It's more than five words.

AW: Yes, this answers the question. That's absolutely fine.

As a review since they day you started; what do you think are the key challenges for you and the team to actually get it running, get it into place and get it attractive over time?

P01: Capacity is my biggest challenge. And that's capacity for us as the People Team to create and deliver the things that we want. But capacity as well for the business to on board the things we want to do. We are very cognisant that people are very busy constantly doing things for clients. So, anything we do from an internal point of view needs to add a tremendous amount of value and to help them to do their job better. So, actually, if I was looking at of the things we want to do as an organisation. As I would have the resource to create them all people wouldn't have the time and capacity to get involved in them all. So, we actually have to be very careful about the initiatives that we launch that we make sure that we do not overload people. So, my biggest challenge is, because we want to offer our employees the same things that we offer to our clients, if take Buzz as an example that's social recognition, it is a product we selling to our clients, the best way for all of our employees to understand what we do and what we can provide to our clients is to experience it themselves. But in order for us to provide those solutions to our clients we need to use the same resources at are building these things for our clients so and clients come first, so we are continually kind of dropping down the list of priorities. So, my biggest challenge is once we identified the initiative that we want to do and we have got buy-in from everybody that it is the right thing to do, having the resource to deliver it is my biggest challenge because I can never guarantee a launch date for anything. Because we always been put to one side to do client things. So, everything I have got to do I have to be conscious or realistic about what we can do. And then realistic about how engaged people will be with the initiative, how much capacity and how much time have they got to do these things. If I give you an example the PEP behaviours that we launched at the beginning of this year, they were really important for us as an organisation to have a set of behaviours that everybody understood and could recognised what it look like and what it doesn't look like. We actually running workshops and pulling people out to do training sessions. So, for every hour we pulling them out they not doing stuff for clients and that stuff for clients doesn't go away so we wanted to design something that would take an hour or an hour and a half which would be a realistic time which people could give to this type of activity. We were very conscious of "this is a nice to have" in a lot of people's minds and we wanted to make sure that we didn't ask people to do a lot of things that actually just become a frustration and something else they got to do in a day but resource I think or capacity I would describe that as the capacity from our perspective to get involved into the business.

AW: Are you aware of any challenges the local markets have with the strategy?

- P01: Yes, so when we get to a point where we ready to talk about something new which alliance with each of the leaders of the business and understand whether this will work for them and what constraints they might have and where are the busy times. So, if there are gone be a lot of people of the office to events and then this is not the right timing for them etc. So, it starts with engaging with each of the business leaders on the things that we want to do and what our plans are and getting their input. I think sometimes, well quite a lot of times, we don't engage early enough with our businesses and not just internationally in the UK as well. Because we never really know what the timing is going to look like till we got a bit down the line so it is, I would say, that the feedback of our international business is that "we do not get enough" time to and not enough of the heads up that these things would be coming and need more time to think about them and to implement them. And I think, for me, I got my people things I want to do but then finance have got things that they want to the business to do and commercial got things that they want the business to do. And actually balancing all of those I would say that most of our business leaders would say that they are a lot of things that are constantly coming their way. And those, even that it is not a people strategy, those can impact on employee motivation if they constantly getting asked from the group to do more and more things and from the business perspective it feels like nothing is joined up and that people don't feel that they are appreciated for all the other things that are asked from them. And not necessarily understand why things are being launched so that is a big challenge and I know that probably more in the finance space that more things that are coming from the finance team are no-negotiable. "You must do this and you must do that!" A little bit like that and that makes – I think – my job is harder because that is an employee motivation piece or de-motivation piece in some respects. So, it is a bit like running along and picking things up behind people and trying to make it all ok. But yes, I think it is not just internal. In the UK they are running a business and all the things on top of that are things on top of that. It is difficult.
- AW: So, this was basically it.
- P01: Ah okay.
- AW: Thank you very much for participating in this and being the "pilot". Are you fine with keeping all the question in the transcription?
- P01: Yes. That is absolutely fine. I think there is nothing in there which shouldn't be in there. From my perspective we are at a very early stage with our Employee Engagement strategy and you cannot just put initiatives in place etc. It won't change in a matter of months it is a long term thing.

Appendix 4: Original interview questions and their aims

Category	Interview questions	Aim
Introduction	<p>Thank you very much for participating in this interview. Within the next 60 minutes I will ask you a couple of questions on the Employee Engagement strategy in your organisation. The questions and answers will be recorded. If you want the transcription to be anonymous, please say so before we start with the interview.</p> <p>For your information: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am a part-time student at the Manchester Metropolitan University's faculty of Business and Law. My PhD "Understanding Employee Engagement" focuses on the Employee Engagement strategy of large organisations in Germany.</p> <p>When I am not engaged with my PhD, I work full-time for [company name], the</p>	Legal disclaimer

	world's leading provider of Employee and Customer Engagement solutions. I am in charge of the Customer and Employee Engagement division. Together with my team, we help clients to inspire their employees and customers.	
Interviewee	What is your name? What is your role in your organisation?	Understand who the person is and what the responsibilities are
Organisation	Which industry does your employer operate in? How many employees does your organisation employ globally? How many employees does your organisation employ in Germany? Where is your organisation originally from? Does the British influence have a strong effect on your organisational culture?	Ensure that the organisation fits to the case study requirements (e.g. large organisations with employee engagement strategy in place)
Employee engagement strategy	Does your organisation have an overall employee engagement strategy? Who designed this strategy? Where was the strategy designed Is it modified locally? Do you think the origin of the organisation (the UK) has an impact on the strategy?	Understand if it is an overall strategy or just for particular target groups within the organisation
Defining the strategy	Can you describe the employee engagement strategy you currently have in place? What are the key elements of the strategy? Is there a local modification of the strategy? (Why or why not?)	Understand what the organisation does
Terminology	Is there an organisation-specific term which you use to define, describe or name Employee Engagement? (e.g. Job Commitment, Work Engagement) From an international perspective: Are you referring to Employee Engagement in the local markets or are you using local terminologies such as "Mitarbeitemotivation" to name it?	Understand if the organisational culture influences the terminology
Aims	What are your main aims? Why are you running an Employee Engagement strategy?	Analyse what they want to achieve
Challenges	Which key challenges are you facing in general? What do you think are the key challenges in Germany?	Analyse which problems/challenges they face

Source: Developed by the author

Appendix 5: German translation of interview questions

Category	Modified and Extended Interview Questions	German translation of Interview Questions
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Introduction	Thank you very much for participating in this interview. Within the next 45 minutes I will ask you a couple of questions on Employee Engagement. The questions and answers will be recorded. If you want me to make the transcription anonymous please say so before we start with the interview.	Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme an diesem Interview. In den nächsten 45 Minuten werde ich Ihnen einige Fragen zum Thema Employee Engagement stellen. Diese Fragen und Antworten werden aufgezeichnet. Wenn Sie wünschen, dass die Abschrift des Interviews anonymisiert wird, setzen Sie mich bitte darüber in Kenntnis.
	For your information: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am a part-time student at the Manchester Metropolitan University's faculty of Business and Law. My PhD "Understanding Employee Engagement" focuses on the Employee Engagement strategy of large organisations in Germany.	Mein Name ist Andrea Wylegala und ich promoviere in Teilzeit an der Manchester Metropolitan University im Fachbereich "Business and Law". In meiner Doktorarbeit befasse ich mich mit dem Verständnis des Begriffs Employee Engagement von Personalern in Deutschland.
Interviewee	What's your name?	Nennen Sie mir bitte Ihren Namen.
	What is your role in your organisation?	Welche Position bekleiden Sie momentan?
Organisation	Which industry are you currently working in?	In welcher Branche sind Sie derzeit tätig?
	How many employees does your current employer employ globally?	Wie viele Mitarbeiter hat Ihr aktueller Arbeitgeber weltweit?
	And how many employees does your organisation employ just in Germany?	Wie viele Mitarbeiter arbeiten davon in Deutschland?
	Where is the organisation originally from?	Wo kommt das Unternehmen ursprünglich her?
	From your point of view: does the international background has an impact or effect on the organisational culture of the company?	Hat aus Ihrer Sicht der internationale Hintergrund Ihres Unternehmens einen Effekt auf Ihre Unternehmenskultur?
Employee engagement strategy	Have you heard about the term Employee Engagement?	Haben Sie schon einmal von "Employee Engagement" gehört?
	In which context have you heard about Employee Engagement?	In welchem Zusammenhang haben Sie von "Employee Engagement" gehört?
	What have you heard about the term "Employee Engagement"?	Was haben Sie bzgl. des Begriffs "Employee Engagement" bereits gehört?
	How would you define "Employee Engagement"?	Wie würden Sie "Employee Engagement" selbst definieren?
	What does Employee Engagement mean for you with respect to the behaviour of an employee?	Was bedeutet für Sie "Employee Engagement" bzgl. des Verhaltens eines Mitarbeiters?
	Are you aware of an overall employee engagement strategy within your organisation?	Wissen Sie, ob ihr Arbeitgeber eine allgemeine "Employee Engagement" Strategie etabliert hat?
	In which department of your company is the Employee Engagement topic positioned? (e.g. HR, internal communications, marketing)	In welchem Bereich Ihres Unternehmens wird das Thema "Employee Engagement" behandelt? (z.B. HR, interne Kommunikation, Marketing)
	Was the strategy designed in a particular country?	Wurde die Strategie in einem bestimmten Land entwickelt?
	Is the strategy modified within local markets or countries based on the requirements of the local organisation and its employees?	Wird die Strategie in einzelnen Märkten bzw. Ländern auf die Bedürfnisse der lokalen Organisation und Ihrer Mitarbeiter modifiziert?

	Do you think the origin of an organisation has an impact on the strategy?	Denken Sie, dass die Herkunft eines Unternehmens einen Einfluss auf die "Employee Engagement" Strategie hat?
Defining the strategy	Can you explain the key elements of the Employee Engagement strategy?	Können Sie die Kernelemente Ihrer aktuellen Employee Engagement Strategie näher erklären?
	What is the aim of the Employee Engagement strategy?	Was ist die Zielsetzung der "Employee Engagement" Strategie?
	<i>s. above</i>	<i>n/a</i>
	<i>s. above</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Terminology	Is there an organisation-specific term which you use to define, describe or name Employee Engagement? (e.g. Work Engagement, Mitarbeiterkommunikation)	Benutzen Sie einen bestimmten, unternehmensspezifischen Begriff anstelle bzw. für "Employee Engagement" oder eine bestimmte Definition? (z.B. Work Engagement, Mitarbeitermotivation)
	From an international perspective: Do you refer to Employee Engagement in the local markets or do you use local terminologies such as Mitarbeitermotivation to name it?	Nutzen Sie international den englischen Begriff "Employee Engagement" (bzw. den vorigen genannten Begriff) oder benutzen Sie verschiedene Begrifflichkeiten in den jeweiligen Märkten?
Aims	<i>s. above</i>	<i>n/a</i>
	<i>s. above</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Challenges	Which challenges do you see with respect to Employee Engagement?	Welche Herausforderungen verbinden Sie mit dem Begriff "Employee Engagement"?
	Of which challenges are you aware with respect to the implementation of Employee Engagement strategies?	Welche Herausforderungen nehmen Sie wahr im Hinblick auf die Implementierung von "Employee Engagement" Strategien?
	What do you think are the main challenges of Employee Engagement in Germany?	Wo liegen Ihrer Ansicht nach, die größten Herausforderungen für "Employee Engagement" in Deutschland?
Closing	Is there anything you would like to add regarding Employee Engagement?	Möchten Sie weitere Anmerkungen zum Thema "Employee Engagement" machen?
	Thank you very much for your participation and time.	Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme und Ihre Zeit.

Source: Developed by the author

Appendix 6: Pool of potential interviewees

#	Industry	Interviewee's position (original title)	Contacted via	1st contact (date)	Interest (y/n)	Interview sheduled for
1	Automotive	HR Business Partner	e-mail	04.02.2018	Yes	27.02.2018 10:00 CET
2	Telecommunication	HR Business Consultant/ Ausbilderin	e-mail	04.02.2018	Did not reply	
3	Automotive	Senior Manager Marketing & Employer Branding	Xing	09.04.2018	Did not reply	
4	Retail	Leitung Ausbildung	Xing	02.03.2018	Did not reply	
5	Retail	Senior HR Manager Employer Branding	Xing	03.03.2018	Did ask for further information, did finally not reply	
6	Retail	Geschäftsbereichsleiter Personal	Xing	03.03.2018	Yes	27.03.2018 10:00 CET
7	Gastronomy	Personalleiter Region Mitte	e-mail	09.04.2018	Yes	24.05.2018 10:00 CET
8	Telecommunication	Customer Experience, Engagement & Insights (B2B)	e-mail	Contact no longer available	n/a	
9	Insurance	Corporate Change Communication	Xing	14.05.2018	Did not reply	
10	Media	Junior Personalreferentin	Xing	14.05.2018	Did not reply	
11	Consulting	Director Comuncations Central Europe	e-mail	03.03.2018	Did not reply	
12	Construction	Managerin Corporate HR Marketing	Xing	05.02.2018	Did not reply	
13	Retail	Regionalverkaufsleiterin	Xing	Contact no longer available	n/a	
14	Fashion	Manager Human Resources (Personalleiterin)	Xing	02.03.2018	Yes, asked for further information, did finally not reply	
15	Research	Recruiter / Koordinator Personalmarketing	Xing	14.05.2018	Did not reply	
16	Retail	Exact position not known	Xing	14.05.2018	Did not reply	
17	Retail	Head of Direct Sales Germany & Austria	LinkedIn	05.02.2018	Did not reply	
18	Entertainment	Assistentin der Personalleitung	Xing	03.03.2018	Did not reply	

19	Consumer Goods	Senior HR Manager Supply Network Operations DACH + Future of Work Project Leader	Xing	14.05.2018	yes - issues with date, call by end of June possible; Did finally not reply	
20	Consulting	Senior Personalreferentin - Recruiting & HR-Marketing	Xing	02.03.2018	Did not reply	
21	IT	Personalrefereintin Recruiting und Personalentwicklung	Xing	23.07.2018	Did not reply	
22	Retail	Experte Recruiting & Talent Relationship Management	Xing	03.04.2018	Yes, asked for further information, due to time constraints participation was not possible	
23	Logistics	HR Business Partner / Senior Recruiter	Personal Meeting	16.02.2018	Did not reply	
24	Tourism, Travel & Leisure	HR Business Partner EMEA	e-mail	07.02.2018	Yes	22.02.2018 09:00 CET
25	Consulting	Currently post-graduate student	Xing	13.02.2018	Yes	28.02.2018 09:00 CET
26	Fashion	Recruiter	Xing	18.02.2018	Yes	18.05.2018 11:00 CET
27	Retail	Blended Learning Expert	Xing	18.02.2018	Did not reply	
28	Energy	Currently reorientation	Xing	06.03.2018	Wrong contact, happy to support	
29	Fashion	Human Resources	Xing	18.02.2018	Did not reply	
30	Travel Industry	Senior Vice President, Strategic Talent Management & Global Human Resources	e-mail		Yes	22.03.2018 08:30 CET
31	Construction	HR Consultant	Xing	02.03.2018	Did not reply	
32	Gastronomy	Personalreferentin	Xing	02.03.2018	Did not reply	
33	Entertainment	Leitung Talent Akquisition & Employer Branding	Xing	02.03.2018	Yes, but did not reply to further invitation	
34	Beauty	Senior HR Business Partner - Commercial Functions	Xing	02.03.2018	Did not reply	
35	Construction	Personalreferent	Xing	02.03.2018	Yes	28.03.2018 18:00 CET

36	Medical	Leiterin Personalreferat	Xing	02.03.2018	Did not reply	
37	Education	Personalreferentin	Xing	03.03.2018	Did not reply	
38	Medical	Head of Global Talent Acquisition + HR Marketing	Xing	03.03.2018	Did not reply	
39	Construction	Personalmarketing	Xing	03.03.2018	Did not reply	
40	Professional Services	Leiter Finanz-, Personal- und Rechnungswesen	Xing	03.03.2018	Did not reply	
41	Construction	Personalentwicklerin	Xing	03.03.2018	Did not reply	
42	Consulting	HR Consultant und Interim Manager	Xing	03.03.2018	Yes, but did not reply to further invitation	
43	Medical	Personalreferentin	Xing	03.03.2018	Did not reply	
44	Professional Services	Recruiter	Xing	03.03.2018	Did not reply	
45	Food	HR Business Partner	Xing	03.03.2018	Did not reply	
46	Travel Industry	Senior Director, Strategic Talent Management	Xing	03.03.2018	Yes, but did not reply to further invitation	
47	Automotive & Defence	Senior Vice President Recruiting & Employer Brand Services	Mail	26.03.2018	Yes	04.04.2018 17:00 CET
48	Logistics	EOS & Stakeholder Management Corporate HR Standards & Programs	Mail	26.03.2018	Yes	05.04.2018 09:45 CET
49	Energy	Expertin Employer Branding	Xing	28.03.2018	Did not reply	
50	Energy	Internal Communication HR	Xing	28.03.2018	Did not reply, changed company and position in the meantime	
51	Gastronomy	Team Manager Employer Reputation & Engagement	Xing	06.04.2018	Yes	12.04.2018 16:00 CET
52	Fashion	HR Business Partner	e-mail	09.04.2018	Yes	26.04.2018 16:00 CET
53	Energy	Global Category Manager HR Services & Marketing	Xing	09.04.2018	Did not reply	
54	Banking	HR Artist // Senior Manager Human Resources	Xing	09.04.2018	Yes	23.04.2018 08:30 CET

55	Hospitality & Gastronomy	Personalleiter / Human Resources Manager	e-mail	10.04.2018	Yes	13.04.2018 13:00 CET
56	Hospitality & Gastronomy	Direktorin Human Resources & Talentmanagement	e-mail	10.04.2018	Yes, but had no time	
57	Education	Head of Human Resources	e-mail	10.04.2018	Yes	23.04.2018 16:00 CET
58	Consulting	Managing Director	e-mail	11.04.2018	Yes	24.04.2018 14:00 CET
59	Health-care	Managing Director	e-mail	16.05.2018	Yes	22.05.2018 09:00 CET
60	Public Service		e-mail	14.05.2018	Yes	18.05.2018 20:00 CET
61	Consulting	Marken- und Kommunikationsberaterin	Xing	28.03.2018	Did not reply	
62	Professional Services	Teamleiter Account Management - Marketing, Kommunikation, Sales	Xing	06.04.2018	Did not reply	
63	Energy	Employer Branding Specialist - Germany, UK & Sweden	Xing	06.04.2018	Did not reply	
64	Construction	Personalreferentin	Xing	09.04.2018	Did not reply	
65	Consulting	Recruiter	Xing	09.04.2018	Did not reply	
66	Telecommunication	Programmleiter HR Suite	Xing	09.04.2018	Did not reply	
67	IT	Senior HR Manager	Xing	10.04.2018	Did not reply	
68	Travel Industry	HR & Talent Executive	Xing	10.04.2018	Did not reply	
69	Professional Services	HR Generalist	Xing	27.04.2018	Did not reply	
70	Retail	Head of Supply Chain Management EU Apparel	Xing	12.02.2018	Yes, not the right contact, helping to screen his network; did not reply	
71	Construction	Expert People Development	Xing	05.04.2018	Addressed colleagues were not willing to support	
72	Retail	CRM Specialist	Xing	14.02.2018	Was not aware of colleague in charge of the topic, no further support provided	

73	Gastronomy	Director Talent Acquisition Germany / Switzerland / Austria (GSA)	Xing	24.07.2018	Did not reply	
74	Public Service		eMail	12.07.2018	Talked to four people in the organisation; no interest	

Source: Developed by the author

Appendix 7: Industry split of potential interviewees

Industry	Number of potential interviewees	Industry	Number of potential interviewees
<i>Engineering</i>	7	<i>Producer of medical products</i>	2
<i>Consulting</i>	6	<i>Public Service</i>	2
<i>Energy</i>	5	<i>Banking</i>	1
<i>Fashion Retailer</i>	4	<i>Beauty & Cosmetic</i>	1
<i>Food Retailer</i>	4	<i>Construction</i>	1
<i>Retailer</i>	4	<i>Customer Goods</i>	1
<i>Travel Agency</i>	4	<i>Entertainment</i>	1
<i>Automotive & Supplier</i>	3	<i>Fair Ground</i>	1
<i>IT</i>	3	<i>Food Producer</i>	1
<i>Logistics</i>	3	<i>Furniture Store</i>	1
<i>Telco</i>	3	<i>Marketing Agency</i>	1
<i>Education</i>	2	<i>Online Retailer</i>	1
<i>Fast Food Chain</i>	2	<i>Publisher</i>	1
<i>Health-care</i>	2	<i>Research Institution</i>	1
<i>Hospitality</i>	2	<i>Service Industry</i>	1
<i>Labour Leasing Company</i>	2		

Source: Developed by the author

Appendix 8: “The Naturalistic Treatment of Trustworthiness”

<i>Inquiry can be affected by:</i>	<i>Which produce effects of:</i>	<i>To take account of which we:</i>		<i>In the hope these actions will lead to:</i>	<i>And produce findings that are:</i>
		<i>During:</i>	<i>After:</i>		
Factor patternings	Noninterpretability	Use prolonged engagement Use persistent observation Use peer debriefing Do triangulation Collect referential adequacy materials Do member checks	Establish structural corroboration (coherence) Establish referential adequacy Do member checks	Credibility	Plausible
Situational uniquenesses	Noncomparability	Collect thick descriptive data Do the oretical/ purposive sampling	Develop thick description	Transferability	Context relevant
Instrumental changes	Instability	Use overlap methods	Do dependability	Dependability	Stable

		Use stepwise replication	audit (process)		
		Leave audit trail			
Investigator predilections	Bias	Do triangulation Practice reflexivity (audit trail)	Do confirmability audit (product)	Confirmability	Investigator-free

Source: Guba (1981:83)

Appendix 9: I08

AW: Thank you very much for participating in this interview. Within the next 45 minutes – maximum 45 minutes – I will ask you a couple of different questions on Employee Engagement. The questions and answers will be recorded. If you want me to make the transcription anonymous please say so before we start with the interview or afterwards.

I08: Ok.

For your information: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am part-time student at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. Since 2013, I am enrolled as a Doctor in Training. In 2019, I will submit my PhD thesis.

In my PhD thesis I focus on the understanding of the term “Employee Engagement” by German HR-managers or HR-managers in Germany.

I will start with a few general questions which I need to ask you. Those are concerning your name, position etc. As we discussed, if you decide that this shall be anonymised, these elements will be deleted accordingly.

AW: Can you please state your name again?

I08: My name is Michaela B.

AW: What is your role in your organisation?

I08: I am “Expertin” [*engl. Expert*] – so it is called – in the team EOS and Stakeholder Management at the Corporate Center of [*company name*].

AW: In which industry are you currently working?

I08: Logistics.

AW: How many employees does your organisation employ globally?

I08: Half a million.

AW: How many of those are based in Germany?

I08: About half.

AW: Where does the company originally come from?

I08: (...) The origin of our company is [*company name*], known in Germany by its Mail and Parcel business. We grew through organically and through mergers & acquisitions and one of them, [*company name*] gave the brand and name for our company name “[*Company Group name*]”. [*Company name*] was an American company and the name was made up with the first letter of the three founders last names: D., H. and L. They shortened the transatlantic process of goods transportation for ships and consequently also for aeroplanes by shipping the documents prior to the good. So when the goods were imported the process went faster. We are operating in 220 countries and territories and with over 500,000 employees and we run our business as a family of divisions, each of them being large companies with their own history and culture. [*Interviews answer was modified by the employer during the approval process; the overall meaning stays the same.*]

AW: No problem. Don't worry about it.

- Do you think that the international background of the company – so consequently the German background as well as Anglo-American background – has an effect on the company culture?
- I08: Yes! Yes, I believe so as we are facing strong cultural differences in our Group across the divisions but also across geographies. We see that for example in our annual Engagement Survey called Employee Opinion Survey (EOS). We can observe there divisional as well as country differences e.g. there are usually “grumpy Germans” and highly engaged Mexican employees. *[Interviews answer was modified by the employer during the approval process; the overall meaning stays the same.]*
- We also know from our service provider IBM that it is not just a phenomenon happening to us. This means that the German scoring of Mitarbeiterengagement *[engl. Employee Engagement]* tends to be lower than the scoring of Philippines for example. There are various cultural, divisional and also leadership differences which for sure have an impact on employees’ engagement (...) or the perception of it (...) and its definition.
- AW: Great. We will shortly also look at the definition. Perfect. I will now ask you different questions on the topic Employee Engagement; so much more in general.
- I08: Ok.
- AW: Have you heard about the term “Employee Engagement” before?
- I08: Yes, I heard about it. By chance it is also the topic which we are dealing with.
- AW: Very good. In which context have you heard about the term?
- I08: In our case we defined – as part of our 2020 Strategy – three key goals: we want to being “Anbieter erster Wahl” *[engl. Provider of Choice]*, “Arbeitgeber erster Wahl” *[engl. Employer of Choice]*, “Investment erster Wahl” *[engl. Investment of Choice]* and finally Living Responsibility. Till 2020, we measure the ‘Employer of Choice’ dimension via our annual employee survey where we want to reach at least 80% favorable scores in our KPIs “Aktive Führung” *[engl. active leadership]* and “Mitarbeiterengagement” *[engl. Employee Engagement]*.
- AW: Ok. When you look at the term from a more general perspective: What have you yet heard about the term “Employee Engagement” so far?
- I08: Well. It is difficult to answer this because we are dealing with it in a very detailed way.
- AW: Yes.
- I08: For us is “Mitarbeiter-Engagement” *[engl. Employee Engagement]* the emotional commitment of an employee with his/her company and the motivation to contribute to the company’s success. It is a definition which we have developed with our internal experts from the different divisions.
- AW: Ok. So you have already answered my next question on how you would define it.
- I08: Yes, indeed.
- AW: Perfect. Very prescient work. What do you think does “Employee Engagement” mean with respect to the individual behaviour of a single employee?
- I08: (...) As I said, we assume that engaged employees are strongly involved with their company. That also means that they need to know that with their daily job they create a difference, that they also need to know that their ideas and *[“ideas” was added by the employer]* recommendations are taken seriously and that they know that they got great chances to grow and *[“grow” was added by the employer]* develop themselves here. Also that they have a great manager who gives them feedback and that they are honoured for good performance which they deliver.
- AW: You said before that as an employer you have a general employee engagement strategy?
- I08: Yes.
- AW: And this... I need to rephrase the next question slightly: In your case this strategy belongs to HR?
- I08: Well, not really. We have our strategic goals as mentioned before and we are all contributing with our daily work to being Provider, Employer and Investment of Choice and Living

Responsibility. It therefore applies to the entire business. We, as HR, provide the tools, best practices and measurement of "Mitarbeiterengagement" [engl. Employee Engagement] and the employee opinion survey is managed by my team and we are indeed allocated to the HR-line. *[Interviews answer was modified by the employer during the approval process; the overall meaning stays the same.]*

AW: Ok. You stated that the aims are those three goals which you defined...

I08: Exactly. Those are executed like a mantra.

AW: Was the strategy developed in a particular country?

I08: ... *sighs* I wasn't part of the development process; consequently, I cannot provide a clear answer to this. We have a Corporate Development department which is facilitating the strategy development process. As our Corporate Center is located in Bonn, it was probably finally defined in Germany but obviously including the different perspectives of our divisional colleagues around the globe. *[Interviews answer was modified by the employer during the approval process; the overall meaning stays the same.]*

Therefore, I would not claim in general that it was developed BY Germany ... Maybe you could say it was developed IN Germany, but together with the various international colleagues.

AW: Ok.

I08: This is just with reservations, as I am not a strategy expert.

AW: Do not worry about it. It is just very interesting to understand if the company's origin, has an impact on the strategy. In particular if the companies are smaller the German origin might sometimes have an impact in the implementation of an Employee Engagement strategy. But I am more than happy to give you some more insides from other interviews and other companies, if you want to.

I08: Yes, for sure.

AW: Ok, you just claimed that the strategy runs through the entire group. Does the strategy stay the same in the different countries or is it modified locally based on the local requirements and the employees' needs?

I08: Well, we do have a strategy for the group.

We also share the same values "Respect & Results" and we have the same aspiration: "When people think of logistics, we want them to think of *[Company name]*." Our core strategy pillars are: FOCUS, CONNECT, GROW. Focus on our core activities to achieve industry-leading performance. We connect across the organization to to achieve quality and service excellence. And we grow by finding and capturing new opportunities. This is of course broken down to each of the Divisions, regions, countries and teams, depending on their function and role in our group. *[Added by the interviewer's employer during the approval process.]*

AW: Divisions means – as far as I know your structure – that for example 'Parcel' could also be located in different countries, right?

I08: That's correct.

We have four key Divisions; PeP (Post, eCommerce, Parcel), Express, Global Forwarding and Supply Chain. *[Added by the interviewer's employer during the approval process.]*

AW: So, basically per division, but not necessarily different per market. Instead it is different per division to which the individual employee is assigned to.

I08: Well, it really depends. Usually it is all somehow interlinked. As stated it sums up to the Division but in the divisions you have differences for example in *[Division]* in the GROW pillar we have e.g. growth markets in Asia and Eastern Europe. Generally, also an individual department is looking at its core activities (FOCUS pillar), will connect in the best way to the colleagues (CONNECT) and develop new activities (GROW) and thereby has its own priorities. For sure it needs to be modified based on the requirements of the individual departments and divisions. *[Interviews answer was modified by the employer during the approval process; the overall meaning stays the same.]*

- AW: So the next question is: Does the origin of the company – we are looking at a German company with a strong US-American – does also have an impact on the employee engagement strategy?
- I08: That's a good question. Well..
- ... Not sure. As we are a very international company (operating in 220 countries and e.g. 45 nationalities are working in Corporate Center), it is more the more the impact of all key stakeholders, like board members, leaders who have an impact on our Engagement strategy, but for sure the local leaders have a key role and impact on our employee engagement on a daily basis. *[Added by the interviewer's employer during the approval process.]*
- Yes, I think that this does have an impact on the individual strategy which is executed. *[Interviews answer was modified by the employer during the approval process; the overall meaning stays the same.]*
- AW: Ok. *break* Well, we already talked about it, but the three key goals of the strategy are those three pillars FOCUS, CONNECT, GROW. *[Interviews answer was modified by the employer during the approval process; the overall meaning stays the same.]*
- You also do an employee survey, which I wrote down. So in summary you have different elements based on this strategy which you implement to either measure employee engagement but also to increase it?
- I08: Yes, that's correct. In particular as part of the global "Mitarbeiterbefragung" *[engl. employee engagement survey]*. We measure our employees' engagement via our annual survey across the group, but we work on different levels (from divisional to a department / team level with our employee's feedback to improve our working environment. *[Interviews answer was modified by the employer during the approval process; the overall meaning stays the same.]*
- AW: And the aim is to become "Arbeitgeber of Choice" *[mixing Employer and "erster Wahl" together]* well "Arbeitgeber erster Wahl" *[engl. Employer of Choice]*?
- I08: Yes, exactly. In English we call it "Employer of Choice".
- AW: Yes, exactly. That was a very strong intermixture of German and English at my end.
- I08: Never mind, I always need to adjust too when I say it in German.
- AW: Are you internally using a particular term – or within your team – for employee engagement or do you use the "Employee Engagement"-term?
- I08: This is a really interesting question. A really good question.
- Well, we have... we do not even use a consistent term within our team – either it is just Engagement or more official Employee Engagement. *[Interviews answer was modified by the employer during the approval process; the overall meaning stays the same.]*
- In general we are talking about – in English – 'Engagement' and 'Employee Engagement'. So colloquial in English it is 'Engagement'. The KPI which we use to measure it is called 'Employee Engagement', but as I said, non-standard you have the tendency to shorten it, therefore 'Engagement'. In German it sometimes develops very interesting ways. Sometimes you would say – but this might be related to the fact that we work in an international team – that we use "Das Engagement" *[French pronunciation, commonly used in Germany]* " or also "Das Engagement" *[English pronunciation]*. But I do have the feeling that we rarely say "Mitarbeiterengagement" *[engl. Employee Engagement]* as the terminology is very bulky. However, it is the official name of the KPI. It becomes even more interesting when you talk about "engagieren" *[engl. engage]* and "motivieren" *[engl. motivate]* and if you want to differentiate these.
- AW: Therewith you have again answered my next question on if you are using different terms in different markets. But your example of Germany is perfect as this is our main focus as well.
- I08: Yes, we try to use the term 'Engagieren' *[engl. engage]* as it would be more consistent in the overall language. But sometimes it just simply doesn't fit. The problem is that in German, you soon interpret the term with "Ehrenamtliches Engagement" *[engl. charity work]*.
- AW: Yes. Yes.

- I08: But that's not what we are talking about. It is not equivalent. At least not 100 percent.
- AW: Which challenges do you link to the term Employee Engagement?
- I08: Well (...), first, the linguistic usage is a challenge. Well basically that's it! If we are just talking about the term and its use then this is it. When working internationally, the English and the German term "Mitarbeiterengagement" [engl. *translation Employee Engagement*] and "Employee Engagement" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] respectively have different shades on a linguistic level. This can sometimes be a bit difficult, especially with translations.
- AW: Where do you think are the challenges regarding the implementation of Employee Engagement strategies? Not necessarily with respect to your employer, more in general?
- I08: (...) I believe there are mainly three challenges:
- I believe there are mainly three challenges: First there is not a single one and only acceptable definition of Employee Engagement. We have our definition but we also use our provider's Engagement concept, measure our Employee Engagement KPI in our annual Engagement Survey and also have what we call our Engagement approach. All valid concepts but in an ideal world it would all be developed holistically aligned. *[Added by the interviewer's employer during the approval process.]*
- Second, the construct of "Mitarbeiterengagement" [engl. *Employee Engagement*] and as we measure it in the Employee Engagement survey is not necessarily – how is it called - "directly actionable" [uses English phrase]. That means if I ask "Lieber Mitarbeiter, bist du denn stolz für dein Unternehmen zu arbeiten?" [engl. *Dear Employee, are you proud working for your company?*] it is actually difficult to improve this through a defined action. This is much easier in case of other KPIs. That means it is very difficult to directly influence "Mitarbeiterengagement" [engl. *Employee Engagement*]. Therefore, we are using the so called ten drivers of Employee Engagement in the Employee Engagement survey, which are the results of a correlation analysis of the other 37 questions which are correlated with the question on 'Mitarbeiterengagement' [engl. *Employee Engagement*] – with its KPI – to evaluate which one has the biggest impact; to particularly work on Employee Engagement. That is the one thing, and the third thing is that Mitarbeiterengagement [engl. *Employee Engagement*] is strongly influenced by the individual manager. Therefore, if you want to steer this through the entire group you would need – well it would at least be most effective – to influence every individual manager to influence the Mitarbeiterengagement [engl. *Employee Engagement*] positively. Which is of course very difficult and nearly not manageable.
- AW: And where do you see the biggest challenges for Employee Engagement in Germany?
- I08: Oh yes, in our group in Germany... it is always a snap shot of the current mood. Besides that, I think one big challenge is that our KPI Mitarbeiterengagement [engl. *Employee Engagement*] is measured through four questions. As I mentioned, one of those questions is "Ich bin stolz darauf für mein Unternehmen zu arbeiten" [engl. *I am proud to work for my company*] and I think that we, in Germany, always have a problem with the term "Stolz" [engl. *proud*]. In particular, due to our history - this is a question where you do see clear tendencies in Germany - that this question is answered more negatively than in other countries. And in Germany we do have, in general, by trend a more negative answering behaviour. This behaviour we also have in other parts of the world such as Japan, but I do still see this as a particular challenge for Germany. And additionally, Germany is our home market for our group and still among one of the biggest markets which [company name] has. And the bigger divisions are, the more difficult it gets to influence the entire division.
- AW: Ok, we are nearly at the end.
- I08: Oh, ok! That didn't hurt at all till now.
- AW: No, exactly. Do you have anything else, any additional comments regarding Employee Engagement or anything else where you would say "You should look at this" – also independent from [Company Name] group? Which I should include or review.
- I08: Personally, I think it is very interesting to look the different companies, which are specialised in Employee Engagement surveys, which define and do measure Mitarbeiterengagement [engl. *Employee Engagement*] in very different ways. And therefore when we talk about

Mitarbeiterengagement [engl. *Employee Engagement*] in general it looks very similar, but due to the fact that it is measured through different questions it is not directly comparable. That's what I think is very interesting. Looking at the difference of engagement versus commitment for example. And – you already mentioned it – it's also a different per country how people answer questions in surveys. Well, you could consider making this more equal by including the country's norm into it and standardise it. That would of course be very interesting.

AW: Thanks. Is written down. So, I stop recording the interview at this stage as we are finished.

I08: Ok, great.

Appendix 10: I01

AW: So, we are recording. The interview takes about 45 minutes, but I can let you know that sometimes it is a bit faster. And all questions and answers are recorded. As I said, you can tell me at any time that you wish that the interview is anonymous or if you want to skip a question. With respect to the background why I am doing this: I am currently doing my PhD at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. And my PhD is on the understanding HR managers of Employee Engagement in Germany.

I would like to ask you to state your name gain?

I01: My name is Constanze L.

AW: Thank you. And can you please tell me what your current role in your organisation is?

I01: Yes. Currently, I am "HR Business Partner" for EMEA at *[company name]*.

AW: For which industry is *[company name]* operating?

I01: Well, tourism, travel, leisure. Tourism industry. If you looking for big words.

AW: How many employees does your currently employer employ globally?

I01: Globally, *[company name]* has 1,400 employees. Within Europe there are 600.

AW: Ok. How many of those are based in Germany?

I01: (...) In Germany... now I need to lie... approx. 150 employees I believe. Including *[subsidiary company name]*.

AW: Where does the company originally come from?

I01: *[Company name]* belongs to the *[parent company name]* and it's located, with respect to its head office, in Utrecht, so from the Netherlands.

AW: Do you believe that the international background of the company does have an effect on the company culture?

I01: Yes, I do believe so very strongly. We have (...) here we do have designated teams. So employees work on EMEA and global basis. They are grouped accordingly and the teams are spread around Europe or even around the world. So, yes.

AW: Ok. Have you heard about the term Employee Engagement?

I01: Well. Yes.

AW: In which context have you heard about the term?

I01: I know about it from literature which I read during my free time as a HR person. And from some activities which we are implementing under the umbrella of this sub-term within the organisation. Yes, implement.

AW: So, when you put it into practice?

I01: Hm.

AW: So this already answers parts of the question on what you have heard about the term or can you specify this a bit more?

I01: Do you mean with respect to a definition?

AW: Yes, but also more general. For example, when you read about employee engagement in literature what have you read about it?

I01: Well, (...) I am consider it very carefully, because you read so much about it. And also very different answers to it. But what I have taken out of it in sum is – when thinking about employee engagement - it is (...) the intensity – I would say – how... I need to think about this. Well, it is a framework which an employer – from an employer's point of view – uses to manage binding an employee (...) towards the organisation. With respect to values and tools which you provide to an employee for motivational and developmental purposes. That's what I would say.

AW: So you could say the entire setup which an employee faces in an organisation or where HR spreads information on.

I01: What I already realised is that employee engagement can cover 360° of an employee's life cycle. Most likely it should cover that as well.

AW: How would you define employee engagement when you would need to explain it to somebody?

I01: (...) Without translating it? So just the content itself?

AW: Yes, but if you have a translation that's also welcomed.

I01: Well, *laugh* I already learnt from you before that there are more than 50 definitions already in place. Well it reflects how strongly or weakly an employee is incorporated into his/ her organisation or his/ her employer. Yes, incorporated. What you might also could use as a definition, well my very own personal modest one.

AW: Perfect. What do you think does it mean from an employee's point of view, so with respect to his/ her behaviour? So when he or she is engaged.

I01: So when he/ she has a high rate of engagement?

AW: Exactly, exactly.

I01: It means that he/ she does his/ her job which he/ she executes, is capable of doing so, willing to do so and also valued correctly by the company and also understands what he/ she does and should be doing. That's what I would say.

AW: Ok. Do you know if your current employer has an employee engagement strategy in general in place?

I01: Yes... we need to keep this slightly out of the overall as we are not doing it under the particular "Employee Engagement strategy" label. But we are very interested in employee development and also orientate us along the company values. Currently, within [company name] we are doing so, but I would directly say that we call it an "Employee Engagement strategy".

AW: Ok. This is an important statement.

Do you know which area deals with Employee Engagement. For example is it part of HR or does it belong to internal communications or does maybe belong to Marketing?

I01: In our case it is HR. There it belongs and it is a sub-part of global HR called "academy" where also many tools and trainings, which we provide to the employee are based to make sure that they can fulfil their job accordingly. Well, internal communication with respect to the topic is coordinated with Marketing. Definitely. They do it together. But it is triggered by the HR department.

AW: Ok. Can you tell me which aims does the employee engagement strategy of [company name] respectively does have globally.

I01: Well (...). In German: We want to that every individual employee knows what do in his/her role. Execute his/ her job accordingly. And that he/she wants to execute this job. So "knowable, able and willing to perform the job" [interviewee uses English explanation] – so we phrase it in English.

- AW: So basically he/she needs to understand his/her job, but he/she also needs to know how to do it, if necessary "learning" [interviewer uses English term] if he/she is not yet on the level to execute it.
- I01: (...) Yes, exactly. And we evaluate this in our "performance review process" [interviewee uses English term] which we execute annually. And it is only one part of the overall big engagement area.
- AW: You plan this strongly around the employee so that he/she can fit into the company. And his fulfil his role.
- I01: Yes, and also his/her strength and weaknesses towards the current position. And we have a big model of competency which we use to evaluate employees together with the manager. So the employee evaluates himself/herself on an annual basis together with the manager to review in which areas you are stronger and where can you support the employee's strength through trainings.
- AW: Ok. Has the strategy for this been developed in a particular country?
- I01: Ow. I cannot really answer this, as we are a very heterogenic HR department which is globally based. Therefore, I cannot say it has been developed in Copenhagen or in Utrecht. It is a very multicultural, global team.
- AW: Ok. Do you know if the strategy in different markets – for example you are in charge of EMEA – differs in EMEA or if it is tailored based the local markets' requirements and employees' needs?
- I01: Well (...). Generally, we execute our initiatives in the same manner in all markets. It is possible that local modifications are required when local labour law needs to be included. We cannot omit those. But with respect to content, for example the performance review, it is the same, it is harmonised. It is the same everywhere.
- AW: Ok. Hold on, just let me note this down. Well, I asked you before if the company's origin does have an effect on the company's culture. We are now looking at a Dutch company, which also got a strong European background and which is reflected in many different areas of the company. But with respect to the topic employee engagement. Do you believe that the origin from the Netherlands has an impact on the employee engagement strategy? (...) I know this is a tricky question.
- I01: No. I do not think so, as we making it a global initiative.
- AW: Yes. Because it is so multi-cultural from a company's perspective.
- I01: Exactly.
- AW: Ok.
- I01: It doesn't matter if it's the Netherlands or France.
- AW: Well. I was planning on asking you if you could tell the key elements of *[company name]* strategy. Let me summaries what you have already told me about it. You gave an overview that it is strongly related to the values, the tools, the development, strongly about understanding employee's capabilities, where an employee can develop towards, to understand his strength and weaknesses and to make sure that he is engaged with his job and the company. To motivate that he/she is established, integrated and involved. (...) Does this explain the strategy?
- I01: Yes.
- AW: Ok.
- I01: Well summaries actually.
- AW: Thank you.
- I01: But for sure this is a very broad topic. Also for my *[associated company name]* colleagues. That's the bigger share of the *[mother company name]* organisation.
- AW: Ok. So we are through the main part. Do you use a particular term, so a company-specific term, instead of employee engagement? Internally.
- I01: (...)

AW: It could be something such as work engagement. Or are you talking about "Mitarbeitermotivation". Or is it maybe Employee Engagement or Employer Branding?

I01: (...) We are using (...) From the organisation's point of view we talk about engagement, talent management (...) Sure also about Employee Engagement on daily basis when we have our HR calls. Here the term is used of course. I cannot say that we do not use it at all in daily life.

AW: You said "Talent Management" and what was the second term?

I01: Talent Engagement and Talent Management.

AW: Ok, Talent Engagement.

I01: We would say Talent instead of Employee.

AW: Ok. So you would also not use this term not just with respect to the on-boarding of new employees. You are also using it for your staff, calling your staff talent as well.

I01: Yes, both.

AW: So Talent is on the one side the potential employee and on the other side the existing employee.

I01: Yes. I know many still associate with the term young employees or those which are with the company for a shorter term or just have finished their first few years after finishing their education. But here it is meant much broader.

AW: Do you know if any markets or any regions – we mainly talked about global and EMEA – do you know if markets such APAC or LatAm use different terminologies?

I01: No. We keep this harmonised.

AW: Ok.

I01: In every region we have the same wording.

AW: Ok. Which challenges do you associate with the term Employee Engagement?

I01: (...) Well, does the question focus again on general and my opinion or is it more with respect to my company?

AW: Please, from your point of view as an HR person in Germany. Also retro perspective, pre-[company name]. Where do you think is challenge with respect to the term itself.

I01: (...) On the one side, creating the understanding, the "awareness" [interviewee uses English term] within companies (...) that they are much more frequently confronted with a type of employee who is looking for exactly this and who want to see what does the company do for me and at my current place and with my current position and everything related to it. Simply the awareness. Currently, I think this is completely missing. But it is also a very new topic. I know in a few cases there are employee engagement managers in companies. But not so frequently I guess. As an example, the HR Business Partner did not exist so frequently in the past and today many are claiming that they have this role in their organisation. I assume it is also a case of development. At a certain stage you can no longer ignore to also look at the employee from an integrated perspective. It is all developed to keep the employee and it all has a positive effect on the company performance. For the strategy and the strategic development where you heading. And there is still room for more. Especially to create decision maker's awareness within the individual companies for this particular topic.

AW: When talking about the implementation of Employee Engagement activities, where do you see the challenges here?

I01: (...) For the German market or in general.

AW: In general, but also in particular with respect to the German market.

I01: (...) Well, every implementation *laugh* is a challenge. In the German market (...) the implementation and transformation of this kind of strategy, train employees for it etc. that takes time. And it all starts with the necessity of defining it, coordinate it with different stakeholders and it all takes time. But you need stay on track and you need certainly a long breath and you need to listen to employees to understand what we are doing and what is wanted from their end

and needed. That is a very important point of departure: Listen to you employees. Or providing them with a tool which they can use to express themselves and comment on things. Yes.

AW: Ok.

I01: I am not saying that is not happening in companies. They are on track, but the consistency and sticking to it and not dropping it is, from my point of view, important. That's one challenge. Often enough it goes missing within the daily business... [phone line breaks and reconnects].

AW: Yes. So consequently that during daily business the focus is on clients or the product, if it is a producing business and HR topics are downgraded with respect to their priority.

I01: Exactly. And you should not forget that a company changes and develops, but also an employee and the employee basis. It's a natural process and I am sure that I am a completely different type of employee than my mother used to be a few years ago or decades ago. That is also challenging the internal process to continually improve, or as you are saying, the employee engagement strategies, towards these new types of employees. The young ones which are entering are maybe different to me or have different expectations into their job position. That is also important: Looking forward with respect to your employees. And I can imagine that a very good employee engagement strategy can cover this and also be a bit more future oriented and forward-looking with respect to which actions do we need to implement now so we can keep our employees and make sure that they can execute their job well and like to do it well.

AW: So, let's look at the last question: As HR person, do you have any further hints for me regarding employee engagement? Anything I should look at as part of my PhD.

I01: Ow.

AW: Kind of a job instruction *laugh*

I01: Ow. Very good question. I think I cannot answer this spontaneously. Maybe I send you an e-mail saying here is a link anytime I see anything.

AW: Thank you that's completely fine.

I01: Ok.

AW: Thank you very much for your time.

I01: Thank you. It is very interesting for me too. Especially with respect to this kind of questions, reflecting on those. Sometimes I think: Oh you need to look at this in more detail or read more about it. Very useful.

AW: Are the questions in general fine with you? (...) To ask them in this ways?

I01: Yes, absolutely. They fitted to what you said earlier on regarding "wanting to hear more about the general understanding about employee engagement in Germany". And HR managers will start to stammering about it, like me. So therefore the questions were totally fine.

Some time you and your team need to explain to me what you and the team do.

Appendix 11: I02

AW: Thank you very much for participating. The interview takes about 45 minutes, the last time once had shown that they might be slightly shorter. I will ask you different questions regarding Employee Engagement during the interview. The questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish those to be anonymised please state so during the interview or over the next two weeks. If the interview contains a question which you do not want or cannot answer please state that you wish to move to the next question.

Some background information: You are aware of my name. I am a part-time doctor in training at the Manchester Metropolitan University, at the Faculty of Business and Law. For my dissertation I research understanding of Employee Engagement amongst HR managers in Germany. Enough about the general, let's move on to the first question.

For the formalities I need your full name please?

I02: Rebecca J.

AW: And I need your current position, so its title please.

I02: There we go, I do not have one at the moment. I am currently HR manager, handing over (in German "Personalleiterin in Übergabe").

AW: This is going to be interesting to translate *laugh*.

I02: *laugh* You can write 'HR manager'. That is up to date.

AW: In which industry are currently working.

I02: Automotive.

AW: How many employees does the company for which you work employ?

I02: Approx. 260.

AW: Are they all located in Germany or are they also internationally based?

I02: We do have an international affiliated company in Romania with approx. 40 employees. They are not included in the 260.

AW: So globally, you have 300. 260 are located in Germany plus the 40 in Romania.

I02: Exactly.

AW: Where does the company originally come from?

I02: From Heiligenhaus (Note: German city between Düsseldorf and Ruhr area).

AW: So it was loyal to it's roots.

I02: Yes, even the building.

AW: Do you believe that the origin of the company, being a German company, has an impact on the company culture. In particular when looking at the colleagues in Romania?

I02: Yes, absolutely.

AW: Have you ever heard about the term "Employee Engagement"?

I02: Yes.

AW: In which context?

I02: Because we have developed a large Employee Engagement programme (Interviewee uses German term: "Mitarbeiterbindungsprogramm"); called "Wir sind [Company name]-Programm (English translation "We are [Company name]").

AW: It's called "[Company name]-Programm"? (Note: Name was not clearly understandable)

I02: No, "Wir sind [Company name]-Programm.

AW: So (...) what have you heard about the term in general?

I02: (...) In general about the term (...) Actually, only how important a Mitarbeiterbindungsprogramm [Engl. translation 'Employee retention programme'] is. So not just the recruitment of staff, but also the engagement at the spot and many more companies, consulting companies in Germany, are occupied with "retention" (uses English term), "Mitarbeiterbindung" [Engl. translation "Employee binding"]. And conceive more and more possibilities what can be done.

AW: Ok. How would you define the terminology?

I02: (...) I would define it very basically as "Mitarbeiterbindungssystematik" [Engl. "employee retention systematic"].

AW: Ok. (...) Just so that you know I take notes therefore I might stumble a bit every now and then.

I02: Ok, no problem.

AW: Well. What does Employee Engagement mean for an individual employee from your point of view? So when you are looking from the perspective of an employee. What do you think does it mean from an individual employee's point of view?

I02: I think that bounding to the company is going to be strengthened. So it's not just a workplace, not just a job, much more that the employee likes going to work. That you are sometimes spending more time in the company than at home and you are enjoying it.

AW: You mentioned early that you are having in a programme in place which is called "Wir sind [Company name]". This basically your programme, your Employee Engagement strategy.

I02: Exactly.

AW: In which area of the company is the programme settled, with respect to the setup, but also with respect to the management? Does it belong for example to HR? Or is maybe internal communication or marketing?

I02: Yes, it is HR. But the Managing Director is directly involved.

AW: Can tell me which goals the programme has?

I02: Well, "Mitarbeiterbindung". So reducing fluctuation rate (...) and increasing the "Wir-Gefühl" (English: togetherness).

AW: Ok. I assume it has been developed in Germany?

I02: Yes, exactly.

AW: Is the programme modified for the Romanian team for example? Or is it globally the same programme?

I02: No, it is modified.

AW: What do you modify?

I02: *laugh* Actually, everything. Because, even so Romania is so close, it works differently and we do have some programmes which have a tax effect and there the entire Romanian system works differently. And the Romanian colleagues also expect completely different things and our subsidiary there is still under development. It just had been founded in 2016 and the employees are currently in the recruitment process and need to settle in and therefore "Mitarbeiterbindung" is different there than it is here.

AW: Ok. So it might have a much stronger focus on on-boarding than on "Mitarbeiterbindung"?

I02: Yes, exactly.

AW: Which is caused by the freshness of staff in the company.

I02: Totally.

AW: Do you believe that the origin of the company also have an impact on the strategy in Romania?

I02: Yes, totally. The experiences we made here are taken into account and the Romanian colleagues, who start to work for us, start because we are a company with its origin in Germany. Our products and the way we work are highly appreciated. So somehow this supports us, I would say.

AW: Ok. What the the key elements of your programme? You said the "Mitarbeiterbindung" is the goal, which key elements have you developed to achieve this?

I02: Do you mean every single detail of the programme or the overall strategy?

AW: More the strategy, so is it a very strong communication approach or is it a reward for competitions for the best ideas?

I02: It is less the rewards and more communication as we are a mid-size company (German: Mittelstand) and therefore we are always having budget discussions as well. We do not have budget allowances such as large organisations do have. So it is very straightforward what we do have and therefore we communicate much more. We have developed an own logo for "Wir sind [Company name]" which are already using since 2011. So since the last large automotive crises. So every activity we do is branded with the logo so it has a big recognition factor. With the programme itself we try to be very broad to ensure we reach every employee with interesting activities. Not everybody feels addressed by all activities but maybe everyone finds something else interesting.

AW: Ok. Are you using a company-specific term for or instead of Employee Engagement? Or a particular definition? For example “Work Engagement” or “Mitarbeitermotivation”?

I02: Well, (...) we call it “Mitarbeiterbindungsprogramm”.

AW: “Mitarbeiterbindung”

I02: *laugh* We are very German-oriented on that matter.

AW: Good to hear that. This is also part of the PhD.
Do you use a separate term, maybe a Romanian terminology, or are using “Employee Engagement”?

I02: Hm... Well, (...) I am not quite sure. We will most likely develop something, but so far we are using an English term, so “Employee Engagement”.

AW: Ok (...) Which challenges do you see with respect to “Employee Engagement”? Especially from a German perspective?

I02: Well, for me it is a HR “on top” activity. *laugh*

AW: *laugh* Yes.

I02: For us it is, as it is entirely left with us and we are facing budget-scarcity, something which we provide with a lot of in-house manpower. Consequently, we are looking at activities which cost more manpower instead of money and that is very time consuming. But it also pays out.

AW: So this goes a bit more into the operational challenges, but when you look at the term itself – less from the *[Company name]*-perspective or the operational side – more with respect to the terminology, do you see challenges or issues which may occur in Germany?

I02: Hm (...) yes and no. I do believe that the government is very soon involved. So you cannot just do what you want as we are also limited with respect to what we can positively provide to the employees. We need to become very creative here to ensure we are legally managing it. So we have to be careful.

AW: So, the topic of “benefit in kind”.

I02: Yes.

AW: If you leave the *[Company name]*-perspective behind, where do you see the biggest challenge for the “Employee Engagement” term within the German market?

I02: I believe that in many companies the understanding has not yet developed as needed. So in a few cases an innovative companies have understand it by now and also some of the smaller once, but that there are designated Employer Branding Managers is rather limited. And therefore, managing directors have not yet internalised that it can generated great advantages when you set something successfully up here.

AW: Ok. So basically that the advantages are not yet clear?

I02: Yes.

AW: I imagine that this might be related to the fact that term is not yet defined clearly, so what it basically means?

I02: Well, yes possibly. Yes, maybe because – doesn’t matter if you say Employee Engagement or Employer Branding or anything else, however you want to call it – it is still an English term.

AW: Yes.

I02: And there are enough companies, small- and midsize companies, which resist this in general. And there it gets pretty difficult to transfer it.

AW: Ok. We are nearly done.

I02: Oh ok.

AW: Is there anything you would recommend from your point of view as an HR manager which I should take into consideration as well?

I02: Hm. No, not really. I assume you know what companies can do. We use it very widely. So, anything which somehow has a positive effect on employees, things where people say, this should be for granted, we already putting a sticker on it and say, no it is not normal that coffee is for free. So, we glue our "Wir sind [Company name]"-logo on the coffee machine. So, we are pushing it very strongly through our communication and I do believe there are big differences between small- and medium-size companies and large organisations how they define Employee Engagement.

Once, we participated in an event where the Employer Branding Manager of Henkel presented their programme and where we presented our programme and we both went into completely different directions, by still using the same wording.

AW: Do you think the difference was mainly the budget or also the implementation?

I02: Both. Henkel looked at it from a much more global perspective. They included, for example, international development perspectives for young professionals to reach the next level. So, traditional career possibilities. And we have, for example, complimentary tickets for the local swimming pool. Just to give you some basic examples. And I do believe it can be very inspiring for both sides, as it is interesting for both employees but it is created very differently.

AW: So very variable and very much fitting the requirements of the company?

I02: Yes, totally.

AW: Perfect. So that was it. Thank you so much.

I02: Thank you. That was fast. If you need anything, please just let me know. And I will see if can find anyone else who would also interested in participating. I will let you know.

AW: That is very kind of you.

Where the questions ok for you? Is there anything which I should take out?

I02: No, they were fine with me. Nothing I had recognised.

Appendix 12: I03

AW: Thank you very much for participating in this interview. The interview will take about 45 minutes. The previous interviews have shown that it can be much faster.

I03: Ok.

AW: We will keep it as short as possible. The questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish those to be anonymised, so your name and the companies you will talk about, please let me know during the interview. Alternatively, you can inform me in written form, as stated in the consent form, that you wish that it gets anonymised.

I03: Ok.

AW: About my background: My name is Andrea Wylegala. I am a part-time Doctor in Training at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. In my PhD I am researching HR managers' understanding of Employee Engagement in Germany.

So, now I would like to ask you to state your full name please.

I03: Yes. My name is Annalena L.

AW: Good. So currently you are participating in the interview as a student. In which role have you been working before in the companies where you have been employed?

I03: Well. Originally, I started at [company name - logistic] as an intern at the basis. And afterwards I have gained a part time position. And it was quite similar at [company name - consulting]. So between my undergrad and post-graduate degree I have been working at [company name - consulting]. So first as an intern and later in part-time in a different department.

AW: In which department have you been working? At [company name - logistic] and [company name - consulting]?

- I03: At *[company name - logistic]* I have been working... well during that time the department was renamed at least three times, but basically it was Employee Engagement and Stakeholder Management at *[company name - logistic]*. And at *[company name - consulting]* I first worked in Change Management and afterwards in Talent Management for leading positions.
- AW: In which industries are the organisations operating?
- I03: *[Company name - consulting]* is for sure a logistics company. *laugh*
- AW: Yes. *laugh*
- I03: *[Company name - consulting]* is a bit of a mixture. I would say it is an auditor company. Mainly, because it is their main responsibility. They also do consulting, but auditing is the most likely the biggest field.
- AW: If I am not mistaken, approx. 510,000 people are working globally for *[company name - logistic]*.
- I03: Yes, that's correct. *[Company name - logistic]*, *[full group name - logistic]* is the complete name. The *[company name - logistic]* is about half of it. And *[company name - logistic (2nd half of group)]* is the second half.
- AW: Ok. And *[company name - consulting]* – round about?
- I03: Oh dear. I worked for *[company name - consulting]* Germany. Approx. 10,000 employees work here. It is a very different structure. *[Company name - consulting]* in the international countries is independent, so I can only tell you about German. These were about 10,000. How many they got globally, I unfortunately do not know.
- AW: No problem.
- You said at *[company name - logistic]*, *[full group name - logistic]*, half of the staff is employed at *[company name - logistic (1st half of group)]* so they are all located in Germany or are they also spread internationally?
- I03: Well... *[company name - logistic (1st half of group)]* those are the postman and those who also partly deliver parcels these are about 180-200.000, if I am not mistaken. Those are just in Germany. There is, *[company name - logistic]* has a divisional structure and the German belong to PeP, Post, eCommerce, Parcel, and Parcel is partly Europe. And a really small proportion is also active on European level, but I would say that 90% of those 200,000 are located in Germany exclusively.
- AW: In the case of *[full group name - logistic]* we are talking about an organisation which got strong German roots and *[company name - logistic]* comes from the states.
- I03: Yes, that is correct. I am not completely aware of the company's history, but I would say that *[full group name - logistic]* does see itself as a large German company. I don't think that the focus their American origin in anyway. *laugh*
- AW: Where does *[company name - consulting]* come from?
- I03: Also from America. It is originally a marcher of *[company A]* and *[company B]*.
- AW: Do you think that – if you look at both of them, one having strong German roots, the other one having American origins – do you think that the companies' cultures have strongly been effected by those roots?
- I03: I think, in case of *[full group name - logistic]* this is very strongly the case. But I also think that, which might be a bit odd, that *[full group name - logistic]* is a bit more international than *[company name - consulting]* or *[company name - consulting]* Germany which might also be caused by the company structure as *[company name - consulting]* is completely independent in the local markets and therefore in Germany has a very strong German influence and is not so much internationally. They are currently working on becoming more international which sounds off when talking about such a big international company. Well, and *[company name - logistic]*, as they don't have those markets so strongly independent from each other, they are much more global and not so German any more. You do feel the German roots, but not as much as in *[company name - consulting]*.
- AW: Very interesting.

- I03: Yes, it is. It is very interesting. I thought so too. But the hierarchies which you might understand as very German; the rigour, hierarchically. That is much more recognisable than within *[company name - logistic]*. From my perspectiveM it depends on the department. Different perspective can change that view, but for me... I had this feeling during my work.
- AW: Yes. We are now looking for at Employee Engagement and how it generally is understood from HR managers in Germany. Have you heard about the term Employee Engagement before?
- I03: Yes. I wrote my Bachelor's thesis about this topic. *laugh*
- AW: Very good. *laugh* In which context have you originally, also prior to your Bachelor's thesis, heard about the term?
- I03: Well, originally I had started my internship in the *[company name - logistic]* department for Employee Engagement and that's how I got in touch with the topic and started to like it. That was the first time I really got in touch with the Employee Engagement topic.
- AW: What are you currently studying?
- I03: I am currently studying International Business with focus on HR and Leadership as Master degree.
- AW: Ok. Well, when you started at *[company name - logistic]* and started to look into the term in more detail what have you already heard about the term?
- I03: Well, in the general Business Degrees a HR course comes up and you hear about it. I think that was the first time when I heard about it. At the beginning, you believe it is how you motivate your staff to become more productive as an example. I assume this was my first perception of it what of course changed or developed over the years. But I think that was the first thing.
- AW: Ok. How would you define the term today?
- I03: Well, I think it is pretty difficult to define, as it is something very personal. Especially as everyone has different things... - the basis is motivation – and everybody is motivated by different things. Therefore, I think it is difficult to define, but I believe it is mainly that employees are motivated to do their job, that they are interested and also excited about what they do. I believe that the boss or the direct manager has a big effect. At least I experienced it this way with my previous boss at *[company name - consulting]* for example with whom I had some problems and my motivation, well, went down. Because I didn't feel like I belonged to the company. And I believe this is an important point with respect to Employee Engagement. However, as I said, it is something very individual and therefore I think it's pretty difficult to generalise what Employee Engagement is such as: 'It's how employees are motivated and how they are engaged to make their work as good as possible, so as productive as possible for the organisation'. However, what it really is depends on the individual person.
- AW: You already mentioned how you experienced it from an employee's point of view. What do you think does Employee Engagement, from an employee's perspective, mean? More in general, so when an average employee hears about it, what does it mean for him or her?
- I03: Well, as an example, when I talk about the topic with my boyfriend, who studies Finance, so he doesn't have so many touch points with it, he would say: It is the stage where I am motivated and where I am willing to do good work than I would say I am engaged. That's what he would say. I believe for most this is applies too. They would say, Employee Engagement is equal to "Mitarbeitermotivation" [Engl. translation "Employee Motivation"] which does not necessary apply, at least not according to literature, but many would equalise it with "Mitarbeitermotivation" [Engl. translation "Employee Motivation"]. Saying, 'ok, if I am motivated than this is Employee Engagement'. But I think in the German language there is no correct translation for Employee Engagement available as it is not "Mitarbeitermotivation" [Engl. translation "Employee Motivation"] word by word.
- AW: Yes.
- I03: It is very difficult to phrase it in German. *laugh*
- AW: That's true. And to explain it to a German without using a direct translation.

I03: That's what I am talking about. And therefore, many Germans say that they put "Mitarbeitermotivation" [Engl. translation "Employee Motivation"] equal to Employee Engagement. If this is correct or if it really makes the point remains to be seen. *laugh*

AW: Yes.

I03: But I think this is how many would define it.

AW: I agree with you. When looking at your previous employers: Do you know if both had an Employee Engagement strategy in place?

I03: With respect to *[company name - logistics]* I know it for sure. They have a company strategy, which is officially known, which is called "Strategy 2020" which is based on three pillars and one is "becoming employer of choice" [uses English claim]. So, becoming "Arbeitnehmer der Wahl" [Engl. translation "Employee of Choice"], ow "Arbeitgeber der Wahl" of course. *laugh* And they really want that employees are enjoying to work there and they also have an employee survey established, an employee engagement survey and the numbers which are generated are than together with this strategy pillar communicated to the public. And they state that their employee engagement index is xy and we want to increase it and so on. And the definitely have integrated into their strategy. At *[company name - consulting]* (...) I am not quite sure as I have never been in a strategic department which was involved here. If they have one, it is very well hidden away, I have to admit. I cannot say if they have it or not. I do not want to say that they do not have it and possibly they have one which is integrated somewhere and I have just not heard about it and therefore not been in touch with it.

AW: Maybe no so prominent...

I03: Yes, exactly. They have different core areas and they have a different focus.

AW: Ok. With respect to *[company name - logistic]*, as we do not know more about *[company name - consulting]*, where is Employee Engagement, well where is the topic of Employee Engagement based at *[company name - logistic]*, *[company group name - logistic]*? Is it in HR or is in internal communication, marketing?

I03: While I was working there it was in the international HR department. It is currently restructured. At the moment, it still lies with international HR, but it's possible that this will change over the next few months, but I am not quite sure as I am no longer working there anymore.

AW: Sure. Well, do you know... well, you actually already answered it... The aim, please feel free to correct it if I am mistaken, the aim of the strategy or the Employee Engagement strategy of *[company name - logistic]* is overall 'becoming employer of choice' for the existing staff but also for the on-boarding of new employees?

I03: Exactly! That's what I would say.

AW: Do you know if *[company name - logistic]* developed the strategy in a particular country or is it international?

I03: I do not want to say something wrong, but I think it is something international which applies worldwide. Well, I am not 100% sure, but when the CEO talks in front of the employees there is usually a webcast for all international markets and during those he also talked about this strategy. Therefore, I believe it is international.

AW: Do you know if the strategy is modified in the local markets depending on the local requirements of the market and the target group and stakeholder there?

I03: I think that the strategy is phrased very broadly. There are those three pillars which are, I think "Investment of Choice", "Employer of Choice" and a third one which I do not remember and it is phrased so broadly that it fits to every market. And as *[company name - logistic]* is so international, you do not recognise major differences, at least it sounded like it when I did my interviews with the people internationally, on different continents which are working for *[company name - logistic]*. It always sounded like the company culture wasn't that different. Always embossed by the country, which you cannot prevent, but still – I would say – that the company strategy with the 'Employer of Choice' was equal in all markets, customisable, but it didn't need to be customised as it was to broad that it fitted every country anyway.

- AW: Ok. As you say... Well, you already answered parts of my next question already, which covers the origin of the company and how strongly this origin influences the Employee Engagement strategy. From how you experienced it, it was an international topic and also embossed internationally and is just slight modified by the local touch from the regional office or teams.
- I03: Exactly. Yes, I would say so. This was my impression. When I did my thesis I interviewed HR managers on all continents with respect to the Employee Engagement strategy and what they do to improve Employee Engagement. And it was all pretty much alike, they all answered similar things. Therefore, I believe that it pretty much alike internationally and that it – well it depends if it's "[company name - logistic] Fracht", "[company name - logistic] Supply Chain", "[company name - logistic] Express" – it is modified on the definitions and what fits there. But overall I would say it's pretty much very international and it only gets the regional or divisional touch.
- AW: You mentioned that key elements of the strategy are the three pillars with "Investment of Choice", "Employer of Choice" and a third variable of choice. Which key activities are used to achieve those? For example Employee Recognition from peer to peer, employee communication, well incentive formats. Do you know a bit more which elements this strategy has to activate the strategy?
- I03: Well, all three (...) pillars (...) have different possibilities to achieve this, for sure "Investment of Choice" is much stronger driven by investor topics. I cannot really say anything about it as I have not much knowledge on this. In case of "Employer of Choice" they have an Employee Engagement survey in place which they use to understand how the Employee Engagement index globally looks like. You can then split it up into the local markets or the divisions, but this survey is rolled out globally in the entire organisation. As far as I know they have also created an "Employee Engagement Framework" during the last years which is kind of a concept which is worldwide modifiable. It includes activities to improve Employee Engagement and to attract new employees. It mainly includes the possibility for employees to develop themselves, that they have a voice in case they do not like something they can raise it. There are different elements within the overall concept and the different managers of the employees, for example in a logistical centre in Germany it can apply. So the managers there can use the concept to improve the motivation and improve the situation. That's what I know about this topic. These are the things which are done in this field. I think with money or higher salaries they do not do so much. They advertise that they are the logistical company with the highest salaries and paying best. Which is correct, as the entire competition such as UPS, Hermes and so on, they pay much less than [company name - logistic (1st half of group)] or [company name - logistic (2nd half of group)]. At least this is the situation in Germany. I do not know how it is in other countries and how the salaries are there. I do not know how the salaries of [company name - logistic] look like there. I just know that the salaries for postmen and parcel delivery men in Germany are very good. But when you are in the organisation once they do not do much by using money, more by holidays and others. More about those activities wanting that they all become a big family and so on. That's how they try that they identify themselves with the organisation.
- AW: Ok. Do you know if a particular term is used internally to name Employee Engagement or is the term Employee Engagement used within [Company Name]?
- I03: It is really Employee Engagement. There is no other term used. It is also used from the employees. There is no translation available.
- AW: So it is also used in the same way in all markets?
- I03: Exactly. Exactly.
- AW: Which challenges do you see as a HR manager with the term Employee Engagement? Not necessary with respect to implementation, also in general – kind of a question of principle.
- I03: *laugh* As I said earlier on, Employee Engagement is very individual. And I do think this is the biggest challenge. Also with respect to different generations. I believe that this is a major, well problem, this might be a bit overdone, but a challenge for an organisation to address all employees in the same way. So to generate the same level of employee engagement, even so they belong to different generations or have different origins or anything else. It needs to be a big concept which is modifiable for every individual employee – in the perfect world. This might be just more or less possible. But I think this is the biggest challenge in this case.

AW: I assume this is also a challenge in the implementation of an Employee Engagement activity; to find something for the individual target groups, the individual generations. To create something which addresses the target group in the right way?

I03: Yes, totally. And it gets ever more complicated when an organisation is not like *[company name - logistic]* has many jobs which are alike. There are postman, the delivery man and the people in the logistic centres. They are doing the same thing. However, there are also companies, for example at *[company name - consulting]*, where many different job roles come together and different professional categories are needed. There it gets even more complicated as employees might think differently, might work differently and are motivated differently.

AW: Ok. So you already answered the next question. *laugh* Very good.

I03: *Laugh* Not bad.

AW: Yes, I think it's the third or fourth time now. *laugh* Just hold on. Where do you see the challenges with respect to Germany, so where are challenges in the German market with respect to the terminology of Employee Engagement?

I03: (...) How it is managed in Germany or how the Employee Engagement level in Germany is?

AW: How it is managed, so how they deal with the terminology.

I03: Ok. I think Employee Engagement in Germany is still at a very, very early stage. There is only a limited number of companies which already take it seriously. It is getting more and more popular, as in particular for service companies' employees are the most important resource they have. But I think it is still at a very early stage and that many companies are not thinking about it yet. Therefore, it is still executed in a way in Germany, (...) I always had the feeling at *[company name - consulting]* that the HR department, for sure also included employee engagement, is an albatross around the neck and it somewhere has its right to be there, but it does not belong to the core business. And I believe that this attitude or this perspective is still the case for many managers. I also see this also when I talk to my boyfriend who studies Finance and we can discuss what is more important for a service company for ages: Finance or HR. So, it's still a big topic.

AW: I guess it's a never ending story

I03: Yes. *laugh*

AW: Great. Do you have any additional information which I should take into consideration? Or do you have anything which I should definitely look at? Especially with respect to the terminology or the topic itself.

I03: Well, no, everything is fine. At least I have no idea right now.

AW: Ok, great. So you made it. *laugh*

I03: *laugh* Oh, maybe there is something. I am not sure if you have been looking at the drivers of Employee Engagement and if you also include in your thesis how you can improve Employee Engagement?

AW: Yes.

I03: And which factors are included. But when I wrote my thesis I used one key model which I thought was very good which I also recommended to my colleagues at *[company name - logistic]*. It's a model which has four key categories, which are "connection, scope, support and voice". Those are the three, ah four, most important categories to improve Employee Engagement, to trigger it and so on. The book in general – it's a complete book – which describes and explains the concept and I thought it is very good. So in case you want to look at it, I am not sure if it helps you, but maybe it is worth looking at it.

AW: Did you say "Connection, goal, support and voice"?

I03: Well, "Connection, scope, support and voice" it's written by... oh dear how is it called. Moment I look it up. The authors are called Holbeche and Matthews, like Matthew just with an S. I just picked up my Bachelor's thesis to look it up. I look it up, it might take a little while as it is pretty long.

AW: No problem. *laugh*

I03: There it is: "Engaged. Unlashing your organization's potential through Employee Engagement".

AW: Ok.

I03: It is from 2012, so it is not a very old book. I thought it was very usefully. I setup a lot based on this book. Through this I have understood the concept of Employee Engagement. It is in English and has been written by Americans so I do not know if it fits to the German market. Maybe you want to check it out. *laugh*

AW: Yes, sure. I will do so.

I have the feeling that Holbeche tells me something, maybe from a paper. But the combination of both authors does not sound familiar. Nevertheless, I base my literature review and everything around definition on Anglo-American literature as there is not enough available literature in Germany and especially from an academic perspective. There is so much available from Gallup and so which are strongly focusing on measurement but without really having a proper basis. I do remember my first Doctorial Symposium, which we have on an annual basis and where we have to present our current status in front of all Doctors in Training and all Professors and I had included many papers which were less academic and came more from the industry and (...) which I experienced a bit differently to my Master degree, that the criticise if you go too far into the industry direction when they have not such a strong academic background. But I always try to evaluate how industry uses it to build a basis. Kahn is one example who first talked about engagement and commitment. Who gains respect in academia. And you still have the problem till today that they are only a few fundamental academic theories which you can use as a basis. Therefore, it is a good recommendation and I will look at it. Perfect, thank you.

Appendix 13: I04

AW: First of all, I give you a short overview on what I am doing. Thank you very much for participating in this interview. The takes about 45 minutes. The last few once were definitely shorter. So maybe we can make some time, save some time as well. I will ask you a couple of questions on the topic of Employee Engagement. And if you want you want me to keep this interview anonymously, please just let me know. It would be very important if you could share that document which I have shared with you prior to the call. I had added it to my e-mail from last night. So, if you could just print it, tick the boxes and sign it and just let me know if you want me to keep your name and the company of the transcript or if it is okay with you if I state your name and [Company Name] as well.

I04: Yes, I will sign it and send it as soon as we are done here.

AW: Perfect. Thank you very much.

Just for your background information: My name is Andrea Wylegala. I am part of Grass Roots Germany and I am also a part-time student of the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law in the United Kingdom. And my PhD focuses on the understanding of Employee Engagement within large organisations; in particular within Germany. But I am also very interested the international background from other markets to see where are the challenges and where are the regional differences. So basically, can you please state your name before we start?

I04: Yes, I can. My name is Christian D. [spells name]. That's my name.

AW: Great. Well, and what is your role within [company name]?

I04: I have the pleasure of overseeing, what we call, Strategic Talent Management as well as global HR for this [company name] I organisation.

AW: Ok. And in which industry is [company name] actually working? Or operating.

I04: We are in the travel industry. What we would call the corporate part of the travel industry, which use to be a business travel agency. Which is now, the new term is: Travel Management Company. Because we moved from just distributing tickets from the airlines to the travellers to

also be more focused as well on security, reporting and tools. That are our own and not just the suppliers' that we use to distribute in the past. So business travel or travel management industry.

AW: Ok, great. How many employees does your current employer employ globally.

I04: We are 12,182. I think that was the count at the end of February. This are our holly owned. On top of that we have a lot of partners in other countries as well. And that would be... I don't know the exact numbers. So actually employed by us directly: 12,182.

AW: Ok, great. And how many of these employees are actually based in Germany?

I04: About 3,000 in Germany. And I should have the exact number which I could give you. But about 3,000 are based in Germany itself.

AW: That's alright. Great. Your company, where does it originally come from?

I04: That's a difficult question, because the company is really a mix of a lot of companies that was bought, marched and all that. But if we don't take the very long history into, *[company name]* was found 1999 and which was headquartered out of Bremen, in Germany. Because *[company name]* went out and bought a lot of companies in Europe to make it a very strong TMC *[Note from the interviewer: TMC = Travel Management Company]* on the European site. And then in 2006 *[company name]* was bought by *[owner's name]* – a very rich Dutch man, a business man – who bought *[company name]* because they wanted to strength it's European presents of a company he had in the US, called *[company name]*. And with those merchers, or that mercher and that acquisition, *[company name]* was formed in January of 2006.

AW: Ok, great. From your point of view – the company got a very diverse, a very international background – do you think that the international background, the Dutch background or even the German background, looking at Bremen, had an impact on the overall culture of the company?

I04: Can you say that again, sorry, I am not sure I got that. Sorry.

AW: Yes. Does the international background of the company has an effect or impact on the organisational culture of the company?

I04: Oh yes, very much! And I think its part of what we struggle with from time to time is that because we are built as a company as we are, with a lot of former national company now being transitioned into a bigger global setting. As well as the biggest part of our organisation is US-based, I think there is a lot of international impact on local organisations. And I would properly say within international; I properly an American influence on the companies and countries such as Germany, Denmark and anything outside the US-region. So long answer to your question. The short one would be 'yes'.

AW: *laugh* Great. Have you actually heard about the term Employee Engagement?

I04: I have indeed. Yes.

AW: And what have you heard about it or in which context?

I04: I heard about it in the context of transition away from Employee Satisfaction to talk more now about Employee Engagement. And I think it is, from where I am sitting, I think it is an evolution. Talking about Employee Satisfaction was important in the past, but now talking more about Employee Engagement looking a bit more... it's not surely interesting to know if people are satisfied. It is more important to determine if they are engaged in terms of how much are they the company? So, I see it as an evolution of Employee Satisfaction to now talk more about Employee Engagement to take it to the next step... or the next level.

AW: Right. Perfect. So you this already answered my second question on what you have already heard about it. So, great.

And how would you personally define it? If you have to define to someone, how would you actually phrase a definition?

I04: I think I would phrase the definition as I just tried to do. I think Employee Engagement looks beyond Employee Satisfaction. Because I think you can be satisfied without being engaged. I think engagement has more to do with to what extent you are the brand? How long... how far you are willing to go for the brand? And how engaged you are in the company? And the wellbeing of the company as part of your own wellbeing. Em... and thereby as well there is an

element to that: How likely is it that you will be promoted to somebody else by becoming a promoter of the brand and not just a... satisfied with the brand.

AW: My next question focuses exactly on that behavioural of employee who is engaged. So you would say an engaged employee is somebody who is not just an employee, it's a promoter of the company?

I04: I would say, being a promoter of the company. I would say being at the front line when it comes to helping the company to develop. Because part of the engagement is that you can identify with the company. So when you do something for the company, you do something for yourself as well. Maybe I put it to literal in the example, I would say an engaged person would not first ask what's in it for me, but wait for it to come because of being engaged means the company does something for the individual as well. Where you can be satisfied, but you would still put your hand up, saying "I can help, but what is in for me?" The engaged employee is a true soldier and a loyal soldier to the company.

AW: Yes. Does your company actually have an Employee Engagement strategy in place?

I04: Em... well now you used the word strategy which is a bit... I in general struggle with the word strategy, so it has nothing to do with you but em... yes and no. We have our strategy. Our general people strategy in this company is 'confidence self' and what we mean with that is that we want every single of our 12,000 people to develop their confidence self as part of being a [company name] employee. And what does it mean, a confidence self, it means you're knowledgeable, you are able and you are willing. And in that is a lot of engagement as well, because we engage in the individual to make them knowledgeable, able and willing to support the company. Thereby, I think, our people strategy overall also speaks a lot to our engagement strategy if you will. And the way how we support it is that we have a bi-annual or an every-other-year employee survey and we are no transitioning away from doing it every-other-year to do it real time. And we are walking away from measuring satisfaction to surely measuring engagement. Em... so that's part of our strategy as well to move away from this satisfaction term because we wanna transition as well towards engagement and we wanna do it more real time. And we want to react to it so instead of saying we do it every-other-year where we ask the people for their feedback, tell them that we listening. So we show them by doing a real-time employee engagement survey, a real time survey.

AW: Ok, great. In which department do you actually have positioned the employee engagement topic / strategy? I know strategy is not your favourite term, but the idea? Is it more a HR topic, do you put it into internal communication or marketing, for example.

I04: Oh yes, it sits with us in HR and

Management. But its part of our overall vision for the company, as another thing, which we focus on, is human and social value. And that goes both – externally and internally. Therefore, because that is the overall vision and plan of the company that is as well, em ... part to the employee engagement. So our CEO and C3-people do take it seriously as well and do look forward to what we are doing now in becoming a real-time survey instead of a survey every other year. So signed in HR but it has a general focus in the company, because we are a people company and we take people serious.

AW: Yes. Great.

So you already answered my question on what is the aim of the strategy you got. So which country has actually developed your current employee engagement strategy?

I04: The current Employee Engagement strategy is not developed in a country as such. It was me with our, with my international team which is represented by several people from Europe, Asia, the US, so my global HR team had helped to formulated our global engagement strategy. So, the 'confidence self' is something we developed internationally and not necessarily originating from one country. We had the global glasses on when we developed that. So, it not inherited from any past-US-company or anywhere else, it was developed specifically for [company name] in the current setting.

AW: Ok.

- I04: The new survey we gone launch is also an international... companion, it is born in Denmark, em... which we didn't know at the time, so it is actually irrelevant. But they are represented in the US and in the UK as well as a very international look as well on employee engagement and what it takes to measure it and what it takes to improve it.
- AW: Ok. Is the strategy modifies within the local markets or countries based on the local requirements of the organisations and the employees actually or is in general overall the same thing?
- I04: It's overall the same thing but what we have is the ability to – what we did not have in our past in our engagement strategy or survey – was to make specific questions to specific target groups. Be that on a country level, be that on our target level, gender, age... em... the example was that we piloted it in the UK and one question we asked specifically was to those working out of an office out of London was to ask a specific question on commuting in and out of London. Because that was relevant for us for that local market to get a bit more gauge on that. So general the questions are the same for us to do benchmark and actual to do a global em... temperature check on our global organisation but we do have the ability to modify it on for example country level but also on other dissection of our in digestive data of our people.
- AW: What, in addition to the survey you mention, what are the key other elements of the programme, the employee engagement programme, you are implementing?
- I04: Well, the programme, the general 'confidence self' has everything to do with how we handle our people. Anything we do from a HR administrative stand point has to do with it, everything from a talent management and thereby leadership development, new talent acquisition, over learning and development. All comes down to 'confidence self'. So 'confidence self' about the knowledgeable that has the training elements, it has a management element of that, because the managers necessarily communicating well to the people on how they make a difference to the organisation, it cannot make them knowledgeable on where they are going, making them able has a lot do about training, but it also has to do with what are we supplying them in terms of work tools. If they have a slow computer they are not able to do the job. If they have a phone which works half the time, it is not gonna help us. And the willingness... it pretty much make them feel part of the organisation, so that they wake up in the morning and say 'I can't wait to get to work', instead of 'Ow... I gonna drag myself into this [company name] hell-hole again' because I don't feel recognised, I don't feel engaged in what I am trying to do. So the element is wide spread, we are the creators, if you want, to educate your organisation on 'Employee Engagement is not only a HR or Talent Management effort alone'. We enable you with the tools and the processes we provide, but the individual employee and especially the management levels have a lot to do with ensuring that every one of our staff develops the 'confidence self' and thereby supply to our Employee Engagement strategy.
- AW: Ok, great. Do you use a particular term within [company name] to define, describe or name Employee Engagement?
- I04: Em... well... I think we do. With the 'confidence self' we continue to mark it more and more and to use that as our tagline saying 'this is everything we do for you' – as employees that what we want you to develop and we develop our tools and processes and everything for you to develop Employee Engagement. So I won't say that 'confidence self' is all about Employee Engagement but it is certainly part of Employee Engagement. It is more, it acutely goes beyond Employee Engagement, but it results in Employee Engagement; if that make sense.
- AW: So literally the branding of your employee engagement is the term 'confidence'?
- I04: Yes, 'confidence self'.
- AW: From an international perspective did you translate 'confidence' or engagement into the local languages? Or do you stick to the English term in all markets?
- I04: We stick to the English term in all markets. And there is a funny story and a funny reason for that: Because you can't actually say 'confidence self' in English, so if you ask any native speaker, they would go 'what do you really mean with that'. It is deliberate because that increases the attention of what we are trying to do. And if you try to translate 'confidence self' into other languages it gets a bit blurry. So therefore it is a brand and I don't think that you translate and should translate a brand. Because it needs to be globally recognised and it needs to be adopted by the people as well, so it is becoming something where we all utilise around

and something where we all huddle around. We do translate the 'knowledgeable', 'able' and 'willing', so what does this mean in German, what does it mean in Danish and so on, but the brand itself we do not translate it. Let me compare this to Audi, KIA, BMW – they don't translate their brand either, but they translate "Vorsprung durch Technik" for example into the local market as well. And for me the 'confidence self' is a brand.

AW: Which challenges do you see with respect to Employee Engagement in general?

I04: Em... some of the challenges I see is that (...) I don't think that everybody wants to be engaged, necessarily. I don't think that anybody, everybody can be engaged. And I think the challenges being that it is, which is probably, the most important challenge is that it is not one department that can secure Employee Engagement. It is really a company decision that we are all working towards the same goal. If we start aiming at it as being a HR responsibility than you will fail. If you aim it to be senior leadership responsibility, you will fail. I think it is important that HR and senior leadership take ownership in terms of branding it and makes sure that they do whatever they can to support it. But all management levels in the organisation need to rounded around this to make sure that they do their part in increasing the Employee Engagement. That is why I think that there is a lot of human factor in it where we will have to support the managers even better in making sure that they know what engagement is. They know what it means. And they know what they need to know to increase it. And that is part of our reason why we are now changing to this real time survey, which will include a manager dashboard for every manager with more than seven employees so that we can actually hold the manager accountable by providing him real time information on where his people engaged or disengaged. So that he or she can target the efforts more as part of their responsibility.

AW: Ok. Great. If you look at Germany in particular – I am not if it is a market you are strongly looking at, because you are looking at the strategy overall – but in case you do, do you have a particular challenge within the German market you have figured out?

I04: I think our challenge with the German market in general, em... - and I, we do focus a lot on Germany – because it is one of our biggest markets and certainly our single biggest market in Europe. So therefore Germany is important for us to consider and we do consider Germany in many ways when it comes to people and talent. The challenge in Germany is that the ... the – a bit of – the conservatism in the country itself on being slow adopters of new stuff, I think is gonna be a challenge for us. I think there is an organisational challenge with all the worker council approvals that we need to go through in order that we actually need to go through to actually implement something that is actually really really important and it almost can be seen as an obstacle. I think slow adoption. I think the way the organisations are organised with the "Mitbestimmungspflichtigkeit" – I think is the word.

AW: Yes.

I04: I think it is something which we do consider a lot. And it is actually in the past when we introduced 'confidence self' our competency model, it just take longer in Germany. As a fact.

AW: Yes. I absolutely agree with you. *laugh*

I04: Ok. I am glad. *laugh* You got so silent that I thought I defended you. But I am glad you see it that way.

AW: I totally loved the term "slow adopters". This is my new favourite one, because it is literally like this. *laugh*

I04: It is a little slow adoption. And I think it is because of a general criticism to something which was not necessarily be invented in the country itself and and you hide behind something like data protection security and all this stuff. Which is more or less an excuse to embrace something which we didn't invent ourselves.

AW: Are you aware that there isn't even a translation for Employee Engagement in the German language?

I04: No, I did not know that, but I am not surprised.

AW: Yes. It is pretty interesting, because the Germany market, which my study had shown so far, that they try to use the Employee Engagement term. But it is actually pretty difficult to explain it someone in German without using a English word in it. Because there is thing which is called

"Mitarbeitermotivation" [Engl. translation "Employee Motivation"] which is like employee motivation doesn't really make the point of engagement and it pretty interesting to see how German companies react to "what is the challenge of the German market". And the three things you mentioned with, it might be a very special market. Instead of conservatism it might have been a very mature market, the might think that they know what they are doing and they try to look to much at foreign things which come in, you know where I am trying to get? And yes, at the same time the organisational challenges. A lot of companies are facing this issue and it can be a blocker actually. So as soon as you are in and you have the workers union behind you, it is a good thing to have than you can run such a programme and they will be very promotive of it. But as long as you don't have them convinced it's a very tricks point you are in, if you want to convince someone like this it is always the question "why you doing it". And people are not really willing to understand that it is for the good of the employees so that they are more motivated, more engaged employees actually gives something back to the company as well.

I04: Yes.

AW: It is a very tricky thing and that's why I am actually doing the PhD study to really figure out what does it mean to the Germans and what does it mean to the German market. And yes, it is very interesting I really loved the idea of the slow adopters. I think this is my new... I think that's going to be on the front page.

I04: *laugh* But it's interesting what you said that there is no translation. What you just said is something I recognised as well in the German market, always coming at it from "what are you trying to negatively impulse on our people". They do not necessarily right of the batch he/ she/ something being positive. It is always being coming from a side of reservation. Or Employee Engagement: "You want to measure, ow ok, what are you gone use that for." Well I am not necessarily gone use it for anything that hurts the people, it is actually the contrary. So that is also coming into it as well and I think that is part of the slow adaption that it takes a little while to grow a custom to new things. I am just trying to rephrase what you just said. Interesting, I am gonne use this in internal lines as well, saying "we actually don't have a phrase for Employee Engagement". Funny. That's interesting.

AW: Yes, there is nothing... the thing is, the word Engagement does exist in the German language, but it does exist in a completely different term. A student for example can be very engaged with homework for example, but cannot really put it together with an employee, it's just a mismatch in a way. You can engage with let's say with your husband or your wife to get married, but you cannot really engage with a phenomenon. So that's a bit of the problem. The two terms together do not really fit together, so they don't really make sense to the Germans I guess. So it is very tricky to explain it to them, not using English terms and if you talk to a very diverse and a very big group of employees you actually need to use German terms to actually make sure that people understand it, because not everybody is fluent in English so it gets really tricky.

I04: That's interesting. Wow...

AW: *laugh*

I04: Good luck with that *laugh*.

AW: Thank you. *laugh* We're nearly there. Just one last question: Is there anything you would like to add regarding Employee Engagement or regarding what I shall focus on? Where you say... I had some recommendations on studies or papers in the past from others interviewees. Is there anything you would recommend to me?

I04: Well, I think – and I am sure you already considering it – one of the things that we are talking a lot about it, and I illuminated a bit in the interview here is: it is important that the focus on Employee Engagement does not become a HR and Talent Management task. And I know that you mentioned in the prep-document you sent about Employee Engagement Managers and where do they sit and maybe they are employed in HR, but they are employed in HR and it may be originated in HR, because we are the drivers but it needs to be seen as a company-wide responsibility to drive the engagement of the staff. And I think one of doing that and what we are trying to do here as well, is link it up with a customer satisfaction or customer engagement survey that you are doing as well, because when you can start aliening the two than you can put more need on the old phrase of "happy employees get happy customers".

AW: Exactly.

I04: Nobody is really able to prove that in the past and I think as we are continue to introduce the Employee Engagement, I think it is important that we show the correlation between “how well do we score internally on the Employee Engagement” to compare that to how well do we score within the customer experience. And one of the things we found, through the tool that we use now, is... we are using the Net Promotor Score as an indication of how engaged our customers are and we are now introducing the Employee Net Promotor Score to hold this two up against each other and see what is the correlation between the Employee Net Promotor Score and the Customer Net Promotor Score. So I think it is important that – and it has been something that we talked about in HR and Talent Management for years – how does HR becomes strategic partner and HR folks in the 80s and 90s and even in the first part of the 21st century we have been a little complaining “ow we are not at the table” and “why are they not listen to us?” The organisation has not listened to HR and Talent Management because we had anything to come with. And they should – having somebody sitting at the table who is constantly whinge: “because you don’t listen to me”. We need to step up and take a precision in terms of the overall strategy and plan of the company and how we can contribute. What if we should take over and everything is about employees? How does the focus on employees rub of the rest of the business? What does mean to attracting? The employer brand overall but also the general brand overall toward the commercial side of what we do as a business.

AW: Yes.

I04: Does this make sense?

AW: Absolutely, well I am actually here in Germany, within the Grass Roots Germany team, in charge of the Customer & Employee Engagement team and we were actually putting both definitions together. It was originally an Employee Engagement division and a Customer Engagement division and we marched them together to create exactly what you just said. We use to run for example for Vodafone a big Employee Engagement scheme and the basic idea was to improve the Net Promotor Score by having engaged employees, because as you said, if you have a really really good customer journey for example and suddenly you have one touch point which is an employee and this employee doesn’t perform in the way he or she was asked to, because he or she is not engaged your entire customer journey is destroyed. Your entire engagement score with a customer is going down so the programmes my team are running are exactly trying to focus on what you said. The main is to get a proper customer engagement scoring because the customer is actually paying for everything, more or less, and the employee is such an important element or touch point within the entire journey so he or she really needs to be engaged to make sure that the story is alright.

I04: Ah, good. I think that is what I would add. We have been in the past, we HR people, we have been carried away by interesting new terms and believe we have implemented it. But we forget to add the element of what is the benefit to the business, because you know as I know that many people have their reservations towards HR people, because we are the once which make it complicated. We are the once which say we can’t hire, we can’t fire. We need to move beyond that saying, “of course you can, you just need to follow some rules. And we are much more than that. We are actually securing the customer experience, even it is the sales and account management team who wants to take the recognition for and the honour for that; HR has an element in that as well. And we have our homework in HR and Talent Management to do that because otherwise we will always be seen as the administrative people that do not necessary provide strategic value. And I do think that’s wrong, it has a lot to do with how we precision it. Thereby, how we tie our initiative towards all benefits of the company. ‘Confidence self’ is a great example. We could sit here and huddle around that as HR people but we went to the business saying, this is important, you have a responsibility and if you do, here is the result on the customer, on the employee, on you, on cost, on revenue, on everything.

AW: Yes. Perfect, completely agreed.

I04: Ok, that was easy.

AW: Thank you, Christian, for your time. Really appreciated. And yes, than you very much. I will drip you a line afterwards and if you could just send me that document back that would be perfect

and of course I will let you know when the interview and the entire PhD is published. A few months to go and it should be ready.

I04: I would love to chat more about that and when it is ready and if you defending it, which I assume you have to.

AW: Yes, exactly. In Manchester.

I04: I would love to know when that is. I would love to be there and here you speak to this and what the result is and what I contributed to. So please do send me a post.

AW: Thank you very much.

I04: Thank you. Bye.

AW: Bye.

Appendix 14: I05

AW: So, we are recording. Prior, I will update you even we have discussed this already, so you are officially informed about the details. First of all, I will ask you question about you, your role and you responsibility and then I will move forward on the topic of Employee Engagement.

I05: That's fine.

AW: Perfect. First of all, than you very much for your time and your participation in this study. The interview will take a maximum of 45 minutes. Nevertheless, the last interviews have shown that it's possible that it will be shorter. During the next 45 minutes I will ask you different questions regarding Employee Engagement and those questions and answers will be recorded. You can state at any time of the interview that you wish the interview is anonymised, so the transcript will be done without your name and your employer's name. Please just let me know during the interview if you wish so.

I05: Ok. I will do so.

AW: Some information about me: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am a part-time Doctor in Training at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law and in my PhD I am researching Employee Engagement in Germany. Therefore, I am interviewing HR managers to understand their perspective on the terminology.

So now we are moving over to you. I would like to ask you to state your name please.

I05: My name is Heinz L.

AW: Ok and which position do you have?

I05: At *[Company name]* I am Head of Human Resources.

AW: Yes. In which industry is your employer operating? So in which branch?

I05: Clearly, we are a retail company.

AW: How many employees do you have internationally?

I05: This varies very strongly, as our Christmas business is very dominant. During Christmas we had approx. 8,000 employees. Now it should be about 7,000 employees.

AW: Ok. How many of these do work in Germany?

I05: About 6,200.

AW: Ok. Where does the company originally come from?

I05: The company exists for the last 60 years and was founded in Spessart in the community Schöllkrippen and originally it was a producing business. They produced Christmas decoration and face fruits and later there was period of time where the business entered the whole sale, during the 90s, 1990 to 94, and afterwards, '95, the retail sale was build.

AW: Do you think that the company's origin, so the original local, have an impact on the company culture?

I05: No, I do not believe so.

AW: Ok. Now we are moving forward to the topic of Employee Engagement. I would like to ask you what you have heard about Employee Engagement till now?

I05: Well, there are various things you hear. The question is how it can be translated.

AW: Yes. [Break] You are welcome to freely state how you would personally translate it for example.

I05: (...) Well, let's say the topic "employing" has moved a lot. Till a few years ago company have chosen between different candidates. Straight forward I would say there were standing ten people in front of you and we talked to the people and made our decision. Today, this is changing. Today, there is one candidate standing in front of you who ask himself the question "in which of the ten companies do I want to start". I think the entire recruitment process has changed and the companies who ask for flexibility from their candidates need to show their flexibility now.

AW: When you think about the term Employee Engagement, where or in which context have you heard about it most?

I05: Difficult question. I think in the context of the external corporate image of the company.

AW: Ok and how have you experienced this in practice – the corporate image?

I05: (...) Well, difficult. How did I experienced it in practice?!

AW: We will also get back to this later on.

I'm switching between the questions if it fits from a content point of view, but for now I can also continue with the other questions and we can look at this question later on in a slight different format.

I05: Ok, let's do so.

AW: Ok, so the next question is: What have you heard, if we look at more general definitions or at definitions from HR publications, about the term?

I05: Ow... [Break] Difficult. I think I have to skip that. You got me on the wrong foot. *laugh*

AW: *laugh* No problem.

I05: Can you maybe repeat the question?

AW: Sure. What have you heard about the term Employee Engagement?

I05: It's difficult for me.

AW: It is. You are not alone on this one. I think I can tell you that. Many have problem to state what they link to it, because – this should not sound rude – but it is somehow everything and nothing.

I05: I assume partly team building, implementing teambuilding, I would guess. [Break] No, I really can't say. I am sorry.

AW: Don't worry about it. You said earlier on when you look at the term that the term goes hand in hand with the change of recruitment. I understood you correctly?

I05: Yes, absolutely. Ok.
In general the job market itself.

AW: If you imagine you are an employee, what does Employee Engagement for an employee, for example in your company, does the term Employee Engagement mean?

I05: From an employee's point of view?

AW: Yes, exactly, when you look at it from the employee's perspective.

I05: I think development in the company, would be the first, linked with career chances. So I would say.

AW: Do you see "Loyalität" (engl. Loyalty) also as a driver of Employee Engagement of an employee to an employer?

I05: Less so.

AW: Ok. Well, do you as an organisation run an Employee Engagement strategy?

I05: No, we don't. We have grown too quickly in the past and usually, if a company grows quickly and we have grown so explosively, there is usually not enough time for these kinds of topics.

AW: Yes. Maybe the retail industry is facing a very special challenge, especially as you stating that you rely pretty much on seasonal / temporary employees. This might be a very special challenge which comes in addition to the fast growth. So there are many different external factors which influence such activities very strongly. Especially, in the implementation process.

I05: Yes, in particular with respect to the Christmas temps – I mentioned to you earlier on, we recruited about 3,000 of these employees last year – we are talking about helping hands.

AW: Yes. So to make sure that the handling process is ensured.

I05: Yes.

AW: So you mentioned that you currently do not have an internal Employee Engagement strategy.

I05: Yes.

AW: I would have asked you now where this strategy relies, but we can skip this. Let's see. If you look at companies in general as there are different larger organisations also in Germany which do have an Employee Engagement strategy in place now, do you believe that the strategy is influenced by the origin of the company? So where the company originally comes from.

I05: Yes, totally. I believe that in particular companies with a long history and also companies which arouse with modern technologies have a strong focus on this topic. Both.

AW: I will skip some further questions about your strategy and will move on to another more general question which is: Which challenges do you in your function, in your role, see with respect to Employee Engagement?

I05: I think you cannot dictate it to managers, I think it is a teamwork task for all managers together, to ensure that the way how employees are lead is aligned. The bounding towards a company only works through the manager. So we need to inform and brief the leaders to ensure that they spread it accordingly.

AW: Ok.

I05: You cannot just say you do have this strategy and it runs now. Together, it needs to be spread amongst all management levels.

AW: Just imagine you would establish such a strategy within your company. Where are the biggest challenges from your point of view with respect to the implementation process? Just to mention a few key words: work councils are often mentioned key word or challenge with respect to Employee Engagement.

I05: I think I would put the work councils at the topic. I assume if it is communicated accordingly it should be possible to win the work council as a partner.

AW: Yes, do you think there are other challenges besides aligning the managers to ensure that they all speak the same language?

I05: Speaking the same language and running into the same direction. I believe this is the biggest challenge.

AW: Ok, well so we are already at the end of the interview.

I05: Ow, this wasn't 45 minutes. *laugh*

AW: Yes. *laugh* We have skipped some questions. About 1/3 of the questions we skipped as they were strongly related to the strategy topic, to the terminology and also related to the definition and the German translation, if there is one which the company uses internally. Unfortunately,

we had to skip those, but they are very much aiming to understand how the term Employee Engagement is named by companies in the German market. So is it still Employee Engagement or does somebody say it is "Mitarbeitermotivation". Many used terms such as Talent Management where many do have the same definition behind the term, but have different names for it.

I05: As I said, I would have preferred to tell you more, but we have been growing so quickly in the past and we need to deal with completely different topics. There is a certain overlap, we always had to deal with employee fluctuation and through "Mitarbeiterbindung" [Engl. translation "Employee retention"] you can actually reduce employee fluctuation. So maybe we worked unknowingly into this direction, but we have not deal with the topic.

AW: That's no problem at all. It's very interesting to see the differences. You are quite a big company when looking at the number of employees and during my study I talked to different companies which were much smaller and who also said – still on an early stage – we need to do something about it because due to the so called "Fight for Talents" we need to differentiate ourselves against the big players. In particular in the producing industry they are claiming that they are in direct competition again the big players. They state that they fight against big brands and we need to do something. At least keeping existing employees and in the best case getting some new on top, because we are constantly facing this competition with the other brands so that they become more prominent in the wide range of employees. And also becoming more attractive.

I05: Definitely. This also depends how qualified the employed staff are. First of all, we employ sales staff, either those who have been qualified as sales assistant but also many un-qualified employees. This is also different to an industry in which I am working with engineers or something like that.

AW: Absolutely. And at the same, due to the high employee fluctuation which might be caused by the un-qualified staff increases the costs.

I05: Yes. It's definitely expensive.

AW: I have some experience in this field as well due to my profession when I am not at university. We are working for a large telco company focusing on call centre agents and they are facing very similar challenges: high fluctuation, usually a rather low brand identity because they are much fast replaceable. And from what I have experienced do retail and call centre face quite similar challenges as the target group has very special requirements... well very special is actually wrong, it's more very basic requirements but therefore it is very difficult to address them. As you said it might be different to communicate with an engineer instead of a retail person.

I05: It is also the question: Are you looking at a retail sales brand, [Company name] has a very strong brand awareness from customers' point of view. [Company name] is well known. But the employer brand is a bit behind. It is not yet the same. This is the challenge to also push the employer brand toward this high level.

AW: For sure this is also a very big element to also state you can improve the customer's brand awareness. Lately, I had this in an interview where somebody said: Well, actually we do this not just because we have a responsibility towards our employees, we do this because we want that the customer feels a positive effect when he/she talks or is in touch to one our employees.

I05: I think DM does this really great.

AW: Yes. They are also quite tough in some areas. Nevertheless, they have created a very strong service mind of their employees.

I05: Their employer brand is nearly as valuable as their retail brand.

AW: Yes, I agree.

I05: For sure this is also our aim. But we got still a long way to go. *laugh*

AW: Yes. How do you say: You grow with new challenges?! But in a way in your case it's vice versa you already grow so quickly.

I05: I am with the company for eight years now. When I started eight years ago we had 900 employees. Today, we do have 8,000 employees. More than 7,000. Just imagine this. And we had completely different challenges and issues in front of us than what you were asking now.

- Aim was to find the staff. Sometimes we have now openings where we only got four or five weeks to find new staff. And you are sometimes wrong. You just recruit who is there. You cannot do a bit recruitment process. You just need the people.
- AW: I, as a customer myself, do see this as well. There are so many by now. Many POS came up. I am from around Bonn, Sankt Augustin, I am not sure if you know it.
- I05: Yes, sure.
- AW: There is also a new store in the HUMA shopping centre. At the same time there is one in Siegburg, one in Bonn. The pop up so quickly. But if I look mention the brand to other customers it does have a very positive image.
- I05: Yes, the retail brand. But if you are looking for staff, there are different assessment portals, kununu etc. you might know, and there we are rated worse. This might also be related to our quick growth, because during the time of growth... well when I look at the employee fluctuation rate and I look at year 1 and year 2, for sure it is higher than in year 3 and the following years. But as we have recruited so many we do have many people in year 1 and 2 who are more willing to leave. Therefore, the employee fluctuation is quite high.
- AW: Very interesting.
- I05: Fluctuation is very expensive and we have started different activities to reduce fluctuation. For example we decided six years ago that we won't do fixed-term contracts of employment without objective justification which is quite common for retail brands. We say we want to give the employee more security after the probation time so many where than hired on a permanent contract aiming to bound the employee.
- AW: I would say this is already a bit related to Employee Engagement. You might still under a different umbrella or name internally at your end.
- I05: As I said we might have already worked subconsciously into this direction, but without knowing what we are doing officially.
- AW: Well, maybe it is just slightly different defined or named in your case. Which is not bad thing. As long as the aim or the effect is there you were looking for.
- I05: When you grow so quickly – which might also be interesting for you – we have also recruited so many managers from various different branches, from retail, from industry. Each of them has somehow brought his own understanding of leadership into it. An equal leadership we haven't had therefore seven years ago we sat down together with 30 people from all different departments and hierarchies and defined company guidelines. And out of the guidelines we have developed leadership guidelines so that the new leaders who came in somehow had a light house which they could use for orientation.
- AW: Yes.
- I05: And I would say you could argue this also goes into this direction.
- AW: Yes, absolutely. I would even say it goes very strongly into that direction. Because somehow this influences or even this branding the company culture to realise this and to develop this guideline / light house for the new colleagues as you said. That strongly goes into this direction.
- I05: The origin in our case was the really high fluctuation. We wanted to get this reduced. We implemented a wide range of activities.
- AW: And you said, we need to start at the head to have positive effects on the lower levels...
- I05: And we succeeded. The cut the fluctuation by half and this over four years. And I think that was quite good. In retail the average is 14-15 percent, we are still slightly above, around 17-18. But this is ok, when you consider that we still grow strongly and that we constantly recruit new people.
- AW: As you said, the first two years a crucial to evaluate if you fit together, if you might say after the trial period 'it will work out', 'it fits', maybe you stay together. Sometimes at a pinch, because the person might be at 80%. Not yet 100%, but before we start again it might be possible to develop this person to get that person closer to the 100%.

I05: Yes, totally. If you have someone new you do not know where the person starts. Maybe this person start only with 60%.

AW: And you also do now know where this person ends.

I05: Sure.

AW: Perfect. There was a lot of interesting information included.

I05: Good. I keep my fingers crossed.

AW: Thank you very much. If you want, I have already published a paper on, if this Employee Engagement might be a bubble which may burst, because there is no translation etc. So if it might burst in the long run. So if you want I can forward it to you, also with respect to, does this terminology have a base or is it a phenomenon which might diappear.

I05: Yes, sure. As I said. I sign you the consent form and if you want you can send it through.

AW: Sure, I will send it together with the confirmation. If you do have time, please feel free to have a look. Mr. L., thank you very much for your time.

I05: You are welcome. Bye.

AW: Bye.

Appendix 15: I06

AW: Thank you very much for your participation in this interview. The interview takes approx. 45 minutes. During these 45 minutes I will ask you different questions regarding Employee Engagement. The questions and the answers will be recorded. If you want me to anonymous the interview, please state so during the interview or also afterwards. Consequently, the transcript such as your name and the company will be left out.

I06: Ok.

AW: For your information: My name is Andrea Wylegala. I a part-time PhD student at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law and in PhD I focus on HR managers' understanding of Employee Engagement in Germany.

Now, we move forward to the first question. Can you please state your name?

I06: My name is Michael D.

AW: And which position do you currently fill?

I06: I am "Personalreferent" [Engl. translation "Personnel Officer"] at a small- to midsize company.

AW: In which industry are you and the company operating?

I06: The company is operating in the construction of specialised industry systems.

AW: How many employees does your company employ worldwide?

I06: Our, well... the *[Company name]* employs 82 employees. The entire *[Group name]*, with its headquarter in Austria, does employ approx. 12,000 staff worldwide, in different Limiteds or GmbHs at different locations.

AW: Ok. And the number of employees in Germany is the stated 82?

I06: Exactly.

AW: Ok. Where does the company originally come from?

I06: The company comes originally from down here, from Stuttgart. It is a company building industrial furnaces. The company *[Company name]* produces heat treatment systems and industrial furnaces for the production of metal pieces. So we produces heavily build furnaces for different kind of metal pieces from screws and nuts to gear box elements which are heated up to 900/ 950°C. They are mixed with a carbon-gas mixture to hardener the structure of those pieces.

AW: Ok.

- I06: Mainly for motors or gear boxes which are operated under great load. And the company [Company Name] produces the furnaces which are used to produce those. And the hub in Ludwigsburg where I am working is a service division, so we do not produce anything at this location. We are in charge of the aftersales for those solitons so we create rebuilding activities, refurbishments and the usual annual services, “trouble shouting” [interviewee uses English term] and provide spare parts for existing systems. Such a system can operate for 30/ 40 years as they are rather upscale products when they are installed.
- AW: The company does have a German origin. Do you believe that the origin has an effect on the organisational culture?
- I06: Well (...) I cannot really say. The company is rather old – we have been founded in 1868 – so we have quite a long history. I would say that we are quite traditional due to the age which also has an impact on the company culture. Yes, absolutely.
- AW: Ok. Now, we are moving to the topic of Employee Engagement. In general, have you heard about the term Employee Engagement?
- I06: Employee Engagement itself wasn't a term I was aware of. I looked it up and found some synonyms which I had heard before in our company and also during my degree. Employee Engagement as an Anglicism or as English term I was not aware of.
- AW: Ok. What have you figured out about the term or it's synonyms during your research?
- I06: Well... many different statements. It seems to be a combination or a synonym for "Mitarbeiterbindung" [engl. Employee retention], "Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit" [engl. Employee satisfaction] (...). Employee involvement in the company. How much the employees identify themselves with the organisation and how much they are willing to work actively for the company, so involving themselves completely.
- AW: Ok. Let's see. You already answered my next question. Therefore, how would you define the term if you had to explain or define it for someone?
- I06: I would most likely define it through "Mitarbeiterbindung" and I would say that Employee Engagement or the German term for it is the binding of an employee towards a company. Ensuring "Arbeitsmotivation" [engl. work motivation]. Surely, also the impact of a strong leadership which leads to a motivated employee who manages its work in the company in the long term.
- AW: From your point of view, what does the term mean with respect to the behaviour of an employee?
- I06: With respect to the behaviour it is important that the employee – I would say so – got a high motivation level. You are easily decoyed into using the German term "Engagement" [French pronunciation]. If the employee identifies himself totally with his work and his company and if he fulfils his tasks or to do's accordingly, or if he is rather slacking, or if he does his job but does not identify himself with the company or the work. So, he could do the work in any other company as well. Therefore, I would say that's where it finds its basis, claiming that he should not just identify with work but also with a high binding and a great understanding of the meaning behind his work. Understanding why his work is important for the company and how the company profits from his work.
- AW: Do you know if your current employer has established an Employee Engagement strategy?
- I06: We do not have a real strategy. We have different activities which should support the "Mitarbeiterbindung" [engl. Employee retention], but we do not have a strategy itself.
- AW: Ok. If we leave the strategy or the term strategy aside where are the activities located? More in HR or stronger in internal communications, marketing?
- I06: Definitely in HR. Partly it is also cross-company based, so in dialog with our Austrian mother which is located there, but it is definitely in HR.
- AW: And which goals have you as the organisation defined for these activities?
- I06: Well, we said that these activities are aiming to bound the employees to the company as the heat treatment systems which we produce and maintain have a high standard and that we profit from employees who stay longer in the company and we have a big problem if our staff changes

every five to six years. Therefore, we said we need to keep them entertained and we need to bound them to the company and that is what the activities are aiming for. And if an employee wants to develop further and we cannot offer this to him in our company we try to ensure that he changes position within the *[Company name]*.

AW: Ok. Do you have developed this strategy in a particular country or are you developing this over-regional for all offices and hubs of the company decentralised?

I06: I would say the idea come from... or are developed in Austria. And I would say in a regular HR exchange which we realise quarterly, such ideas are shared. But still every company is independent and free to decide if these activities may or may not be implemented. So there is no general duty from the holding which claims that everyone needs to do it. But everyone is invited to think about which activities may fit to the individual organisation and during the HR exchange we talk about it and mirror it to identify if it is also of interest for other companies.

AW: So there is also the possibility to take individual requirements of a market and its employees into consideration and to modify it?

I06: Absolutely. As something which works very well in Germany does not necessarily work well for an American associate company or not for the Chinese. It is another culture, but you have at least shared the own activities.

AW: Well, do you believe that the Austrian origin also has an impact on these activities, let's call them Employee Engagement activities, Employee Engagement strategy?

I06: Yes, I think so. As I said we try not to just create the binding to our own organisation here in Ludwigsburg, but also a binding to our *[Company group name]* to also create identification there and in this field the impact from Austria is recognisable as they are mainly dealing with this and are very active. They want to reflect their impact also in the subsidiaries.

AW: You mentioned that the aim of these activities is the retention of the employee...

I06: Yes.

AW: ...and an increase in the brand identification.

I06: Correct.

AW: Well, are their key elements you are using to push those aims?

I06: There are specific elements which we implement which are for example employee surveys or participating in "Great Place to Work" certificates. For this is one of the activities, but they are also more general things such as frequent events or Christmas parties or incentive trips which we realise as we claim that we do not just want to talk to the other we also want to know the other one. So we create exchange. We offer a "Discover *[Company name]*"-programme where employees can visit an associate company for three to six months to see how is the same work executed at a different location. And after three months or just four weeks they come back to their old position. These are our key topics but it is mainly the promotion of a strong company culture which shall also support that our employees stay.

AW: Ok. Do you internally use a company-specific term for Employee Engagement? You said earlier on you Googled what it is. Do you use a specific term; some use "Mitarbeitermotivation" [engl. Employee motivation], you also said "Mitarbeiterbindung" [engl. Employee retention]. Do you use internally a particular term?

I06: No we don't.

AW: Do you would also no use the English term Employee Engagement?

I06: It is would be possible to suggest to use it which would possibly a good thing, but so far we have nothing which we generally use to summaries it.

AW: When you... Which challenges do you link to the term Employee Engagement?

I06: The challenge is – if you look at motivation – to make it measurable. This is a very very big problem. Sure, you can run surveys asking how satisfied are you, how is your relationship to your boss, how is your relationship with colleagues, but it is difficult to make this objective and quantitative evaluable how high the motivation of employee is, because you cannot look behind

his forehead. And this is for sure a big challenge. Another challenge is if you start to measure something you need to do this frequently – you cannot do it once and say ‘great, now we have a result’. And it also requires the willingness to use the result, however they look like, to implement actions and if you have the feeling that the result does not fit to what you were expecting. Also the management team needs to support this and not just say ‘oh let’s just do something’ so that the employees just feel involved, it also requires that they implement actions when they are required.

AW: This goes pretty strongly into the implementation of actions.

I06: Yes.

AW: Well, what do you think is the biggest challenge of Employee Engagement when looking at Germany?

I06: Ow... *breathes out* in our case... I can only speak about our company: Here it is difficult to create the balancing act between wanting to invite the employees to involve themselves, we want to invite the employees to share their experiences in feedback meetings and to tell us how they feel at work, if they feel valued, if they identify themselves with the organisation to understand if they have a high “Bindung” [direct engl. translation is “binding”, could be translated with “engagement”] without getting on their nerves. This is often a problem for us because historically we have a high degree of capacity utilisation and as a service company anyway. We have to deal with on-daily-basis changing client priorities and therefore it is difficult to frequently involve the employee and to get them away from their work and to create certain disturbance. There were many discussions on what we could still do, but maybe it would be too much than and therefore we need to make sure that it is still just to a normal degree. Those are things which I realised in the case of our hub in Ludwigsburg.

AW: A very interesting perspective on the topic. And we this we are nearly through. Just one last question: Do you have comment you would like to leave with me with respect to Employee Engagement?

I06: Well, spontaneously I have no additional comments. Maybe, just one topic which came up as well. We once had a very interesting discussion with employees who went to the workers council, not because they wanted to complain, but they were wondering what is done with the results of an employee survey and so on and what do we extract out of it. And if you implement such an Employee Engagement activity, I saw there are providers who offer solutions, so their product is to make Employee Engagement measurable on a qualitative level and there is the question what to do with it if you have employees which have a very high score and you have employees which have a rather low score? Are you willing as a company to invest in the employees to improve the scoring and to look into it in more details to understand what the individual motivation of an employee is? Also with respect to demotivation. What does motivate this person? Or does a company say, ‘well, employees with a scoring of less than 40 for example we are seeking for a separation’. In our case we could explain to our employees that seeking for separations would not fit to our company culture. Which we do not do anyway, as we are looking for long-term employees for our company. However, I thought this was a very interesting thought which came into my mind when I read about this company, Qualtrics, which is an English or an American company and I thought here you need to be careful and that it needs to be communicated clearly from the beginning what do you want to do with this data.

AW: I think this is a very important thing. Especially measurability is facing completely different challenges in the German market than it might face in Anglo-American countries.

I06: Correct, because we have a high... we have workers councils and work unions. In American companies it is a bit slacker with their ‘hire and fire’ mentality and therefore I thought to look at this from employees’ point of view.

AW: Yes. If it is ok with you I would stop the record now or is there anything else you would like to add.

I06: No, I am through.

Appendix 16: I07

- AW: So, before we start I will share 2-3 sentences with you before we start. Here we can also state that we keep the employer out of the transcription.
- I07: Ok, no problem.
- AW: First of all, thank you very much for your participation.
- I07: You are welcome.
- AW: It takes a maximum of 45 minutes. However, I can ease you a bit as it usually takes a bit less which the other interviews had shown. The interviews are mainly designed to understand Employee Engagement a bit better and the questions and answers will be recorded. If you want me to anonymise the transcript of the interview, please let me know so. I understood that we take the employer out.
- I07: Yes, please, so that *[company name]* is not stated. You can state my name, that's no problem, but not the employer.
- AW: Ok, great.
Some quick information about me: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am part-time PhD student at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. For my PhD thesis I am researching the HR managers' understanding of the term Employee Engagement in Germany.
Can you please state your name?
- I07: Yes. My name is Monica W. and I work, as I mentioned, for the *[company name]*. I am in charge of the recruitment centre of the *[company name]* since 2017. Previously, I have been with *[company name]* in different positions.
- AW: Ok, great.
In which branch are you currently working?
- I07: The branch I am currently working for, the *[company name]* has actually two branches. First, it is a supplier for the automotive industry. And second, is the topic of security in defence.
- AW: Ok, how many employees does your employer currently have on a global basis?
- I07: Globally, about 28,000.
- AW: How many of these are working in Germany?
- I07: Approx. 13,000.
- AW: Where does the company originally come from?
- I07: From Germany.
- AW: Do you believe that the German origin does have an impact on the company culture?
- I07: Yes, absolutely.
- AW: We are now moving forward to the questions related to Employee Engagement. If there are any questions please just let me know.
- I07: Sure.
- AW: Have you ever heard about Employee Engagement before?
- I07: Yes.
- AW: In which context?
- I07: In the context of what does "bindet" [possible engl. translation "to bind" or "to engage"] employees, how satisfied employees are, how committed they are, how they manage their goals, what does the company do to support this culture, that employees are satisfied, that they be extremely involved – also with the company – and that they also do not leave the company.
- AW: So there is strong focus on the "Bindung" [possible engl. translation 'binding', 'retention'].

- I07: Yes, exactly. Retention [uses engl. term] is an important topic, staff development is an important topic, commitment is an important topic. Working together is an important topic. Tolerance is an important topic – from both sides. These are key words which come into my mind when we talk about Employee Engagement.
- AW: Yes. (...) Have you... Moment wrong question. How would you define the term?
- I07: Engagement? There is a nice saying from Kennedy, who said in a speech “ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country”.
- AW: Yes.
- I07: And this has a bit of representativeness towards Employee Engagement. Not just always ask ‘what can the company do for me’, but also ‘what can I do for the company’. So always from both ends. So basically what does my employer do for me, but also what do I do for the employer. Maybe the extra mile outside my usual job. Outside my normal work, outside my usual job. That’s what I am paid for. I believe it is not just about money, it is also about commitment. Enjoy doing what you’re doing. There are also different studies from Gallup which look at those who are committed to their organisations and others who just do their job and others who even do their job poorly. And for me is Engagement how I can support of the potential of my employees best so that they be highly committed. And for me it is like in a relationship, it needs to come from both sides to make sure that this binding is kept up in a healthy way.
- AW: Ok, great. What do you think does Employee Engagement mean with respect to the behaviour of an employee?
- I07: Well, I see a difference between blind loyalty and engagement. Blind loyalty is just this saying yes to everything, basically ‘yes and amen’. For me this is not engagement. Engagement is exactly this extra mile. To think about how to improve, for example how can I save something, make something more efficient. Not just in my team but also outside my team. Ideally cross-units or (...) to other divisions. But also the small things: That I do not switch things on standby when I leave instead of really turning them off. I have a commitment where I have to say ‘they trust me with what I do in the company and I have to do it my best possible way’. So, I also have to take care that the equipment doesn’t break. Therefore, I switch it off, so that they do not need energy for nothing. Or if I have an idea: who shall I address to get this idea placed. Or I get together with others to develop an idea further which has a positive effect on the company. Also for myself because I have a certain ‘return’ [uses Engl. word] when I have had a good idea; doesn’t matter if it is praise, if it is a card for Christmas or a monetary reward, but I do something. And on the other side I need to have a culture in the company which does allow this. Avoiding to be cut off any single time when I have an idea, receiving comments such as “what is it to you”, “why do you think about this, do you not have anything to do”. Do you understand what I mean?
- AW: Yes, absolutely.
- I07: It needs a company culture where this is welcomed, where employees find commitment when they look across their daily business. There needs to be a culture to support this. That’s what I meant with a relationship – it needs to come from both sides.
- AW: Yes. A very good example.
- I07: Totally.
- AW: Do you know if your employer has an Employee Engagement strategy in place?
- I07: I am not aware of a general strategy, but we have established something called “One [company name]” – you need to get this out of your documents as well – and “One [company name]” are the two divisions, one automotive and one defence which are the two areas of the company, where we are realising the idea moving both areas closer together. There are various initiatives which we try to implement to ensure that we look beyond one’s own nose. I am with the company for one year now and I am not aware of any Employee Engagement strategy, but I experience frequently the culture of this company. That you are welcome when you have an idea. That you are welcome when you want to join somebody for coffee to discuss what you might have realised and you need another perspective on it. There is no hierarchy thinking claiming why does this person not sit down together with another person discussing this particular issue. And this kind

of culture, I believe, you cannot strategically mandate nor can you force it. I believe it comes from the people and from the organisations which support something like this. And that's what I really like about this company. That it is still flexible. You could assume that a company of our size and with our history – I mean we are nearly 130 years old – is more of a traditional company, maybe a bit mouldy, but it is not, because this culture is so strong here. And more and more people follow this though on an interdisciplinary, cross-unit basis; getting together and consider things. I like this example and I might swopping from one topic to the other, but 2-3 weeks ago I was emailed from my colleagues here in Neuss, "please do not forget to switch of the television. You might not see it, but if it is all dark is there a little, very bright light in the back and that shows that it is still on. Remember the TVs were really expensive." And that came from one employee and it had such a big impact that everybody was saying "Oh shit, that's right! Otherwise they might break." This didn't come from a manager. It came from an employee. If you want to call it that way, a small gear, but it had a big impact. In a department where 40 people are working for and we have three of this big TVs and they are now always switched off in the evening. Do you know what I mean? These are the things I really enjoy. Small little things, but they show that somebody put thought into it. Sending a message to everyone saying, "remember, when you leave, please switch it off, otherwise they break." He didn't need to do it because this person also addressed people on higher levels and everyone thought it was great. The next day, they told him thank you, we didn't even recognised this before. A really good recommendation.

AW: Super.

I07: These are just little things, but I think they had great impact. And the colleague was pretty proud about himself, because he was recognised for this.

AW: Totally, this also gives something back.

I07: Exactly, just like "great that you thought about it. This little light... we always thought when we pushed a button that it was completely switched off, but it wasn't till you also pushed a second button, than it is completely off." You didn't realise this, but this colleague figured it out and helped us. The things were expensive enough.

AW: Some information on top of this, I read a study about this a while ago: One of these televisions or monitors costs 40 EUR p.a. when it is on standby.

I07: Amazing. Just thing how many of these we even do have in our company.

AW: And how much this is.

I07: Yes and if everyone would just say "I don't care, it is not my money"... this example, I cannot really tell you if all 28,000 people act like this, but those directly around me they do.

AW: They make the world a bit better.

I07: Exactly.

AW: Well, you said you do have different activities as part of the overall concept. From your point of view where is it located in your company, even when every employee is involved in this, how is the "patron" of those activities?

I07: That's what I mean. We do not have this. I know from other companies that they for example give their employees days off so that they can support for example kindergartens or go somewhere and support there. We do not have this – if you are referring to this. We are more focused on working together, being transparent, recognise employees. We just had our employee survey which showed great results for how people rated their teams. So work in team at the hubs; a really high commitment towards the teams and the locations. And this combined with a low fluctuation. Mainly just related to age, but overall so vanishing low that gives me the feeling that we have a culture here of cooperation and support. It is different to engagement programmes which other companies have. As I said they send two people somewhere, they get two days off and then they can do something. I have done this with my former employer where we did something in a kindergarten if I remember correctly. We had worked in the garden and stuff like this during these two days off. We do not do this, as far as I am aware. Instead we have a culture which is not arranged but which is just there and which is highly valued by the people. For me this is a completely different approach of Employee Engagement.

- AW: Ok, understood. The next question would be on the goals of the strategy. I understand that you are very strongly focusing on exchange, recognition and commitment.
- I07: Yes. Openness, recognition, exchange, exchanging expertise, giving space to create exchange. We want this transparency. We want people to be critical. It is wanted that ideas and improvements are communicated. It is more of a cultural thing than an engagement strategy what we have in place.
- AW: Most likely...
- I07: We come from culture.
- AW: Most likely it has been developing within the entire company and was not created in a particular country and been transferred to the other markets?
- I07: No, no. It is really a culture. As I said it is a mix of many different things. If I look at our situation and how huge the commitment is and the positive outcome from people and teams. It also could be seen negatively, when people do the same job 30 years or more. Sure you can look at it from this point of view, but as we are losing many people due to age, because they retire, we get enough fresh blood – as you could say – in every year. Yearly, we recruit for more than 1,000 open positions – just with respect to Germany. So there is enough fresh wind coming in. Additionally, we are growing. However, I was pretty surprised that we do not have a designated programme, at least no programme I am aware of, and how engagement is lived here. I was really surprised. I need to get 55 years old to learn this.
- AW: *laugh* Sounds very interesting. Well, I already did some interviews and frequently, there is no strategy in place, but many different activities which build the strategy. However, in your case it seems to come strongly from the company or organisational culture which forms the strategy. Even so there is no direct strategy.
- I07: Yes, it is fully lived. I think it is very charming that it is lived that way. That it is not just implemented. Sure, it is nice when a company says we do this and we put that label on our company and we realise the activities 1, 2, 3 and 5 and we review “bad practice” [Interviewee uses English term] and communicate about it. I think this is great and useful. We do not have this, but it is all about the culture. Usually, I say “most likely there is nothing when there is no culture”. They are also different cultures which company’s may have, but for us it is definitely culture and not strategy.
- AW: Do I understand correctly that as there is no strategy, but various different activities, which are all bundled under the programme “One [company name]”, correct?
- I07: Yes. Various thing, also things which have already been there and I think this is quite nice; they become more present because it is much clearer. As I said much more explicit, as I said earlier on: openness, transparency, trust, exchange between automotive and defence. In the past they were two different worlds each worked on its own and now it becomes more integrated with respect to projects of the two company divisions.
- AW: Ok.
- I07: Some things are pretty similar and some things are completely different with respect to how they work, with respect to their products and their target groups.
- AW: So this is also a goal?
- I07: Yes, totally. This is definitely an aim of “One [company name]”. However, it had not been implemented with the aim to get an engagement index in a way and to promote something. For sure, it has been implemented to push cooperation and openness and as a consequence, a positive consequence, many employees are more engaged and more committed towards the organisation.
- AW: Ok, great. My next question is: Do you use internally a particular term for Employee Engagement or a particular definition?
- I07: No, no, no. We don’t have one.
- AW: Do you use the term Employee Engagement itself?
- I07: In one year here I have not even heard the term once.

AW: Yes. For the German market it is also a very difficult term *laugh* as I think.

I07: Yes, absolutely.

AW: So on international basis you most likely do not use any particular term for your activities either?

I07: No, at last I am not aware of it.

AW: Ok. When you think about the term itself, less with respect to your employer, where do you see the challenges of Employee Engagement?

I07: Where are the challenges... I think the sustainability... I think sustainability... also our CEO said so... sustainability should not be a buzz word. Sustainability should be key element of our corporate management. I think that the term sustainability is very important for engagement, because otherwise you have marketing activities, a flash in the pan, here is something done, there is something done, but you do not change the attitude [Interviewee uses Engl. term], I do not know what attitude is in German.

AW: Well, yes. The term "Attitude" does exist in German. Yes. You can definitely say so. In a way the behaviour, correct?

I07: Yes, it is a key element of our company culture. Not just in our willingness to invest in economic feasibility, but also into our actions and I think this is great. This sustainability, not just with respect to economics, also with respect to how you work. Not just this flash in the pan-approach, more what do we put on our portfolio.

AW: Most likely this is also a challenge with respect to the implementation of such activities?

I07: Yes. In particular that we put sustainability also on "Mitarbeiterbindung" [engl. translation employee binding, employee retention]. My direct boss, Mr. K., please delete the name as well, our chief human resources officer, said "we come out of 125 year history, so old is our company, but we are not just focus on sustainable client relationships in automotive as well as in defence, but also important is lasting and sustainable "Mitarbeiterbindung" [engl. translation employee binding, employee retention]." And that is very important because we are also competing for good employees. We cannot lose good people and luckily we don't. But that shows how we live employee engagement, we have an academy. We value personal development and so on and so on. For sure there are many different reasons why we have such a low fluctuation, but also because people are satisfied, like to work here and have a high binding to their teams and the hub. So positively, and I have been working for many different companies and have seen many different employee engagement surveys, I was pretty surprise by it. In a positive way.

AW: Well, when you look at the German market, from your point of view what do you think is the biggest challenge there when talking about Employee Engagement.

I07: I think it should not become a buzz word or a marketing thing. Many companies say 'engagement is important to us, you get three days off and can use them for charity or something else', that's what I have seen mostly. Those who uses tools, which I think... are... well not debased... but a tool doesn't hit the target.

AW: It does not satisfy the thing completely.

I07: It is good when you do it, but maybe things which you develop together, so when employees come to you and have an idea 'I would like to support this and that' and therefore this person want to have three days off for this and the company say 'well we think this is so great what you do we give you one day extra for it'. I think this is something else than the institutional way where people always get three days off for something. I think the "Bindung" [engl. term binding] is different. I am not sure if I am explaining it too complicated, but I just do not like these kinds of marketing programmes which have generic effect where everybody gets three days off to do something. I think it is better to also sometimes spontaneously react on good ideas and first of all engagement is you give somebody a pat on the back when the person has supported somebody else, another colleague who might have a problem. It does not necessary always need to be the poor children in India, don't get me wrong. Sometimes it can be a colleague who is just not fine at the moment. Lately, I heard a story and I thought this is great. There was an employee with a sick child and the colleagues donate a particular volume of overtime to this person so he could take time off to be at home with his sick child. Maybe you have heard about it?

AW: Possibly, maybe in Spiegel.

I07: Somewhere I read about it and I thought this is a great thing. I assume the company just supported it as they could take people's overtime away. Also the company was very flexible with respect to HR and the colleague could give their overtime to the colleague so he could be with his sick wife or sick child, I cannot remember what it was. But I think it was a sick child. And I thought that's great, this is not a marketing activity where it is predefined how you could do things. I am sure this came from the people themselves. You can be 100% sure of this. Someone in the team recognised this person is not doing well and had the idea and organised it that way. And those are the things where I say: This is great. This is really good. For me this is Employee Engagement par excellence. No marketing activities which are printed on handouts or any webpages where the company is advertising how great they are and what they do for them. To be honest with you, this is – so to speak – 'bull shit' [interviewee uses engl. term]. This is just marketing. However, the example of this company, I cannot remember the company, but for sure you have read it as well.

AW: I am sure I have read about it, but I am not sure if I heard about it or if I read about it. But it does sound familiar to me. Great activity.

I07: You can be sure that this came from the people themselves. From a cultural perspective, I prefer when something like this, when ideas, come from the people themselves. When something is created by them. And the company listen to this. This is something which might be a bit less developed in Germany. Maybe because we assume that everything is always related to performance, to achievement, better production, faster production, bigger production, better product development and we forget that this can only happen when the people stand behind those products, the company, the teams. Their own colleagues. And therefore this small signals or symbols, if this overtime was donated finally, or our colleague her who realised that our TV will break, this are small things, but the sum out of them create a completely different atmosphere where you are working. And you feel completely differently linked to the company you work for and to the people and not forced by marketing strategies, marketing products which say we need to do this because otherwise we won't get scorings in "Best Place to work for" and whatever else.

AW: We had something equal here in the company. It's about two years ago we had one colleague left to start his own business and he said I don't want you to collect money for me. And at the same time the husband of our cleaner who also cleaned here died. Our colleague decided that he wanted her, she is Greek, to travel to Greece over Easter with her kids and that's what you shall collect money for. And finally we had enough money for two tickets and she has another daughter living there and our boss sponsored another ticket on top. In a way this also brought the team closer together, because...

I07: This is what I mean. These are things which come up because they just do and you cannot force this through a strategy. You need to have this culture in your company which allows this things to develop and nobody looks at it with disgust. So nobody say 'what's this'.

AW: Or maybe question what is in for the company. We didn't do it for marketing purposes and never used it for marketing at all. It was just a nice gesture of the colleagues, after this stroke of fate, saying, get your kids and fly over to see your mother.

I07: Exactly and it does not always be linked to such strokes of fate or sad things. For me engagement also happens during daily work when one helps the other or just having fun together. That's also engagement. If we meet on Wednesdays for football, men as well as women, because we have a team which plays against other teams at [company name], this is a lot of fun, but also a lot of engagement, because people play together with their colleagues during their free time. Do you understand what I mean?

AW: Yes, totally. After work some just say 'God, I just want to get home' and here they extend the time.

I07: It's just one example: On Wednesday we have training here, we have tournament in June and everybody is happy.

AW: Super.

I07: Or here in my division in Neuss – you will actually laugh about this one – I have bought a tabletop football on own expenses. I paid it on personal expenses for my team. Why? Because they enjoy playing tabletop football. This stupid tabletop football game which is located in our office creates so much fun. So much fun with such a stupid tabletop football game. These are the things which you enjoy doing, because you get so much back. So much since I have this tabletop football. We for example do allow employees to bring their dog to the office. Sure, it is just a small Paris-Hilton-dog, such a... not Pekingese...

AW: Chihuahua?

I07: Yes, exactly, but the colleague is so happy and this small dog is running around here. He doesn't bother anybody because we do not have clients coming over and so one colleague is walking the dog and another colleague is walking the dog and the little dog cannot even walk so much as they want to go out with him *laugh*.

That's what I mean. This is culture. This is not predetermined. And these are the small things why people like to come to the office and why they like being there and why they are willing to invest more, why they like to support each other and this doesn't follow a strategy. It does follow a culture. And if it doesn't feel odd to do so and nobody looks at you because you play table top football at 4pm I don't mind it. I just close the door when I am on the phone because otherwise it gets too noisy. However, at the same time these people are also sitting having conversations at 6:30 or 7 pm. And they do not look at their watches and I don't either when they playing a match for 10 minutes.

AW: Giving something and taking something.

I07: This is this openness, transparency, trust. These are all things as I believe which we cannot determine.

AW: Great. So we are coming to the end now. I have one final question regarding other additional things on Employee Engagement which I should have another look at? You also mentioned something during the discussion, but maybe there is something which you would like to point out to me?

I07: Well, with respect to Engagement. As you might know I have been working for *[company name]* before, but there it was also managed by HR. I am not sure if you are going to do anything with them. They also did those days off and so on. *Sighs*

I really had some issues with it. I always had the feeling it was a general order to do it. No, as an example I would use this company which allowed employees to donate their overtime to another colleague. I think this is a good example for from people to people and companies who support this. This shouldn't been taken for granted.

AW: Absolutely.

I07: I think in the German-speaking region the topic of Employee Engagement is not yet as developed as much as in Anglo-Saxon cultures, so the US, UK, also Sweden – much more is done there. There it is much more let's call it 'common'. We are now talking about culture which should be taken for granted. However, even this is not natural for some.

AW: Yes, this is one of the reasons why I am researching this topic. I am doing my PhD in England, I am located in Germany, but I am working for a British company, but do have my office hub in Düsseldorf. Therefore, when I took over this responsibility at the time, I became in charge of the product Employee Engagement or Employee Solutions as well call it, and I said it is still such a foreign body in Germany somehow. Nobody knows how to deal with it and if I am getting in charge of this I want to do my PhD about this topic and I want to look into every detail and every aspect of it. Now, the in-depth interviews I am doing with large organisations and cooperation show how interesting it is how individual organisations deal with it. You focused pretty strongly on the cultural aspect as in your case the company culture has such a big impact. I have one company on my list which grow really really fast and they stated they have no term for it, but we do this, this and that and maybe this is already employee engagement. It just does not matter how you call it as long as you create this effect for the company and its people.

I07: Absolutely. Absolutely.

AW: If you put a mark on it saying talent management, employee engagement or recognition or whatever which is all not completely translatable into German, it does not really matter – at least from my perspective – and that what I am also looking at during my research. Understanding if German organisations already doing it, but call it differently – a bit like old wine in new pipes.

I07: Yes, exactly.

AW: Maybe it is already there, but we do not know it as Employee Engagement, because the term itself is nearly absurd, you could argue, in the German language. From my perspective it is really difficult to translate it...

I07: Yes, maybe because every company does understand something completely different; maybe one understands three days off for something, the next one understands monetary donations for charity together with employees. At *[company name]* we had re-cent programme. So you can decide if you want to donate up to maximum of 99 cent per monthly wage. And the company doubled the sum and with this money they did charity activities as well. This is also a kind of Employee Engagement too which I thought was pretty good. This was a really good thing.

AW: I imagine in this scale it is accepted because the employee does not feel a big personal effect, but the overall sum of the team had a positive impact.

I07: Absolutely.

AW: Yes, a very interesting topic and I am also looking forward to see what the other interviews will contribute too. Nevertheless, we two made it. Thank you so much.

I07: You are welcome. And you send me the material via post so I can sign it and send it back to you.

AW: Sure. I will add another envelop for you, so it is ready for you and if you could just fill it in and sign it, that would be perfect.

I07: Perfect. Could you just make sure that the name of the employer is taken out.

AW: Yes, and from Mr. K.

I07: Mr. K., yes please. Otherwise everyone knows that Mr. K. is the Chief Human Resource Officer of *[company name]*. And that Mr. P. is the CEO.

AW: Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 17: I09

AW: First of all, thank you very much for your support and the participation in this study. During the next maximum 45 minutes I will ask you different questions regarding Employee Engagement. The questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish that the transcription of the interview shall be anonymised please let me know so.

Some additional information about me: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am part-time Doctor in Training at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. In my PhD study I focus on the understanding of the term Employee Engagement in Germany. Enough about me, we are now we moving onwards to you.
laugh

I09: *laugh*

AW: Could you please state your name again?

I09: Sure, my name is Kerstin W.

AW: And which position are you currently filling?

I09: The department I am looking after is called “Employer Reputation and Engagement”. This also includes another department which looks after an intranet for employees.

AW: Ok, in which industry are you currently working?

I09: In the gastronomy.

AW: Ok. How many employees does your employer employ at the moment globally?

I09: Well, I cannot really say *laugh*, because we only communicate the German-specific numbers. In Germany, we have approx. 60,000 employees.

AW: This would have been the next question. Perfect answer. *laugh*

I09: *laugh*

AW: Where does the company originally come from?

I09: Originally, I come from the USA.

AW: Do you believe that the international background of your company does have an effect on your company culture?

I09: (...) Well, it depends on what you are focusing. As we are having many restaurants and as my main job is to take care of the employees working in the restaurants, here I would say it does not. If I look at the administration I would say 'yes'.

AW: So it depends on the department or the topic.

I09: Yes, absolutely.

AW: We are now moving toward the topic of Employee Engagement. Have you heard about the term Employee Engagement?

I09: *laugh* Yes.

AW: Great, in which context.

I09: It is the term which describes my department. My department is called "Employer Engagement", for us "Employee Engagement" is part of it.

AW: Ok. What have you heard about the term Employee Engagement in general?

I09: Generally, in our specific case at *[company name]*, so at our company, we are not looking at what the term itself includes - with respect to Employee Engagement - we are looking at it to understand what motivates people to work in a specific company, so to also represent the company externally and how we can establish it in our case.

AW: Ok. How would you personally define the term?

I09: Employee Engagement? For me it covers everything on how we motivate an employee to start working for us, to keep him and if he leaves how we can still keep him as a brand ambassador. For me it is a complete package.

AW: So covering the entire Employee Life Cycle?

I09: Absolutely. And for me it is not just a HR topic. It is a topic of the entire company. How you can motivate employees? Which branding activities you can implement? This all goes into it.

AW: From your point of view, what does Employee Engagement mean with respect to the behaviour of an individual employee?

I09: (...) Well... the behaviour of an employee, which has a lot to do with motivation. It also goes into... I think it is difficult to separate 'reputation' [uses Engl. term] and 'engagement' [uses Engl. term] because all the recognition I originate for an employee does motivate an employee to work in this company, to get to work motivated, to do the job motivated. Not just working for a company, also being part of this company. When you bring this closer to an employee that he is part of the company and that he has his share in the success of the company, because the company is only successful because of the employee, when the employee understands this and also get this communicated than this is Employee Engagement, because this is also mirrored externally.

AW: Ok, great. As employer you do have an Employee Engagement strategy in place?

I09: In place... well, we are currently establishing one.

AW: So, in a way getting it on track?

I09: Exactly, our department is brand new. Last year in February we have established it and since then – as we are a global team – we have been reviewing what we are doing on global basis. What can we learn from each other and how could a global strategy be established for the entire company. Actually, it takes more than a year to just review how you do it best for the employee and how does he work and how do we ensure that we keep the employee's motivation getting to work.

AW: Ok, just let me write this down. Earlier on you said it is not just a topic which relies with HR. With respect to your structure does the topic belong to a particular department, for example Human Resources, Marketing? Where does your team belong too?

I09: Well, my department is part of HR. However, I always try, when I define the term for myself, to bring in a lot of Employer Branding as well. Nevertheless, it also touches our Operations department, so how are processes defined, we have different challenges in our restaurants which all tend to focus on Employer Branding. However, for us Employer Branding is a joint project for every department, for example also Training, which are taking care of people's development. Therefore, for me it is a joint project, including Marketing. For example do our employees appear in advertisement. These are always real employees. I believe through activities like this it is possible to retain employees, because it is an honour to participate in it.

AW: Yes, great. When you state that you are still at that point where you create checking what is possible, what is currently done in the market, where can we develop: Which aim have you defined for your Employee Engagement strategy in general? You already mentioned a good climate, enjoy getting to work are very important topics.

I09: For me the aims are that the employee does become brand ambassador. That has a lot to do with the area of reputation. As I said, from my perspective it is not possible to separate these two areas. Additionally, when you allow your employees to do work where s/he is motivated s/he does also mirror this and becomes a brand ambassador. Maybe also tells his friends that it is good to work there. When this commitment is not there you wouldn't recommend working there to somebody else.

AW: You mentioned that the team you are working with on the strategy is an international team? My next question is on...

I09: Exactly.

AW: ... what the strategy developed in a particular country?

I09: No. We develop it together. This team includes colleagues from Canada, Australia, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Poland, Russia and Germany. We do not have our regions split in US, Europe and so on, we have a different structure behind it and therefore I am working with colleagues from those countries together.

AW: Perfect. Very interesting I assume.

I09: Yes.

AW: Do you modify such a strategy in the regional markets or countries depending on the local organization and its employees or do stick to one general strategy which is similar everywhere?

I09: We already have a "Reputation Strategy" (uses Engl. term) already established as this was more advanced and the Engagement strategy will look quite similar. So we develop the strategy globally. It is kind of a playbook on how the things should look like, but not how it should look like in different countries, because every country has its individual needs, the employees have different needs and it needs to be broken down for every

restaurant, because in Munich somebody wants something completely different or it is different to motivate this person than somebody in Hamburg as an example or someone in a small town as the east coast. Therefore, it needs to be possible to implement it differently. Therefore, on global strategy basis we only give input on what can be done, global key words on what is covered, but we stick to the plan that everybody can work on it depending on what is required for the market.

AW: Well, do you think that the origin of company, coming from the United States, does have an impact on the Employee Engagement strategy?

I09: I wouldn't say so. The USA is partly involved as well, but as we having so many different countries involved here it is clear that the USA does determine some things, but we say we need to do it slightly different, because it does not necessarily works for us when it does work in the US. Also because of rules and regulations we have here and therefore the US does implement their own strategy and we review what does make sense for us as well and what doesn't and we create our own.

AW: Ok. Which key elements are you planning for your strategy? Frequently, in my interviews I heard things like "we do interviews", "for example, we focus on communication". Earlier on, you mentioned the integration of employees into marketing campaigns such as video material. Which activities are you planning which you would like to include?

I09: We already do have an employee engagement survey which we will redesign next year, also with respect to the strategy. We figured out it doesn't make sense for us to run an employee survey once a year, because the mood can be so differently. So do feel good at this time, some don't. It is done in September, so there is "Oktoberfest" in Munich which does have a big impact on people's perception. So we said on quarterly basis we will run a pulse survey and we will take the impulses of the employees at the time and we will look into the details and how they develop. We will evaluate if there are peaks, is there a time when employees are dissatisfied. During the summer break there are many seasonal employees because many employees want to go on holiday and there are various things which influence the decision why we change this, but in general that we keep it and still modify it depending on our requirements. To increase the scoring we will modify our intranet version for our employees in the restaurant during this or next year as it, how it was developed at the time 12 years ago, does not suit our requirements anymore and not fit to the requirements of the employees either. Therefore, it will be improved. They employees asked for something similar to Facebook where they can discuss things. So that important information is not just shared in WhatsApp groups, instead information for work shall be shared in a professional environment so that this stays professional and private matters stay private. Based on this we also want to increase engagement, so interaction with colleagues, but also to get a better perspective on what happens elsewhere, for example what does happen in a restaurant in Munich while I am in Hamburg. Just to show the wide range of possibilities. If an employees of *[company name]* are joining an event they can show, "hi there, this is how we do it, maybe next time you also go for a Charity Event or a Gaming Convention" and so on.

AW: Sounds very interesting! So you got many really interesting projects you are taking care of.

I09: Yes, totally. We had a meeting in February and since than we have done so much and we are in the process of planning what we can implement when. So there is so much in the "pipeline" [Interviewee uses Engl. word].

AW: Great. Sound really good.

I09: Yes.

AW: Are you using a company-specific term instead of Employee Engagement? I heard you say Employer Engagement internally.

- I09: Exactly, we have Employer Engagement, but we run this as Employee Engagement as well.
- AW: You use it a bit like Employer Branding, correct?
- I09: Yes, exactly.
- AW: The terminologies are really a challenge *laugh*.
- I09: Yes, absolutely. It is difficult and you cannot... well those who are dealing with it always know that it covers both or at least most of the time, as I assume that no company does have one department each for Employer Branding and Employee Branding, because it is so difficult to differentiate it. I think it is just really difficult.
- AW: Yes, I agree. If you want I can also give you some more insights from the other later on.
- I09: Yes, please.
- AW: Because also for me it was really interesting to see what the different companies say about it.
- I09: Yes, totally.
- AW: Well, with respect to international: Do you also use Employer Engagement or do you translate it for the local markets?
- I09: Hm... well, if I talk about the department it is always "Employer Reputation and Engagement" because there is not yet a suitable German term for it. If you want to explain it, I usually say: Well it covers Employer Branding and much more beyond it. There is so much more and it does not end with Employer Branding. And... well Employer Branding isn't a German word either so to replace it by a German word is just really difficult and I usually do not succeed, so normally I say it in English and explain it with Employer Branding and everything else I do in addition to it.
- AW: Ok. With respect to the challenges of Employee Engagement: Which challenges do you connect with Employee Engagement? You already mentioned it is not possible to translate it.
- I09: Yes, this is one big challenge – you cannot translate it! And... I have the problem that everything which comes from the US such as "Inspire crew and management", you would not... you cannot "jemanden inspirieren" [Engl. translation "to inspire someone"] to work. It is not our culture and it doesn't make sense. We don't speak like this. However, in any claim "inspire crew and management" is included and it is simply a challenge, because this is absolutely an Engagement term which cannot be easily implemented in German.
- AW: Yes, this goes a bit into the direction of my second question. Which is, where do you see the challenges in the implementation?
- I09: Hm, yes. This is the biggest challenge, because especially with respect to Engagement, the "engagieren der Mitarbeiter" [engl. translation "engaging employees"] is different to motivating employees. Motivation is easier to create and the engagement topic is pretty American and the challenge is to make this more German and as a company to know if Employer Branding is moving forward to Employee Engagement? Is it the same and does just have a different name? Or is it a completely different topic? So, do I need somebody who looks after Employee Engagement? I think, as everything is somehow the same and there is no clear differentiation, as I see it, I think the challenge is that you can put everything into engagement. I heard from a colleague, "please arrange the Christmas party, because this is Engagement". So everything suddenly becomes engagement and you have to take care of all topics which are related to employees because everything is engagement. And I think this is a really big challenge, to set the line on what Engagement is and what does not belong to Engagement.

- AW: It is a bit like it is misused as the “Eierlegendewollmichsau” [Engl. translation “universal-all-in-one-super-duper-everything gadget”]?
- I09: Exactly! Like it has been with “Employer Branding”, everything became “Branding”, because everything was a benefit and a purpose for the employees. At least I have this feeling.
- AW: Ok. Where do you think are the biggest challenges with respect to Germany – I know we already hit that ground slightly?
- I09: Well, with respect to Germany it is the concept and how Employee Engagement is seen. In the USA, where it does come from,... well it is difficult to find a definition for it, but what it really is... and it is also a challenge to get the new talent prepared for this. Those who are now still at university, studying HR and decide to focus on Employee Engagement. I just had the challenge with a job description for a student job for Employer Engagement and Reputation and nobody knew what was meant. And I explained we were looking for somebody for Employer Branding and suddenly everybody understood and pictured it. In the meetings, I explained in more detail why the department was named this way and that it was much more than Employer Branding. Sure, a big part is Employer Branding but it goes beyond this. And I think a challenge in Germany is, do you want to continue using Employer Branding or do you want to continue using Employer Engagement where Employer Branding is part of.
- AW: Ok, great. This sounds very good. Very challenging, but very good.
- I09: Yes.
- AW: So we nearly made it. One last question for you, do you have any additional comments on Employee Engagement? Anything I should have a look at?
- I09: Hm... well... I think you know the challenges also with respect to the other interviews and I hope they have a similar option to mine. There is a book, which I would like to recommend to you. It is a book on reputation, but it might also cover Engagement and it looks at many conflicts. As there is one degree which looks after Engagement and Reputation this is a very interesting book to look at.
- AW: Perfect. If you could share the title or the ISBN number with me that would be perfect. I highly appreciate it.
- I09: Sure.
- AW: Ok. I would stop the recording as we are now done with the official part.
- I09: Yes.

Appendix 18: I10

- AW: First of all, thank you very much for your participation in this interview. During the next maximum 45 minutes I will ask you different questions regarding Employee Engagement. The questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish that the transcription of the interview shall be anonymised please let me know so before or afterwards.

Some additional information for you: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am part-time Doctor in Training at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. In my PhD study I focus on the HR managers’ understanding of the term Employee Engagement in Germany. So much about me and we start with the first question.

Can you please state your name?

- I10: Linda D.

AW: In which role are you currently working?

I10: Human Resources Manager.

AW: In which industry are you working?

I10: Hospitality and gastronomy.

AW: How many employees does your company employ globally?

I10: Globally, we have about 100,000 employees.

AW: Ok. How many of these do work in Germany?

I10: Well, let me think. Briefly, approx. 2,000.

AW: You are working in Cologne, correct?

I10: Correct.

AW: How many people do work there?

I10: 263 *laugh*.

AW: *laugh*

I10: Here I am a bit more precise.

AW: Very good. Where does your employer originally come from?

I10: Our headquarter is in America and therefore we are also an American hotel chain.

AW: Ok. Well, do you believe that the company's origin, so the American roots, do have an impact on the company culture?

I10: Yes, they have.

AW: Ok. We get back to this later on. Have you heard about the term Employee Engagement before?

I10: Yes.

AW: In which context?

I10: With respect to how loyal or how engaged an employee does feel about a company and how you can increase this relationship, this loyalty and even create it.

AW: Ok. Increasing and creating. This leads to my next question on what you have heard about the term itself.

How would you define the term if you would need to define it?

I10: How would I define it. (...) Well (...) Employee Engagement is... it depends if it is a value or a behaviour. I would need to put some more thought into this... which an employee shows to a company or has. Employee Engagement is ... well what is it... it is a focus which a company should have to create a good Employer Brand, a good Employer Branding.

AW: Ok, great. What do you believe does the term Employee Engagement mean with respect to the behaviour of an individual employee?

I10: When you are engaged, it mainly means that you support the decisions of the company, and you are more willing to be motivated, and you are in generally more motivated than an employee how is not engaged [Interviewee uses Engl. term]. In this person you need to invest much more, so that he will provide the same outcome which you would expect in general.

AW: Ok. Do you know if your employer does have a general Employee Engagement strategy in place?

- I10: Well, we do have one. However, you cannot summaries it in one sentence. In general, at *[company name]* the focus in on the employee. In same way as the focus is on the guest and there are many different areas where we are working on the engagement of the employees in various different ways.
- AW: Ok. So from what you said it is quite enhanced and with respect to your company structure, is this part of HR or are we talking about internal communication or marketing?
- I10: It is included in the company culture. I would say the way how our vision and mission is designed includes Employee Engagement as well, because otherwise it would not work at all. It lies with top level and we in HR have our main focus on it and we also got the main aims for it.
- AW: Ok. So according to what you said the main aim is to build and develop staff's engagement. What is strategy behind it? In general, no internal information.
- I10: In general, we are operating in service and if we have dis-engaged employees we would not be able to provide luxury hospitality and therefore it needs to be placed amongst the highest position. Furthermore, it includes getting the right people, making them happy in very different ways – not just the traditional benefit package – also supporting with development and talent management and everything around it. For example local benefits or we have an activity at *[company name]* which is called "Celebrating our people". This focus on saying "Thank you" and every hotel can decided how they motivate their employees. This can very basic, such as a Frozen Yoghurt station, where the team leader is placed at the staff exit and gives ice cream away. However, it can also be a bigger activity where we get external trainers on board which train specific employees. So addressing our employees very individual – this is our goal.
- AW: Ok. Has your strategy been developed in a particular country?
- I10: Most likely it comes from our head office in Chicago and has been rolled out for all hotels worldwide.
- AW: Do you know if the strategy is modified in the local markets, depending on their requirements or the needs of the employees?
- I10: Yes it has been! I know this for sure, because the entire thing was announced and there were various HR meetings hold on this topic where all hotels of the region were brought together and the strategy was presented. However, only the umbrella itself and afterwards every region was asked in workshops to review how would it look like in the markets with respect to the local requirements or what would be the best way to do it. So there was a lot of exchange and the possibility to act local as well.
- Yes and this is really important, because otherwise it would not work. What does work in America does often enough not work in Germany or even more exotic India for example. And therefore we have a lot of free space to develop it as long as it is based on the same idea and does aim for what we are all aiming for.
- AW: Ok, perfect. Do you believe that the American roots of the company does have an impact on the actual strategy, so the Employee Engagement strategy?
- I10: I do believe so. The Americans are – how shall I say that – a bit more flowery in their imagination and a typical American culture, this touch they want to live and they do it slightly less in their hotels – so for example do battle calls when you start your shift, which works great in the states and the Germans would laugh about it. However, in general it does have an impact on the company strategy. Definitely.
- AW: Ok. Lately, by the way I saw the battle call also in a British hotel.
- I10: Well, as I said, I did Trainings before I moved to HR and you get all the international trainings as tutor notes sent to you and in there it usually say that you should do

something like this. And I have always re-designed it because it would not work in Germany at all.

AW: Yes, most likely a cultural problem.

I10: Yes, maybe it would even be counterproductive.

AW: Yes, everybody would be like “what does she want...”

I10: Exactly.

AW: Can you tell me key elements of your Employee Engagement strategy? So for example Employee Engagement surveys. You mentioned the Frozen Yoghurt machine earlier on.

I10: Key elements of the strategy or how we implement it?

AW: Well, both would be great if you could tell me more about it.

I10: Key elements of the strategy is what I already mentioned: We do not have it phrased as vision or mission, instead as “purpose”, so why do we exist as a company. This ‘purpose’ is called “we care for people, so that they can be their best” and this is something which counts for our guests, but also counts for our employees in the same way. This means we see our employees also as an internal guest and say that we need to invest the same time into dealing with our people than we invest for a paying guest. Because only this way the construct of hospitality does work on the level where *[company culture]* want to be. So this means that there is very individual way of dealing with the people. There are different brands such as *[sub-company name]*, there is *[sub-company name]* and there are only modified guidelines for the brands, saying this are the overall directions we want to move with the brand and then every brand or region has the freedom to decide how the implementation would look like – with respect to the guest but also with respect to the employees. As part of it we implement individual benefits for the employees. We run, which I mentioned, “Celebrating our people”, for example we do not tell them “in May you need to do this”. Instead there is the idea of “Celebrating our people” and it is the chance to say thank you and how it is done depends on us. It can be a big cake which is provided in the canteen. It can be that we provide a Segway tour for all employees to do a city sightseeing tour or a frozen yoghurt stand or a barbecue party and so on and so on. Main focus is on appreciation *[Interviewee uses Engl. term]*, so to recognise employees and the measure everything we run an Employee Engagement survey on annual basis. And we generate an Engagement Index out of this. So we evaluate based on this data how many employees are actively engaged or disengaged.

AW: Ok, perfect.

Are you using a company-specific for or instead of Employee Engagement or are you using a specific definition which you have created as *[company name]* and also use?

I10: In our case everything moves around the purpose. So everything we do, everything we create – it is the purpose. Are we aligned with it? Are we taking care about the people who are important to us, because it says “we care for people”. Purpose is a term which we use on daily basis.

AW: Ok. So you also use this worldwide? My next question is about the translation of the term or is it the same everywhere at *[Company Name]*?

I10: We in Germany have decided to not translate this term, because in German it doesn’t sound strange. So we kept it. Every new employee who starts working for us joins a 2-day introduction and as part of it half day is on purpose and what does it mean, how do we want to manage it and the English term is also explained because independent from the language you are using you should be able to understand it afterwards. It is possible that it has been translated elsewhere into the local language, but we have not done so in Germany.

AW: Ok, do you think or see a particular challenge with respect to Employee Engagement – mainly in general?

I10: Yes. I believe very strongly that it needs to be pushed really strongly by a person or a company and I think that me, as an example, not being motivated and taking my job serious I am not able to give this to another person. With the function of a Chief with respect to HR, if I do not have the desire – and I only have it when I am engaged – to engage others, it would not work. So I believe that leadership and role model is really important in this case.

AW: Ok, great. Perfect.

Do you see particular challenges with respect to the implementation of Employee Engagement? Earlier on you mentioned that leadership is important. I frequently heard the term “work council”.

I10: Luckily, we do not have one *laugh*. It is always the question of what you want to do. If I think about Employee Engagement, I think about it as pro-employee, because my aim is to satisfy the employee so that s/he backs up the organization. So he needs to be happy and satisfied and for sure when you have a workers council you need to agree with them on all this, but still the challenge is to have the resources, because you invest time in the employee which you need to have and on the other site when you believe in it you have to priorities it. But at the end of the day it is a matter of time. Furthermore, I think as a company, independent from being small or large, you need to speak one language. You cannot just decide for yourself what I want to do when my colleague, who is in charge of another team, does something completely different. The management team needs to stand together as a team in this case and live the key values in the same way. It does not need to be all the same, but the general needs to be similar.

In particular in a hotel where all departments are working so closely together, and I do something and the head of F&B director has a completely different way to work with people – more negatively – I can try really hard, but at the end of the day the employee, who might report to this person, who does not live it and destroys my work and at the end of the day the employee is not engaged.

AW: Ok. Perfect.

Do you face particular challenges with respect to Germany? Anything where you do see challenges in particular in our German market?

I10: (...) With respect to engagement I think we need to position ourselves slightly different. Something which might work today and does engage them needs to be modified because also in hospitality, which is common knowledge, we are facing a lack of qualified employees and to keep good employees it is important to be more than just the traditional employer. This is the one area where engagement needs to change. And the other one is that people who are coming in from other industries might need to be addressed completely different.

AW: Great, we are now getting to the last question: Is there anything where you would say, Andrea, look this is up that fits well to Employee Engagement?

I10: (...) I think it is very interesting to understand and I know it is really difficult to measure, but what are the key factors which engage you. Is it the salary, is it a general benefit package? Or is it maybe a single department head, which I do see as my manager or is it a company culture? So from which perspective does the employee see it and how does this fit to how a company does position itself?

AW: Super. So that it.

I10: That was easy. *laugh*

AW: Do you want it to be anonymised?

I10: Who does read it?

AW: Well it will be published as PhD thesis with open access. However, I am also fine with anonymising you, excluding your name and *[company name]* and would just claim you are from hospitality.

I10: I would need to check if we are allowed to be named in something like this. However, I would get back to you on this during the next 1-2 days unless you need it now?

AW: No, I do not need it now. If you could send it together with the consent form that would be perfectly fine.

I10: Ok, alright.

AW: Great. That's how we do it.

Appendix 19: I11

AW: So, we are on record. First of all, thank you very much for your participation in this interview.

During the next 45 minutes maximum I will ask you different questions regarding Employee Engagement. These questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish that the transcription of the interview is anonymised please let me know so.

Some more background information for you: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am a part-time PhD student at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. In my PhD thesis I am researching HR managers' understanding of Employee Engagement in Germany. So now we are moving forward to you.

Can you please state your name again?

I11: My name is Sebastian S.

AW: Ok, great and in which position are you currently working?

I11: I am HR Artist and Senior Manager for a bank in Wiesbaden.

AW: Ok, great. So with respect to the industry you are working for, you are operating in the finance industry?

I11: Exactly.

AW: How many employees does your company employ globally?

I11: Well, for the bank approx. 950. For the overall group about 2,500 but many, well most statements I am giving I can only give for the bank because I have not enough details on the group.

AW: That is no problem. How many of these are working in Germany?

I11: Approx. 700.

AW: Out of the 900. Where does your company originally come from?

I11: It is from Berlin.

AW: From Berlin. Very good. Do you think that the German background, the background from Berlin, does have an impact on the company culture?

I11: Yes, we are a "German business".

AW: Ok. Now we are moving on towards Engagement. Have you heard about the term Employee Engagement before?

I11: Yes, sure!

AW: Ok and in which context?

I11: Well, I am working in Human Resources and there it comes up again and again. We translate it as “engagiert” [engl. translation “engaged”], so how motivated are employees to deliver top efficiency – if I am allowed to phrase it this way.

AW: Ok. You already answered my next question. Very well. If you would need to define it yourself? You mentioned ‘top efficiency’ how would you define it?

I11: I would phrase it as following: All basic conditions and hygiene factors would create a situation where employees are happy to work and willing to contribute to the success of the business which does not need to be an extreme time effort, it means the maximum quality and the maximum involvement.

AW: If you look at it from the point of view of an individual employee, what do you think does Employee Engagement mean with respect to the behaviour of an individual employee?

I11: (...) Hm, the question does come from the theory of motivation and what does motivate people. So intrinsic or extrinsic drivers and individualised for a single employee it is really difficult. We provide various packages – based on the “Rasenmäher-Prinzip” [engl. “principle of a lawn mower”] – and I am questioning if this is the right thing or would it be a canteen. Identifying this is the interesting part for me, figuring out the best principle.

AW: Do you know if your employer has a general Employee Engagement strategy in place?

I11: (...) Yes.

AW: Who is in charge of this strategy? HR? Marketing?

I11: HR.

AW: Can you tell me a bit more about the general aim of the strategy? So what are you aiming to achieve with this strategy in general?

I11: What do we want to achieve? Well, our aim is to make sure that the employees do what they are supposed to do. Just hold on, the cleaning lady is just interrupting. Now, we can continue. [...] that employees do what they are suppose to do. We are facing competition, also international competition, fight for the best employees and for sure we want to achieve with those different benefit packages and the canteen scheme that they employees are very satisfied with work.

AW: Was this strategy developed in a particular country?

I11: In Germany.

AW: In Germany, ok. Would you modify such a strategy, which has been developed in Germany, based on the local requirements of the markets in which you are operating and based on the local organisations? Or does it stay the same on global basis?

I11: Hm, I think here we require some improvement, because we focus very strongly on Germany.

AW: As it is the biggest market?!

I11: Yes.

AW: Ok. Great. Do you believe that the German origin of the company has an impact on the employee engagement strategy?

I11: Yes, because we organise everything in a very detailed way and establish it in detail (germ. Term “einprägeln” and “überstülpen”) and for a German soul it is complicated to include a certain verity.

AW: So to a certain extent the concept is imposed [on the countries].

I11: Yes.

AW: Ok. To not use the term “prügeln”. [laugh]

I11: Yes, that’s fine.

AW: Can you tell me a bit more about one or two core elements of your strategy? Many state that they have an employee engagement survey in place and you earlier mentioned you have a canteen concept in place – are there any other elements which build your strategy?

I11: Hm. We have an above average payment scheme in place. I think this needs to be taken into the equation as well and we offer – we participate in the Top Employer Germany – we offer, a wide range of benefits from which the employee can choose from. I think this is also a strategy.

AW: Do you internally use a company-specific term for employee engagement? Or a specific definition?

I11: No.

AW: So you use employee engagement?

I11: Yes.

AW: Consequently, you also use this term in the other countries in which you are operating?

I11: I think we do not really talk about it there.

AW: Ok, I write this down. Which challenges do you actually connect to employee engagement?

I11: Which challenges?

AW: Yes, in general.

I11: Which challenges... I mentioned it earlier on: We are all motivated by different things. There are different types of motivation and what does drive us. And what we do here is a “one-size-fits-all”-approach, right? A classic example is an employee is “unzufrieden” [engl. Translation “dissatisfied] and threatens to leave the company and the usual reaction is “more money”. And I am questioning if this is the right way to go? Maybe it’s worth to evaluate what are the drivers of engagement and where are those located and maybe these are completely different topics. From my perspective we are here at a really early development stage.

AW: If you look at the implementation: Where do you see particular challenges in the implementation of actions?

I11: The fear of people to change. For example, are employee surveys treated like the poor cousin because everyone is afraid that the results might be bad and the we are getting more transparent in areas where things are not working.

AW: Ok. With respect to Germany, where do you see the biggest challenges for the German market regarding Employee Engagement?

I11: [...] Puh... If you check where this is usually positioned, frequently in HR and communication departments, and that there is often a lack in knowledge on how “Engagement” [engl. Translation “engagement], how motivation is created and instead of understanding it in detail, things are often done quickly to ensure that one or two stakeholders, which are usually not the employees, are satisfied.

AW: Ok. Good point. This was quite quick. The estimated 45 minutes which I mentioned earlier where estimated quite conservatively and we are reaching the final question now.

I11: Ok.

- AW: Yes. Would you like to add anything on the topic of Employee Engagement? You already mentioned extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, which are important elements on this topic. Are there any other topics you would like to point out?
- I11: Well, what are also important topics? One might be what we are currently facing all-over the country a skills shortage. It is about culture and how can we make culture more measurable, visible and perceptible to ensure... well we, end up with principle of “matching” really soon. So that I can check if I do fit to the company or not. I think to engage with this is a big challenge over the next year. However, when I arrange with this it is much easier to align actions along this. So if I define I want to be like this, I need to feel this with every part of my body. If I claim that transparency is our thing, I need to make sure that is lived in all aspects including the architectural design of the building, the salary, in every aspect. Otherwise, it becomes screen washing [uses English term] and employees will realise this straight away.
- AW: Good point, perfect. So this was quite quick on this early Monday morning.
- I11: Yes, while we were still fresh.
- AW: With respect to some of the aspects, if I look at it a bit from a broader perspective, other companies are facing the same challenges. Especially those with a comparable size to your company. What is really interesting is that the branch which is strongly involved with engineers has stated many of these topics, including for example Fight for Talents and so on. Of course this comes up everywhere, but especially for the larger mid-size companies these are very relevant topics in comparison to the large organisations, which I also included in the study. The topic of organisational culture is important. There was one interview which completely left the topic of Employee Engagement behind and moved towards culture and how important culture actually is.
- I11: Yes!
- AW: Perfect. Thank you very much, you really supported me here. Is it fine with you if I leave the interview as it is or do you wish that it will be anonymised? What do prefer?
- I11: When we will the study be published?
- AW: After the 28. September 2019 – so autumn 2019.
- I11: That’s all fine. There is no secret information included. When we participate in the Top Employer certification we are asked about the same topic.
- AW: Perfect. Thank you very much for your time! Great, we saved some time so that you can start on time into this Monday.
- I11: Yes, that’s perfect. I have some time to ramp up till 10am now. All the best to you! Sounds like a big thing and I am sure we will meet again.
- AW: For sure. Thank you very much for your time and have a good week.
- I11: Good bye, Ms. Wylegala.
- AW: Bye!

Appendix 20: I12

- AW: Now we come to the official part. First of all, thank you very much for your participation in this interview. During the next approximately 45 minutes I will ask you various questions about employee engagement. These questions and answers will be recorded. If you want the transcript of this interview to be anonymised please inform me accordingly – also during the interview or afterwards. However, you prefer.
- I12: All right.

AW: A bit more about my background: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am part-time student at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. In my PhD research I am investigating the understanding of Employee Engagement amongst HR managers in Germany. Since 2013, I am enrolled as a Doctor in Training.

So, let's move on to you.

Can you state your complete name please?

I12: My name is Tim K.

AW: And which position do you currently cover?

I12: Currently, I am Head of Human Resources for the Career Partner Group. Career Partner Group is the educational institution for the *[Company name]* and others.

AW: Ok, so this means in which industry are you working?

I12: Education.

AW: Ok, and how many employees does your organisation employ globally?

I12: Globally: 870.

AW: How many of those are based in Germany?

I12: 862.

AW: Ok. Nice.

Originally, the organisation is from Germany.

I12: That's correct.

AW: Do you believe that the international or the German background of the company has an effect on the organisational culture?

I12: Absolutely. The German background has an impact on our organisational culture.

AW: Great. We will now look into the topic of Employee Engagement. Have you every heard about the term "Employee Engagement"?

I12: Yes, I heard about it.

AW: Ok. In which context?

I12: Well, we actually use the term in our organisation when we talk about our employee survey called an Employee Engagement survey by our management. Which focus on understanding if our employees are happy with their tasks, their teams but also with us as their employer but also on the identification and the understanding with the job. So basically, these three topics: task, team and employer which are supposed to be measured.

AW: Ok. With this answer you already covered my next question on what you have heard about the term yet.

I12: So basically, what I just stated. Also reviewing side effects which I have also learnt during my studies here at the *[company name]* where the topic of Human Resource management was also covered. Today, is employee engagement part of the employee experience as the dominating term.

AW: Yes. Assume you should define the term in one sentence. How would you define it?

I12: In one sentence with approximately seven sub-sentences. *[Laughing]*

AW: Yes, that's fine. Go ahead.

I12: For me Employee Engagement is ... well ... it already starts... stammering.... Well, for me Employee Engagement is a construct which combines and measures satisfaction

and identification of employees with their task, their team and their employer and which stands in relation to the work performance [Interviewee uses English term].

AW: Ok. What do you believe does Employee Engagement mean with respect to the behaviour of an employee?

I12: With respect to the behaviour of an employee... I believe that a “highly or positively engaged” [interviewee uses English terms] employee shows a positive attitude towards working, especially with respect to performance. So, a bigger identification with the organisation and therefore is more willing to contribute. Of course, this also correlates vice versa, negatively.

AW: Do you know if your current employer has a general employee engagement strategy in place?

I12: Well, not a completely developed strategy. No.

AW: Ok, but what is there is this part of HR or maybe part of internal communications? Marketing? Where does this belong to in your case?

I12: It is part of HR. However, so far HR was 95% administrative work until today. Now with the perspective – considering me as Head of HR being now in charge of [Company name]’s HR and Career Partners for just three weeks – of developing employer marketing internally, but also externally. Also covering communications on Employee Engagement in future.

AW: This means that your main target is communication?

I12: Exactly. Especially with respect to culture, focused communication internally, including reflecting on feedback and communication circle.

AW: Was the strategy developed in a particular country?

I12: In Germany.

AW: Ok.

As soon as your strategy is more holistically implemented: Do you believe that your strategy will be adjusted for those employees not based in Germany – which are currently eight if I remember correctly – based on their local requirements? Or will it be a globally identical strategy?

I12: I believe it will be a general strategy at the beginning. Personally, I believe – but this also depends on how quickly country organisations gain a certain size or exceed a certain threshold [interviewee uses English term] in their size. But right now, we talk about here three, there two and here another three employees if I remember correctly – so, in three additional country organisations. But becoming more and more international and considering that for us as a group growth is just starting, I believe that if we have enough country organisations of a certain size, this engagement strategy needs to be adjusted based on cultural requirements in the local markets.

AW: Ok. Now we go back to the topic of origin. Do you believe that the origin of the organisation, so the German background of the organisation, also have an impact on the employee engagement strategy?

I12: Yes.

AW: Ok. Well, are you able to already outline some of the key pillars of your strategy, well, the strategy which you are currently developing? I understood it is about communication, but also about employee feedback. Is there anything else which you will include in this strategy?

I8: It is definitely about communication. Maybe we start right at the beginning. Status today is that the employee engagement strategy covers “belonging, purpose, achievement” [interviewee uses English terms] and also “happiness” [interviewee uses English term]

so affiliation and identification with us as an employer or also our personality as an employer. So, we already focusing on creating a stronger “culture fit” [*interviewee uses English term*] during the hiring process [*interviewee uses English term*] to ensure we have a achieve a better “person – culture fit” [interviewee uses English terms] and therefore to achieve most likely a better performance outcome. With respect to communication and the “purpose” [*interviewee uses English term*], as we are coming from Germany as an educational institution, it is about doing a good thing during the development for our customers, so mainly our students for their life-long learning experience. But to also communicate this much more internally as part of the strategy. Then with respect to the “achievement” approach we are developing for different target groups such as “top-talents and high-potentials” [interviewee uses English terms] programmes to create for those sub-target group which are crucial for us an additional add on or benefit. Here we try to create a certain discipline. And finally, we are also discussing between HR and management – also with a little smile on our faces – the inclusion of a so-called party paragraph in our contracts: “Celebrate till the end” which is of course very difficult to establish from a law perspective, but to a certain extent to link back to the culture and to create a surrounding where people like to be and to create awareness that our employees are often spending more time in the office than at home and to ensure that they are willing to invest more than just the minimum into their job and to identify with it.

AW: Ok.

Well, you stated at the beginning that you also use the term “Employee Engagement” itself within the organisation. Did I understand this right?

I12: Parts of the organisation do so – including the management – but sometimes without thinking into much detail about the definition of the term.

AW: Ok. Is there any other term you use instead of Employee Engagement?

I12: Well, often – at least how I perceive it – is Employee Engagement used along with Employee Experience. Or ... how to say that ...

AW: Mentioned in the same context?

I12: Yes, mentioned in the same context. Thank you.

I am just thinking what else is used. We do not just use it towards our employees, we also use it towards our customers as “consumer engagement” [*interviewee uses English term*]. Well, defined pretty similar. It is not just about performance measurement it is also about “how engaged is a student” and “is it a high performer” [interviewee uses English phrases] – so not just about the student’s scoring it is also about the student’s engagement and involvement in the culture from student site. As an organisation this is often more important to us than a 1.0-scoring.

AW: Ok, perfect.

When you communicate to the colleagues in the three other markets would you usually also use the term Employee Engagement or would you translate it into the local language?

I12: Today, we would use it as we use the English term also in Germany. Also in the other countries we employ English-speaking staff as we do in Germany and we use the term Employee Engagement.

AW: Ok. In general, where do you see the challenges of Employee Engagement?

I12: Well, are you referring to the definition, to the establishment or to the measurement?

AW: Well, maybe in step one with respect to the definition and second with respect to the establishment and third with respect to the measurement. Especially, with respect to Germany. Because than we have covered all three questions.

I12: I believe, at least for me, with respect to the definition it is a term which is known by many people but not clearly defined. It is mainly a term used by HR and employers. However, during the last years the term has stretched much more towards Employee Experience – if I am allowed to say so. This goes along with the measurability and then also the establishment of it. So, straight away I have no easy or CEO-like explanation of which I have heard so far.

AW: Which is also important with respect to the implementation.

I12: Absolutely. Yes.

AW: Where do you see in general the biggest challenge for the terminology in Germany?

I12: From my perspective in Germany, especially looking at the field of big mid-class or the segment of the mid-class which we have in Germany, which is still not very international and therefore the acceptance of an English term is not yet given. In Germany we often do not think further than looking at satisfaction and loyalty and/ or recommendation, but we do not look at the relationship of those and how other drivers effect it. Hm, what else? Maybe I have another think I can think of which...

No, I think those are the things I can think of.

AW: Ok, perfect.

Let's jointly look at the final question.

Do you have any further topics where you would say "Andrea you need to look at those"?

I12: Hm... No.

AW: Ok, perfect than we are actually done.

Appendix 21: I13

AW: There might be some points which we will discuss again even so we briefly outlined them yesterday during our first conversation. However, to ensure that everything is complete we might discuss those again, so please do not let yourself get confused by this.

First of all, thank you very much for your participation in this interview. During the next approx. 45 minutes I will ask you various questions about employee engagement. These questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish that the transcript of this record should be anonymised please let me know so accordingly. Just for your understanding: My name is Andrea Wylegala. I am currently working my PhD at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. As part of my PhD I am investigating the understanding of the term Employee Engagement of HR managers in Germany. And now we continue with the first question for you: Could you please state your complete name please?

I13: Sure, it is a pleasure. Tjalf N.

AW: What is your current role?

I13: I am Managing Director of the clipr GmbH and in addition I am operating in different other functions such as a "Digital Evangelist" for various organisations.

AW: For which industry are you operating?

I13: Our focus is on HR management in general and mainly on HR services as consultant.

AW: Your team, how big is it in general.

- I13: Sure, we have 14 people on our payroll and additional a certain amount of fixed freelancer – as you would call them.
- AW: Ok.
Your team, well your company, is originally from Germany?
- I13: The company's head quarter is in Munich. The employees are spread amongst different countries.
- AW: Ok.
Do you believe that the German background of the organisation has an impact on the company culture and what as consult deliver to your customers?
- I13: I think here we need to differentiate between the different functions; so either as managing director of a rather small agency or as consult who is frequently out there. Less on with respect to Engagement, but more with respect to Human Resources. Shall I answer to this twice or how would you prefer it?
- AW: Well, what you could do as I am mainly interviewing HR managers from large organisations and some consults and usually, they phrased it really broad and outlined where they are actively involved most of the time in the Engagement field. As this is also somehow linked.
- I13: What I can do is to bring my personal perspective from my own small agency with my 14 permanent employees and some freelance people who are out there or I can outline this from the perspective of a consult where it is not working.
- AW: Ok, considering the sizing of the overall organisations I would suggest to reply to this as consultant. Otherwise, the agency with its number of employees would stick out of the overall research.
- I13: Ok.
Yes, sure. Would you mind repeating the question? I would than answer as consultant?
- AW: With respect to your work as consulting: Did you observe if a company's origin have an impact of the company culture?
- I13: I really hope not!? Because than it would not be a neutral consulting, however, it is most likely impossible to hide from your own perspective and maybe some companies even contract you because you got a bit of cultural understanding which you can bring in and which is aligned with the wanted or the existing company culture. Nevertheless, the companies – at least those which I consult – are usually working in a global environment and as I am working a lot in Germany I also recognise that the German culture should often also the lived stronger than for example an American culture. Especially in sales – which is sometimes on people's wish list. However, if I stick to the companies which I am working for and which are more international some of the stronger German values are positively influencing the consulting work. However, usually I am not booked as a consultant to bring in my own culture. Instead I pick them up where they currently are and define a benchmark on where the journey should go. I am also benchmarking where the other organisations surrounding them are currently positioned. Additionally, we are looking into – but maybe here I am going into too much detail – variables which need to be adjusted to generate the required culture. I am happy to share some examples from practice which I have experienced over the approx. last one to two years. The last five years might not be so interesting as the last one to two years have massively changed due to the digital change and therefore also the cultural understanding has changed dramatically especially on management level, but not just on management level, as the contractors are often the initiators, but the normal management level does usually do the implementation.
- AW: Perfect, sounds very interesting. We will now be looking into the topic of Employee Engagement and also the strategy behind.

Therefore, first of all: Have you yet heard about the term Employee Engagement?

I13: [Laughing] It would be bad if I would not know about it. Interestingly enough, the term is often interpreted differently, therefore I could also pass the question back to you to understand how you define it. From my perspective there are two definitions and the first one – which is from my point of view the wrong one – is “Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit” [engl. Translation “Employee Satisfaction”] which is – from my perspective – not the meaning of Engagement itself. So more of a cosmetic meaning. Instead it is more about on how “engagiert” [engl. “involved”] – which is also part of the terminology itself – employees are in the organisation. Consequently, satisfaction – which is more than the cosmetic meaning behind – is a pillar of this. I would not necessarily be involved if I am just satisfied. Much more it is a question of how “engagiert” [engl. “involved”] are the employees with the organisation.

AW: This already answered one of my next questions. Thanks a lot. [laughing]

I will jump back now to understand in which context you have heard about the term for the first time?

I13: Well... actually, already during my education. Somehow, everything we are discussing is just old wine in new bottles, isn't it?! Digitalisation and so on it has already been there. If you ask me, it has already been a topic since the beginning of man kind. However, if you ask me in person, I believe it already starts in school. Students who are already “engagiert” [Engl. “engaged” or “involved”] during class will continue to be so during their working life, too. It will continue during their careers and if you get into a management role, engagement is still important – with respect to promotions, managing employees and so on. I would say it is a hot topic from early childhood onwards. From my perspective this is a really interesting question, because it is nothing new with respect to being engaged and being satisfied. It should actually be part of our nature and therefore it should strongly be linked to our individual behaviour.

AW: If you would be asked to define it, what would be the definition?

I13: Could you specify which term should be defined?

AW: Sure. How would you define the term Employee Engagement?

I13: Translated into German I would say: How well are my employees in my organisations engaged?

AW: Ok.

I13: If I am rephrasing this into a question. Interestingly enough those questions are usually not asked by organisations on a long-term basis. Usually the approach is “let's do another employee satisfaction survey” or “I read something about this” and “it is a nice idea, let's do this” and in the end, it does not fit the organisational culture at all. Especially not managed by a communication approach. This is usually the problem.

How engaged are my employees and how can I measure this? What are the best variables to measure this? Did I do a reference measurement before? What does this mean? These should be the first questions – but maybe we will come back to this.

AW: Ok. When you look back at your customers, which you are working with, who is normally in charge of the Employee Engagement topic? Is it HR? Is it internal communication? Is it marketing? There are different approaches with respect to the responsibility.

I13: Well, I guess there are two answers to this: One, by whom is it managed and who should actually manage it.

With respect of who is usually in charge: If I am the managing board and if I ask the responsible person “what is our “engagement” [Interviewee is referring to in Engl. “Engagement level”], I would ask Head of HR. And this person should actually know

this and if this person does not know if I would ask this person to figure out the “engagement” [Interviewee is referring to in Engl. “Engagement level”].

Ideally, the individual managers of the different departments should know it and the management team in general. They need to know how well are my employees “engaged” [Interviewee uses Engl. term]. How well do their commit towards our organisation? These are the real once, but they are usually untended in this.

Instead the management board on higher level involves consultancies which create great slides and refer to the Gallup studies and whatever else, stating that’s where we need to go. But those who are really impacted by this, those who work with the employees on a daily basis, those who might need to motivate their employees on a daily basis for what every reason, these are actually the once which need to be asked!

AW: So, the management topic is a very important one from your perspective?

I13: Yes, sure! They are the drivers of the organisation. Of cause the real drivers are the employees. For me is a company, and this I also know from my company – I only create the accounting and customers, those which contract us, we only share the processes etc., but the actual “engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] happens between the employees and the customers. And everything in between, like it was in the past with respect to the role of a manager, is different in today’s understanding of a management function. At least this is how I live it. I do no longer pay based on a position. I pay based on an employee’s performance and what an employee is able to deliver. Therefore, I do not mind if this is a trainee who might be much better than someone who is in the company for 10 years. In this case I am paying more to the trainee than the one who is with the company for 10 years. For sure, this is easy to say and I am not paying based on any tariffs, but the understanding of the US approach or others outside Germany, where this is lived. If I think of Silicon Valley: there you are not payed based on how long you are with the company and consequently you get a company car because you are with the company for ten years and therefore you also get a company mobile phone. This is completely irrelevant. It is more about your abilities.

AW: From the consultative perspective: Which strategies do organisations have with respect to Employee Engagement and what the aims behind?

I13: Sure, aims and strategies. For sure, this depends a bit of the motivation factors behind. What do you want to improve to improve employees’ “engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. term]. My perspective is that I first need to look at this with respect to “what are the employees actually expecting from this”? These are motivational factors and if I know them, I am able to setup the strategy. The aim behind should be creating maximum level of “engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] within different areas of the organisation. And one area, which is usually on a top position, is the salary topic. Many do not like to hear this and there are also other factors, but salary is on a high level. For me, if I look at organisations and how they keep someone satisfied, if someone is underpaid, “gender” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] topics – male - female – and also results vs affiliation with the company and so on – so salary as one topic. And finally, the entire topic of “Anerkennung” [Engl. translation “recognition”]. “Wertschätzung” [Engl. translation “appreciation”] is also a term which is used frequently but is very quickly forgotten. But those are the topics which I would put really high. So, salary and “Wertschätzung” [Engl. translation “appreciation”].

Additionally, – well, if this is your question, if this does not answer the question you need to tell me – another aim is to renew the organisational leadership to become more transparent to get more trust into the organisational leadership. This is often also not given.

If this going into the right direction? If so, I have different other factors which I identified as a consultant.

AW: Yes, totally. You are on the right track.

I13: Ok, great. I realised in smaller dimensions in my own agency, where I am also working with consultancies, but also as a consult in bigger organisation, where employees do not trust into the organisational leadership. Sometimes caused by changes, globalisation or also by acquisitions. So, you do no longer know where the journey is going and what is your role in it and here the engagement is usually not really high. I guess there are five billion studies on this, but I usually say or feel that approx. 80% of the employees in organisations are latent willing to change job. Because somehow they are not satisfied. For sure everybody got different "Bedürfnisse" [Engl. translation "needs"] – one person is more driven by "salary" [Interviewee uses Engl. term], another one is stronger driven by "Anerkennung" [Engl. translation "recognition"], while a third one looking more at topics such as "Work-Life-Balance" [Interviewee uses Engl. term]. But the topic of trust into organisational leadership, I see as another topic and for sure the topic of career – which needs to be approached as well – and development possibilities and how to provide those – either vertical or horizontal – not everyone always wants to become a manager when this person is just good at their role. Maybe this person just wants to become more experienced without changing role. So the topic of development is something where it needs to be defined how I can offer this to my employees and how can I offer this to my employees by making sure it fits to my organisational aims. I need to know what I want to achieve as organisation? How much more adding value do I want to create next year and what do they employees need to contribute and how do they need to "engagieren" [Engl. translation "engage"] to achieve this. "Arbeitsbedingungen" [Engl. translation "Working Conditions"] does also play a role. Basically, which instruments, "tools" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] and which space do I provide my employees with – and today space does really mean do I need to lock them in the office spaces and focus on working hours or do I focus more on aims and how they achieve those? If they do this from their home office, from a camping spot or is the office the space. This is also a topic.

Overall, in generally spoken, if you work on these topics – I do not know how many there were – but that would definitely bring you forward.

AW: Ok.

Did you ever observe, especially with respect to the large global organisations with those you have worked so far, if their Employee Engagement strategy was developed in a particular country?

I13: Well, usually they do not have one. [laughing]

Often, they do not have one and the topic is just there, attached to something. Well... I really try to remember, if anyone, in case I would have asked, which I did for sure – "Do you have an Employment strategy" – I would most likely been told about different actions, but not a real strategy. For sure, the field is not my key area of responsibility, however, it does not really matter in which field I would ask this question, for example, in recruitment, if I ask three people I will get five different answers, consequently, a clear strategy – if there is one – usually just exists on a company level with respect to where you want to head with the organisation. But broken down for different departments, such as HR, and then even broken down further to "engagement" [Interviewee uses Engl. term]... if someone says so then the person has just developed it. I do not believe that this is a real strategy in this case.

AW: Ok.

Well, you mentioned that we are talking more about different activities which are currently run by a company, less so a real strategy. Did you observe that these different activities are realised in completely different ways in different countries? Or did you observe that large companies actually establish the same set of activities for the different markets where they are working?

I would like to understand the unique approach on global-level. In particular global organisations – which I also learnt from the interviews – do either apply the same strategy everywhere or they say “no, our people are so different in the different countries and we need to adjust it”.

- I13: Sure. Well, now, we really looking into different cultural understandings. Here I can share a very basic example which you can just use on a 1:1-basis. Lately, I have met – well, I have been invited to [...] [country of origin was deleted on request] – to meet with a – how to call it best – large mid-size company with approx. 70,000 employees. They are operating globally and they are still run by their owner. It is actually a family business. Usually this size of company is quoted on the stock exchange or are share holder managed and therefore the run always slightly different, but here it is a business run by a family. Something which is in Germany very uncommon. Especially, having 20,000 to 70,000 employees, not necessarily a lot, but still some people.

And this company is actually based on 500 individual organisations. Different “GmbHs” [Engl. Translation “limited liability company”] which generate the business if you want to call it that way. And I was standing on the stage for the podium discussion and the daughter, the upcoming head of the management, said that she would like a strategy based on one culture which applies to all organisations. So, one “Engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] which she would like to run amongst all employees. I thought about this for a second and then I literally fall of my chair because I believe this is not possible. I do not think that you can tell a business, for example in Nairobi that they need to do it completely similar to the team in Berlin. I cannot tell my colleagues here that they need to do it similar to our team in Munich and vice versa. This is also a big misunderstanding of the Americans when they take over German companies or also French companies or when we acquire companies from UK and someone believes we are all the same. Also when you look at Spain, as one example, they have a completely different working routine than we have and I cannot just tell them you are all the same. What I able to do is to establish “Werte” [Engl. translation “Values”] and “Werteverständnis” [Engl. translation “Understanding of values”]. Those I can establish. But to just address everyone in the same way I believe is irresponsible and therefor simply wrong.

- AW: Do you believe that the origin of a company – especially when you look at your different customers, especially those which are international – does have an impact on their Employee Engagement strategy?

- I13: Yes, a very clear “yes”! Today, I do not work as much as a consultant anymore, but there are still some customers where I show up every now and then and those are mainly German organisations – sometimes from Switzerland or Austria – but mainly German and they think German and work German and this will not change until they have changed their management board and their HR board by adding other people who come from other countries and therefore bring different cultural understandings. Those with the German minds usually pretend to be very international, but they still apply a very German way of thinking. Nevertheless, I am not saying it is a bad way of thinking, but it is a very particular way of thinking which other people, HR, etc. in other countries need to live with. For sure, there has been a lot of change over the last years also effected by the media, outlining that it needs to be approached differently. However, I do see often that they feel caught by still applying this German thinking and please do not get me wrong; for sure it is a good thinking and which leads to – and here we are back to the topic of “Engagement” – that other cultures are left behind thinking “the Germans”. Nevertheless, same story with the Americans. Here I can also tell you stories on what the Germans say about the Americans and which are not very well on track with their Engagement approach.

- AW: Looking at your customers, do see particular key elements which drive Employee Engagement? Usually, I hear “let’s do an employee survey as one example. Do you

know any other key drivers or activities where companies state “this is a activity of my Employee Engagement strategy”?

- I13: Maybe one comment on the employee survey: Often people do not trust this employee engagement surveys as the tools are set up in a way that it is possible to refer back to an employee; especially when feedback from different departments is summarised. It is really easy to make a link and statements come up like “this was said by this person”. It is possible to break it down to a department and then state that this might be stated by a particular team. Therefore, the data is often no reliable and therefore not useful, but this might also be a different topic as it also depends on the tools and that you are not able to break it down and be able to retrace details. For sure the tools are often ensuring this, but I could state some tools or at least I know some tools where it is possible to retrace details. However, this is just a small side step on this matter.

Well, what are the drivers: The topic of communication! This is an important driver from my perspective which allow the employees to understand the company’s business and why things are done in a certain way. And what is my add on? What can I contribute to this? What can I pay in on this matter? So, communication is a really big topic.

Then, what you also just mentioned, a goal and a resulting understanding in the strategy is also important. Employees need guidance. It’s like on a motorway. You need crash barriers on your left and right to ensure I am not getting off track. If I have the feeling that they company does know where they journey is going, especially nowadays in the digital age a clear understanding of the strategy is build on this. An employee survey is more of a cosmetic thing.

And what I would also like to mention briefly is the topic of “work-life-balance” [Interviewee uses Engl. term], the topic of pressure of work is an important topic which companies need to keep in mind. They need to work on the images. The topic of “work-life-balance” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] is a big topic. However, a topic which is also shown at so many HR trade fairs is the topic of “Gesundheitsmanagement” [Engl. term “Health Management”]. Why? Because companies really need to do something about it. It is also part of a company’s image. We just saw this with Facebook and how quickly an image can be negatively affected and what can I do to develop it properly.

Finally, I believe it is important – and nowadays easy to manage through social intranet etc. – how I involve my employees in decisions. This way I am bringing in “Wertschätzung” [Engl. translation “Appreciation”] towards the employee. If I do so I am picking up on employees’ energy – the negative one and the positive one – I might be able to transfer negative energy into positive one. And if I pick this up and transfer this into change which is visual than I believe that I have create “engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. term].

- AW: During your work which other terms or also alternative terms have you heard about when talking about Employee Engagement?

- I13: Well, “Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit” [Engl. Translation „Employee Satisfaction“] I hear a lot. Mostly this word, usually interpreted in different ways, but I hear rather rarely from HR how productive are our employees. This usually comes from different departments. Especially, when someone has just been recruited. When does it need to start? When does Engagement [Interviewee uses Engl. term] really start? It does actually already start much earlier. I would call it “pre-Engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. word] which already starts when I start to recruit. It does even start before that. This all contributes to “Engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. term]. Even the recruitment has changed today. As a company, I first need to create a proper reputation to get new employees “engagiert” [Here it can be translated either with “campaigning for someone” or with “engaging someone”] and here the term would be used first. And during the first months the question comes up how to take care of this employee so that he does not quit during the first day? Usually, we take care a lot during the recruitment, pay attention to someone, even put a fruit basket on the table but when this person first arrives you just

realise “oh yes, you start today”. And there the “Wertschätzung” [Engl. translation “Appreciation”] is again not given. Somehow this all links to it.

However, for sure “Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit” [engl. Translation „Employee satisfaction“] starts directly on the first day until an employee leaves the company. This also has a big impact on the image. Defining how well an employee is still involved with the company. Maybe this employee makes good reputations for new employees if he leaves the organisation positively and it is a great company, it just did not match any more for whatever reason, but still does not refer badly on the company. This is also something we often do not take completely into consideration. Sometimes, when an employee leaves the organisation, s/he might get a more or less good reference and that's it. Alumni are not lifted correctly. They are usually founded by previous employees and are not managed by the organisation, but can be a very important tool to ensure satisfaction also afterwards. These are things I have in mind. However, I am too far away from what companies are doing. Companies seem to think, 'I do my employee survey and some more cosmetic things and I add some additional money for bonus agreements and do some career management', but these are all things which only survive for so long.

AW: Now, we will look more into the challenges. Just one remark for you, this is the last section. Which challenges do you link to the term Employee Engagement?

I13: The challenge as a company? Well...

AW: May I briefly jump in?! First, with the term and second, with respect to the implementation. However, you are welcomed to answer them in one.

I13: Ok. Could you repeat the question please?

AW: Yes. Which challenges do you link the term Employee Engagement? And the second is: Which challenges do see with respect to the implementation of Employee Engagement strategies?

I13: Ok. I did not take any notes on what I said before, therefore I might repeat myself. With respect to what a company associate with the term Employee Engagement and am actually starting pretty blank. Usually, there are the typical questions on “Mitarbeiterbindung” [Engl. translation “Employee Retention”] and what can we do to improve it? Usually, the topic of salary comes up, “benefits” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] and what can we do in this area? What can we do to improve our communication? Career perspectives... various... well, how can we keep our employees? This is usually the cry for help. As a consultant I wouldn't be required if they already have the answers. Therefore, I would be more interesting to understand the colleagues from this field and what they do to improve. And I believe it is not enough to just organise a nice barbecue. This are actually the questions which we should ask! How can we by using digitalisation improve our “Engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. term]? And here I am directly looking at “Social Intranet” [Interviewee uses Engl. term], “Social Enterprise” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] which are first of all software, but it is important to understand how to use this software to involve employees? For your understanding: “Social Intranet” is used to offer employees a platform different to what we know so far where you meet in the kitchen. The kitchen you now transfer to the internet where all employees where all employees, similar to Facebook or Xing, are able to exchange between each other. And this are also the challenges for the companies. Do they want this? Some say, yes, we do want them to bring in critique and provide constructive feedback to improve. So, what we use to call the office grapevine gets transferred into the digital world to make it more transparent also for the management team and the company and to stop certain things. Additionally, it ensures the exchange and this links back to “Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit” [Engl. translation “Employee Satisfaction”] and “Engagement” [Interviewee uses English term] when I know what the others do out there. Always aiming to avoid groups, to ensure how can we get better as a company but also as a person, a team or a department. This are the challenges of the digital age.

Employees have much more possibility, also if we look globally, to discuss things and to learn from it.

These are the basic discussions we had over the last two years where I have also been involved in various workshops on which tools can we implement. Most companies have very different communication tools and work with different communication tools. Sometimes up to ten/twelve tools which I saw in one mid-size company. They had eleven different possibilities to get in touch with each other and lot goes missing, because you do not know what had been discussed and agreed to in one of the channels. So now it should be centralised in one platform which is supported by a software. However, this does not help at all if I do not inform people and most people do have problems with transparency. And also with sharing their knowledge, because they assume when they share it they might risk being useless. Following the principle of “knowledge is power”. Therefore, this is linked back into culture to avoid this behaviour and what needs to be done by a company to stop this thinking and here I am looking into the process of communication – also top-down. That’s a topic which needs to be place on top at the management team. They need to live and show this. They need to live and how engagement [interviewee uses Engl. Term]. Also via video broadcast if s/he cannot be everywhere in person. So establish frequent sessions where employees are also able to raise their questions and reply to those questions in real time without having a filter applied. This are the things I am thinking of.

AW: Great. Then we are done. Thanks a lot.

Appendix 22: I14

AW: First of all, thank you very much for your participation in this interview. During the next approx. 45 minutes I will ask you various questions about employee engagement. These questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish that the transcript of this record should be anonymised please let me know so accordingly. Just for your understanding: My name is Andrea Wylegala. I am currently working my PhD at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. As part of my PhD I am investigating the understanding of the term Employee Engagement of HR managers in Germany. And now we continue with you: Could you please state your complete name please?

I14: Sure, Isabel R.

AW: What is your current role?

I14: HR Business Partner at [Company name]. Specialised on or mainly working for the management team here at [Company name] and additionally the European retail division.

AW: Ok. You already mentioned [Company name], but could you also state in which industry you are currently working?

I14: Sure. In the fashion industry.

AW: How many people does your employer currently employ globally?

I14: Globally... well, let me check so I do not tell you anything wrong numbers... in Germany we got 1,500 at the head office. However, globally we got 9,816 in total.

AW: Very precise.

Ok, you already stated in Germany there are approx. 1,500. Where does the company originally come from?

I14: Originally, the company is from California. It was founded by Doug Tomkins – I am not sure how much information you need on this... but by Doug Tomkins. Doug Tomkins is

an entrepreneur who also made [2nd company name] really big and together with his wife he created a love story for their friends and this was the origin. Originally, it was an American company at the beginning. After approx. 15 years it went public at the Hongkong stock exchange. The financial and office head office is therefore in Hongkong, but the head office where all the official operations happening is here in Ratingen. Most stuff happens here and most employees are based here.

AW: Ok. Do you believe that the origin of the company, so the US-American roots, do have an impact on the organisational culture?

I14: Yes, I believe so. If I would state that American's are very open and uncomplicated and sometimes non-conventional than I would actually find those also within [Company name].

AW: Have you heard of the term Employee Engagement before?

I14: Yes.

AW: In which context.

I14: Hm... in which context... every now and then I read an article about it in a HR magazine. However, also within [Company name] we have an initiative called "[Company name] Cares" which is an own division here which actually looks into "Employer Engagement" [Interviewee uses Engl. term]. Basically, what can we as a company do and how can we bring our culture closer to our employees.

AW: Ok. In general, you mentioned you read about the term in magazines, what have you heard about the term?

I14: Puh... with respect to a definition? And what I see as a definition?

AW: That would be the next question on how would you define it.

I14: In general, "Employer Engagement" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] becomes more and more important for companies to not just attract employees with money, but instead with the entire concept. Meaning that the company also convey its values to the employee and to create a good workspace for the employees. Just thinking how we could phrase this right... Because, if the work atmosphere is pleasant for an employee – especially nowadays with respect to work-life-balance – it is the biggest benefit a company can offer.

And... well that's my understanding. It would be difficult for me to phrase a clear definition.

AW: Ok, perfect.

From your perspective what do you believe does Employee Engagement mean for the individual behaviour of an employee?

I14: It has a positive effect. If you identify yourself with the values of an organisation it has a big positive impact on the behaviour of an employee, because if I am able to identify more with a company and become more loyal to the organisation. This is our experience.

AW: Perfect. Do you know if your current employer does have an Employee Engagement strategy in place? You already mentioned "[Company name] Cares", so you do have one in place.

I14: Yes, that's correct.

We even do have someone in place who is in charge of "[Company name] Cares". In preparation of this meeting I thought this might also be an interesting contact for you.

AW: Yes, totally.

I14: But the general approach I can also explain to you. It is basically a designated team within the company. There is one employee in particular in charge of it. Besides her, there is a large group of volunteers working on this. The board is currently based on 25 volunteers here from the head-quarters in Rating who meet frequently once per month to discuss different initiatives. However, it is completely voluntary and they work on the concept of “[Company name] Cares”. So, it is really from employees for employees. And different initiatives are discussed. It is a highly respected function in its own right to underpin its importance.

AW: Ok. To which department does this one colleague you mentioned belong too? Is she more of a HR function or internal communication or maybe marketing?

I14: Difficult to say. From an organisational perspective she does belong to HR. However, that’s just her and there is actually another colleague from internal communications. In case there is a new value added than this is aligned with marketing. The value which are realised by the department “[Company name] Cares” should be aligned with the global values, so the marketing values or the brand values. Therefore, it is aligned. Nevertheless, the employee who is responsible for it is official part of HR.

AW: What are the general aims of your Employee Engagement strategy?

I14: Well, we developed three pillars. The first one is called “do good to ourselves” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] so in German “sich selbst etwas Gutes tun”. “Zusammen etwas Gutes tun” [Engl. Translation „Do something good jointly”] and “tue etwas Gutes für Andere” [Engl. Translation “Do something Good for others”]. These are the three pillars we have in place. For example, in the “sich selbst etwas Gutes tun” category we are planning a “Health and Sustainability week” [Interviewee uses Engl. event title] in June. It is just one example. However, it looks at what I can do to save energy, what can I do to reduce water usage. There is an official event day for it on global basis. Similar to the official global “sweatpants” day for example, it is the day “Health and Sustainability day” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] which is this year a Sunday, but we will manage different activities throughout the entire following week.

What else do we do?! Another example is which we already did and will do again... now I am thinking about the right term... not really a wellness day, more like a...

AW: Feel good day [Interviewer uses Engl. term]?

I14: Well, not really. We will have a massage team coming in. We will invite a nutritionist. “Wellness Day” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] might go too far, but something where you can learn how to be more aware of yourself.

But also – if you want to call it this way – “Work-Life-Balance initiative” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] where we might do a corporate run challenge. So basically, do something good for yourself and ideally in the group. Including some additional activities which go beyond this.

AW: Ok. Sounds very interesting.

I14: On the “Tu’ Gutes zusammen” [Engl. Translation “Do something good jointly”] where we realised a “Family Day” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] last year and invited our employees to bring their family. If I remember correctly, it was a Saturday – but, I was not yet part of the organisation at that point, therefore I cannot really say. However, the families were invited. There were different games setup for the children. A clown as makeup artist was here. We made BBQ. It was a nice event to also bring the family closer to here. So for this year we are thinking of a “Nikolaus Event” [Note from the researcher: Holi Sankt Nikolaus is celebrated traditionally on the 6th December in Germany] or “Sankt Martins Event” [Note from the researcher: Holi Sankt Martin is celebrated on the 11th November in Germany] to bring the families closer to the organisation.

- AW: Ok.
- I14: Also related to this: When the local kindergarten were closed due to strike we just founded a kindergarten very short notice.
- AW: Really, cool.
- I14: We had various effected employees who managed it. However, the company managed the official part and got a professional babysitter and managed all the requirements you need to fulfil to get something like this setup. We basically needed to fulfil all those requirements and needed to ensure that we are completely safe. However, by doing this we tried to helping our own employees by just moving the kindergarten which was on strike to *[Company name]* “headquarter” [Interviewee uses Engl. term].
- AW: Very good. I really like it. Well...
- I14: I just remember: We also did a “Spring Flower” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] initiative for example. During spring you could buy a flower for one of your co-workers with a little note attached to it. They were distributed amongst the employees last week and this was also a very nice initiative to get some nice wishes on your desk.
- AW: Very nice.
- Was this strategy or the different activities you are managing in a particular country developed?
- I14: Yes, it is strongly related to the “Headquarter” [Interviewee uses Engl. term].
- AW: Ok, so Germany.
- I14: Exactly, in Ratingen. By the way I might said this wrongly. We are 1,500 employees here in Ratingen, Mönchen Gladbach and approx. 5,000 within Germany. Maybe we need to correct this.
- AW: Ok.
- I14: And the biggest share of employees is located in Ratingen and therefore the main ideas are related to here. However, just now – as we are also active in various countries in Europe and in Asia – to develop a platform to get people closer together. The “Flower” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] initiative we also shared with our colleagues abroad. We share the material from the headquarter [Interviewee uses Engl. term] with them so they are able to manage this themselves.
- AW: Ok, this would have also been the next question aiming to understand if you modify your initiatives for the local organisations? Basically, to fit the local requirements of the employees or if you apply the same strategy on global level?
- I14: Well, I would say we have global strategy which can be managed by the local agenda. The global strategy defines some things which we want to realise on global basis, including for example in November “Photo Nations” or “Holiday Giving” [Interviewee uses Engl. terms] – however, you want to call it – but also the “Health and Sustainability Day”, the “Spring Flower initiative” and the “Family Day”. Those are all things where we prefer that they are realised in the countries, but depending on the country where you are there are different bank holidays etc. and therefore, we are very open towards the local setup. In some cases, we found the situation that something does rather not fit to setup an event. Therefore, we have a quarterly call managed by our responsible “*[Company name]* Cares” colleague. She manages a call with the colleagues from APAC – so the team in Asia – and one with the team in Europe. There she defines the guideline [Interviewee uses Engl. term] and what she wants to see realised during the upcoming year including a brief time frame, I would call it.
- AW: Ok. I would call it “Think global, act local” [Interviewer uses Engl. term].
- I14: Yes, this might be a good way to describe or translate it.

- AW: Do you believe that the American roots of the organisation do have an impact on the different initiatives which you run?
- I14: I am not sure if it is very American. This might also depend on the American you are talking too. However, Dough Tomkins, the founder of the brand, used to be a very sustainable and very “engagiert” [Engl. translation in this context “involved”] person. Unfortunately, he died a couple of years ago. After he sold the company, he founded a large farm in Patagonia where he planted millions of trees. He used to be a very social and economically “engagiert” [Engl. translation in this context “involved”] person. Consequently, this was something which he brought into the company straight from the beginning. Just from the start it was important to him that *[Company name]* is a family and not an employer. With respect to *[Company name]* the spirit of the brand was important to him, not to bring the financial aspects into the front.
- AW: Ok. You mentioned a lot about the key elements of your strategy which would have been the next question. I understood there are various different activities which are designed to bring employees and company closer together, but also bring employee closer to each other.
- I14: Exactly.
- AW: So basically, to live this spirit of a family, even so that one location already hosts 1,500 people it should still have this family spirit.
- I14: Yes, exactly. There are also various other initiatives. Lately, we had one employee who got sick from leukemia and we worked jointly with DKMS [Note: German organisation for Bone Marrow Donor File] and two weeks ago we realised a registration initiative and *[Company name]* paid for the registration itself. So, all employees had the chance to donate.
- AW: Great, so including the medical registration for potential donations.
- I14: Yes.
- AW: Nice. I helped to organise something similar during my time at Ford.
- I14: Great!
- AW: Yes. For sure the Ford Werke GmbH is even a bigger number of employees and if I remember correctly a couple of years before I did it there were actually eight people identified for a donation. I think this is really interesting. Especially, considering that during such an initiative you find so many donators even so it was just realised in two locations – Cologne and Saarlouis. I mean there are a few thousand employees. However, to find eight people who could donate is really good.
- I14: Yes, totally. We do not have any results yet, it might take another three, four weeks. But we keep our fingers crossed.
- AW: Really great initiative from my perspective. Yes, this was really nice.
Internally, do you use a particular term for Employee Engagement or a certain definition?
- I14: No. What we have in place at the moment, but which we are still rolling out, but did exist in the past is “*[Company name]* Cares” with “Tu für dich selbst etwas Gutes”, “Tu für andere etwas Gutes” and “Tut zusammen etwas gutes” which I mentioned earlier on, but this is not yet official. The activities we have established are aligned along this and we have phrased it in this way, but it is not an official pamphlet stating this is what what we do.
- AW: So basically, when you are together in your work group you would be talking about Employee Engagement?

- I14: Hm... most likely. I am just thinking this through. Everything we do in this area is part of "[Company name] Cares" and therefore we would most likely call it an "[Company name] Cares Initiative".
- AW: Ok, great. Very good.
- So "[Company name] Cares" you also use in the markets where you have already rolled it out?
- I14: Actually, in Asia it is called differently. However, the department does also exist, but I am not sure about the name.
- AW: Don't worry about it.
- I14: However, it got the same aim and it is targeting the same thing, but it does have a different name.
- AW: Ok.
- Which challenges do you link to the term Employee Engagement in general?
- I14: Challenges. I think mainly about the effort of time which needs to be invested. Everything you do is difficult to measure. For sure a company wants to get nice results out of it and employees which stay longer with the company and these are all things which you can only... well... with "Employee Engagement" [Interviewee uses Engl. term]. Wait, let me rephrase this: Challenges of Employee Engagement are from my perspective that it is linked to a lot of effort and that the success is difficult to measure. For sure in the centre of it is the success a company is aiming for and for sure a company is also successful when the employees are happy, but it is difficult to measure this.
- And also, the activities with respect to time and cost. Sometimes you have costs involved and in our case, it is definitely the time effort. Because in our case, you need to make an employee or even more than one available for a day or more to organise such a "Family Day" [Interviewee uses Engl. term]. This is not just done.
- AW: Do you believe that the German market has very particular challenges?
- I14: Hm... I believe that the German market is not yet as Employee Engagement-oriented as other countries are. From my perspective, I am partly Dutch and I believe that the Netherlands are slightly more developed in this field. Also others. We are really traditional here and this is something quite modern and I would say – this might be an allegation – but I would say that we are rather numbers-driven and this does not fit in there complete. "Work-Life-Balance" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] is in Germany – in comparison to other countries – still a bit behind.
- AW: I hear a really nice sentence in one of the other interviews which was actually in English. "The Germans are slow adaptors" [Interviewer uses Engl. term] and I just thought this fits so well and laughed out loud when he said it and somehow I had to admit that he was right. We are always very critical, not knowing what to think of something as we believe it is already part of the existing work contract.
- I14: Yes, just like: Let's think this through again.
- AW: Yes, exactly and I thought this was such a nice thing.
- Now we getting to the last question.
- I14: Ok, great.
- AW: Do you have any additional remarks with respect to Employee Engagement which I should look into any further?
- I14: Puh.
- AW: Difficult one.

- I14: Well, let me think... I do not think so. Before I worked for Diesel and I know they had the OTB foundation which you might want to look up. However, with respect to literature etc. I do not see anything crucial which I could share with you at this point.
- AW: Ok, perfect.

Appendix 23: I15

- AW: First of all, thank you very much for your participation in this interview. During the next approx. 45 minutes – usually they are slightly shorter – I will ask you various questions about Employee Engagement. These questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish that the transcript of this record should be anonymised please let me know so accordingly. Ideally during the interview or shortly afterwards.
- I15: No, we don't need to.
- AW: Ok great.
- Just for your understanding: My name is Andrea Wylegala. I am currently working on my PhD at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. As part of my PhD I am investigating the understanding of the term Employee Engagement of HR managers in Germany. And now we continue with you: Could you please state your full name please?
- I15: Rabea G.
- AW: Perfect. In which position are you currently working?
- I15: Officially, I am in charge of the recruitment of *[Company name]* in Germany and Austria. In-officially my role is called Recruiter, but I am in charge of the recruitment. And from next year on I will also be in charge of Talent Management.
- AW: Sounds very good.
- I15: We will see.
- AW: In which industry are you working at the moment?
- I15: Retail, high street and fashion. However, you want to call it, but I would say it is actually fashion.
- AW: Ok. How many people does your current employer employ globally?
- I15: Globally, there are approx. 5,000 employees. In Germany and in Austria we employ 500 to 600. It is quite strongly fluctuating.
- AW: Ok, great. This was actually the next question. Perfect.
- So, where does the company originally come from?
- I15: It's from the United Kingdom.
- We are from Cheltenham. And Cheltenham is really a small town. About an hour away from Birmingham and Bristol and that is also where our "head quarter" [Interviewee uses Engl. term].
- AW: OK.
- Du you believe that the international background of your company does have an impact on the company's culture?
- I15: Definitely. We are super international. We have a lot of employees whose native language is English, Spanish or Turkish. It is really international.
- AW: Ok. We are now moving towards the topic of Employee Engagement.

I15: Sure.

AW: Have you heard about the term Employee Engagement before?

I15: Yes, and I actually had a discussion with one of my employees about it yesterday.

AW: Ok.

I15: Actually, for hours.

AW: And in which context have you heard about the term?

I15: We actually run an Employee Engagement survey every year. We have implemented "Great Place to Work" and that's how I heard about it.

AW: Ok. And what did you hear about the term so far and what have you discussed with your colleague yesterday?

I15: Well, we discussed what does make an employee and "engaged" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] employee. And we ended up stating that "Engagement" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] does mean that the employee is emotionally bonded to the company. I believe employees who identify strongly with the company, its values, its mission and also its "purpose" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] and therefore bring in additional effort. And that's what actually brings us forward.

AW: Ok. This would also be your definition for Employee Engagement?

I15: Yes.

AW: So, the emotional bounding of an employee with the company.

I15: Yes, but very strongly related to effort. So, for us as company it is very important to have "engaged" employees to ensure we are even more successful as a business.

AW: Ok.

From your perspective, what does it mean with respect to the behaviour of an employee?

I15: Well, I believe that "engaged" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] employees show much more effort. I believe that they have a much more positive attitude towards work. That they are much more in contact with other employees and are much happier in general. Most likely also more loyal. For sure more loyal.

AW: Yes.

Does your employer have an Employee Engagement strategy in place?

I15: Yes and no. What we have in place is that when the survey results are published and we are in such as phase at the moment – we will get the results on Monday – than the wheels start turning again in England and strategies will be developed.

Last year we activated various activities. For example, there was one remark that employees are not benefitting from the success of the company and consequently we created an activity on shares.

What else did we do?! It was stated that we do not have benefits or at least not enough benefits. Based on this we started to contribute to "BAV", we got additional annual leave days, we get our birthday off. So, yes, I believe a certain strategy is behind all this, even so you could not directly see it.

AW: So you could say at the moment it is much more ad hoc based on what they survey shows as a result and behind this...

I15: Totally. However, in Germany we often do not get the details as we are more on the executing side, which mean we also create certain ideas, so when the survey is published and the results are out, we sit together and question what we can do in the country. However, the main part does always come from England.

AW: Ok. In which area is the topic of Employee Engagement managed? Is it more HR, internal communications or marketing?

I15: Definitely within HR.

AW: Ok.

What are the key aims of your Employee Engagement strategy?

I15: Key aims is an interesting topic, because so far we just did ad hoc activities. Last year the feedback was that our managers are not good, that we do not have any benefits in place and our strategy last year was that we want to do more for our employees and consequently get out higher "engagement" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] which means investing in the benefits. Basically, putting more money into these.

AW: Well, the next question is: Where has the strategy been developed?

It's from the UK.

I15: It comes from the UK.

I believe it has been developed by our Senior HR Business Partner – jointly with our HR Manager. I think it was mainly designed by them, but for sure also influenced by all other HR Business Partners who are located in the UK.

Therefore, I believe that there are various teams working on it in work streams before it is then distributed into the countries.

AW: OK.

When you distribute it to the countries, do you adjust the strategy based on the local requirements and the employees or do you take over the same global concept for the different markets?

I15: This depends. Some things are rolled out very "consistence" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] which means we had a "Values and Purposes" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] workshop this year where the "Werte" [engl. translation "values"] are rolled out in the same way globally. However, we also have individual things like here we support BAV or the additional annual leave days which is not done in other countries. This was established by us. England said they provide the budget xy and you can do whatever you like with it. And that's what we did. However, most things come from the UK and are rolled out globally.

AW: Do you believe that the origin of the company does also have an impact on the Employee Engagement strategy?

I15: For sure. For sure. England can be rather "protective" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] of their country and often just think to the sea and therefore it is very strongly impacted from England and does have an impact on us too.

AW: Ok.

Well, you mentioned one of the key elements is the survey which you run, last year you established different benefits in various areas, "manager improvement" – would you say those are the key elements of your strategy which you established?

I15: It was mainly the benefits and additional "Values and Purposes" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] – basically asking why do we exist, why do the different departments exist and what are company's "Werte" [Engl. translation] and those were they key statements and the key strategy behind.

AW: You call it "Value for Purpose"?

I15: No, we call it "Values and Purposes".

AW: Ah, ok.

- I15: It is basically our “Price – Point – Zero”-strategy [Interviewee uses Engl. term] which includes the individual “Purpose” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] of each of the departments. It shows what are our “Werte” [Engl. translation “values”] and since last year it was rolled out properly. And here I need to say that they actually involved us from international side. For example, about a year ago I went to the UK to meet with another approx. 60 people from global who were invited to develop our “Werte” [Engl. translation “values”], because we never defined them properly – after actually 15 years of existence.
- AW: Yes, I was just about to say that the brand isn’t that new anymore.
- I15: Yes, it exists since 2003 in the UK and since 2008 in the German market. However, the sub-brand *[Company name]* Germany does only exist since end 2014. So still rather new.
- AW: I learnt about first during my England-time. During this time I first got in touch with it.
- I15: Yes, there it is basically at every corner.
- AW: Could you repeat this?
- I15: I meant in the UK you find it at nearly every corner. We run 130 stores there and therefore it is really crazy.
- AW: I am frequently visiting Manchester and maybe effected by the North-English roots it’s super popular. It feels like every second person is wearing a sweatshirt or a jacket. In particular the men.
- I15: Absolutely! Luckily this is also expanding to Germany. Here we are very strongly growing and there is some more coming up.
- AW: I am very excited to see this. In general, you have really nice stuff available.
Internally, do you use a particular term or do you use the term itself?
- I15: I can’t really say. Employee Engagement is normally never used. It’s more about the “Great Place to Work” study in the centre and then about *[Company Name]* and about activities.
- AW: Ok. Very good.
So also, internationally you won’t use any local term such as “Mitarbeitermotivation”?
- I15: No. Maybe in England they talk about Employee Engagement, but this does not include us as there is a big wall and a lot of water between it. We would call it... well, I do not know what we would call it. However, definitely not Employee Engagement.
- AW: Ok.
Which challenges do you link to Employee Engagement in general?
- I15: Well, it is a relatively big topic, influenced by various factors and it is not just about the benefits, it is also about how we communicate with our employees, do managers react, what is our “hiring” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] process, what is our “on-boarding” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] process. How are we afterwards? I believe it is very complex topic. Consequently, it is really challenging to be good in all field. If you are just not good in one field, for example the managers are not doing well, then an employee can become an “un-engaged” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] employee really easily.
- AW: Ok. So, influenced by various aspects.
Which challenges do you see with respect to the implementation of Employee Engagement activities?

I15: This I would need to think through. In our case it is difficult, because our “head quarter” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] is in the UK, so we do not get that much involved. We are more or less just the executing function and I believe this is rather difficult in our case. Things are not adjusted and, in some cases, we do not support it 300%. So I believe the biggest challenge is in fact that our “head quarter” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] is located in England.

AW: Ok.

I15: And it is a lot of work for six people who are working for the German HR, including two which are there for recruitment. So, I guess you can imagine...

AW: Challenging to roll something large out, right?

I15: Totally.

AW: Where do you see the biggest challenges for Employee Engagement in Germany?

I15: In Germany?

AW: Yes.

I15: Well, in our case it is definitely “Leadership” [Interviewee uses Engl. term]. I believe German companies are usually quite well in benefit topics, so I believe that “Leadership” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] could be a topic, because from my perspective this is what influences “Employee Engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] most – negatively as well as positively.

AW: Yes.

I15: I imagine this it. Or even processes for “On-boarding” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] which are not managed well. This is also a big topic for us. Employees are not correctly onboarded from the first day on.

AW: Yes.

I15: “Performance management” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] could also be a challenge because many companies might not execute proper “performance management” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] dialogues, such as annual or half-term dialogues. I believe it’s often related to management, “performance management” [Interviewee uses Engl. term] and “leadership” [Interviewee uses Engl. term].

AW: Yes.

I15: Maybe also “Talent Management” [Interviewee uses Engl. term], because most of them are also bad in doing this.

AW: Yes. Ok, very well. Just let me note this down.
And that’s actually it.

I15: Amazing. This was fast.

AW: As I said. We will be able to manage this fast.
Do you have any additional remarks which you would like to add?

I15: I don’t think so. I would be interested in understanding what others state or where you see the challenges of “Employee Engagement” [Interviewee uses Engl. term].

AW: Sure. If it is fine with you, I will stop the recording here. Are you fine with not anonymising the interview?

I15: Yes, totally.

AW: Ok. Then I will stop recording at this point.

Appendix 24: I16

- AW: First of all, thank you very much for your participation in this interview. During the next approx. 45 minutes – usually they are slightly shorter – I will ask you various questions about Employee Engagement. These questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish that the transcript of this record should be anonymised please let me know so accordingly. Ideally during the interview or shortly afterwards. And you already told me that you would prefer that the interview gets anonymised.
- I16: Yes, this would be nice.
- AW: Ok no problem.
- Just for your understanding: My name is Andrea Wylegala. I am currently working on my PhD at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Business and Law. As part of my PhD I am investigating the understanding of the term Employee Engagement of HR managers in Germany. And now we would be great if you could state your name for the record.
- I16: Sure, Sabine B.
- AW: Perfect. You stated you are currently on maternity leave.
- I16: Yes.
- AW: What was your previous role before?
- I16: Well, I was an employee in a Human Resource department. It is called a "Personalreferentin" [Engl. translation "Personnel Officer"]. That's what I would call it.
- AW: Ok.
- In which industry have you been working?
- I16: As we said we do this more general, on the one side I have been working in the industry sector for a mid-size company and on the other side I have been working in the public service.
- AW: Ok.
- You stated a mid-size company and also public service that means there were no employees located abroad? Every employee was located in Germany?
- I16: Well, those which I managed yes, but the mid-size company also had some subsidiaries abroad however those were not managed by us as HR department. So, yes only in Germany.
- AW: Ok and how many employees did the companies and the organisation you were working for employ?
- I16: Between 100 and 300.
- AW: Ok and those were companies which had a German origin I assume.
- I16: Yes.
- AW: Do you believe that the German origin of the company did have an impact on the companies' culture?
- I16: Yes, absolutely. Indeed!
- AW: Ok. Did you hear about the term Employee Engagement before?
- I16: The English term not really, but I have an idea of what is meant with it. However, this way we did not use it.
- AW: Ok. So, you have not heard about the English term, but instead a German term. Can you state which term it is?

I16: Well, I can imagine and that's what I also understood from your side is that it is about "Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit" [Engl. translation "employee satisfaction", "Mitarbeiterbetreuung" [Engl. translation "employee supervision"]... well... really difficult to say. Well... is there even a German term for it which stands for it?

AW: Well... I guess, not really.

I16: You see. *laughing*

AW: Very good.

I16: What I just stated, does this fit?! I mean it is actually everything what you do to somehow keep an employee.

AW: Yes, exactly.

I16: That's how I would simply phrase it in German.

AW: Yes. How would you define or explain the term if you would need to do so?

I16: Well, I guess like I just said: Everything you do to keep an employee attracted. Basically, that an employee feels linked to the company, that s/he feel good and enjoys working and that employee is willing to perform well for the company.

AW: Ok, great. From your point of view what does the term mean from an employee's perspective and his/her behaviour?

I16: Puh... I would say... an employee... how to say this best...! Would you mind repeating the question? I think I am confused now.

AW: Sure. What does Employee Engagement mean with respect to the behaviour of an employee?

I16: Ok. The more developed "Employee Engagement" [Interviewee uses Engl. term] in an organisation is, the bigger is an employee's willingness to work for a company, I would believe as an employer. The stronger the bounding between the employee and me, as the organisation, gets, the willingness of the employee to do something for me increases.

AW: Yes. Perfect. Considering that you weren't aware of the term before, your definition is really good.

I16: Yes, but I was super interested in it. I also had some touch points with health management in organisations and realised different activities in that field. Doing something so that employees are willing and happy to work in the organisation again and like to stay.

AW: Did your previous employers had Employee Engagement strategies established?

I16: Hm... no. It was one of my tasks to do something in this area and also with respect to organisational Health Management. For example, to provide different classes for employees. More into this directly, but there was no real concept behind and in public service there is never money available for anything.

AW: Ok. You mentioned that you were part of HR and were partly responsible for different activities. So, you state that the topic of Employee Engagement was part of HR?

I16: Yes, totally.

AW: Looking at the different individual activities which the employer wanted to realise, what were those activities aiming for?

I16: Well... on the one hand to keep the employee satisfied and to make sure that s/he feels like being part of the big family, but on the other side also to ensure that the employees performance increases or at least stays stable through the organisation health management.

- AW: Ok, the next question is about the country of origin where the strategy was developed. As your employers are mainly operating in Germany, I assume that the German HR department developed it?
- I16: Yes.
- AW: And one of your employers also had international offices. Do you know if the established the same activities in those office or if they did something on their own?
- I16: I believe they did something on their own as we have not had that much interaction. Those were independent subsidiaries and therefore, we did not pass anything on to them.
- AW: Ok. Do you believe that the German origin of the company did also have an impact on the Employee Engagement strategy or the individual activities?
- I16: ... This is rather difficult to say as I don't have any comparison as I do not know how it was executed in another country. However, I would say no.
- AW: Ok. You mentioned earlier before that there was no full strategy, but the key elements were topics such as "Gesundheitsmanagement" [Engl. translation Health Management] activities and trainings. Did I understand this correctly?
- I16: Yes, on one side those and on the other side family-friendliness was also a big topic. They "engagieren" [Engl. translation "get involved"] to make sure that something is done for parents who come back for example. Making sure that they could come back in a part-time position. Making sure that they were even able to leave for paternity leave. Making all these things possible. So I would say there were two things: Being family-friendly and the "Gesundheitsmanagement" [Engl. translation "Health Management"].
- AW: Ok and which aim did strategy have? Hold on, this question you already answered before.
- Well, you mentioned at the beginning that you did not use the term Employee Engagement in this way at work. Did you use a particular company-specific term such as "Mitarbeitermotivation" or something completely unique to talk about the topic?
- I16: Most likely "Mitarbeitermotivation" [Engl. translation "employee motivation"].
- AW: Understood. So, the English term Employee Engagement you did not use at all?
- I16: No, we did not use it at all.
- AW: From your perspective: What are the biggest challenges with respect to Employee Engagement?
- I16: On the one side offering the employee something which is a benefit to him/her. So not just spending money to state you did something for the employees but it does not fit the needs of the employee. And on the other side to find something which fits to the company and the company's objectives. How to phrase it best...? You cannot just be nice to the employee and everything seems to be fine, but the work is not done. It should increase performance and fit the companies aims and to get both covered in one is the challenge.
- AW: What are the biggest challenges from your perspective with respect to the implementation itself?
- I16: You suddenly experience resistance from employees. You want to do something good for them and they do not take it – especially when talking about "Gesundheitsmanagement" [Engl. translation "Health Management"] where you offer them classes and they do not use it because they don't want to do sports jointly with other employees for example ... or they do not want to come back into the organisation when we talk about paternity leaves. So, the employee also must want it.

- AW: Ok. With respect to the German market: Where do you see the biggest challenges for the term and the topic of Employee Engagement in Germany?
- I16: Do you mean with respect to the industry?
- AW: Well, more from a general perspective. It is a very Anglo-American term as well as the entire topic. So, where do you see the issues for such a topic or such a phenomenon in Germany? Let me share an example from a large organisation who stated that workers councils or leadership issues could be challenges.
- I16: I believe it is not typical for Germans. Being German means performing and everything must work and I think it is very difficult to get it into people's heads that this is a completely different approach.
- AW: Ok. Perfect.
We are nearly done.
- I16: Ok, great.
- AW: Is there anything else which you would like to add with respect to Employee Engagement, "Mitarbeitermotivation" [Engl. translation "employee motivation"] which I should look into?
- I16: Spontaneously, I cannot think of something. Especially, because it is quite a while ago and I do not know how it is currently managed. Therefore, I cannot say what is currently up to date.
- AW: Ok. Then we are done.
It wasn't that bad, I would say?
- I16: Not at all. I hope I was able to support you even so we were done so quickly.
- AW: Absolutely. Let me stop here. In general, when I anonymise this, the questions and answers were fine with you?
- I16: Yes.
- AW: Ok.
- I16: Totally fine.

Appendix 25: I17

- AW: First of all, thank you very much for your participation in this interview. During the next approx. 45 minutes I will ask you various questions about Employee Engagement – so the topic of "Mitarbeitermotivation". These questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish that the transcript of this record should be anonymised please let me know so accordingly. Ideally during the interview or shortly afterwards. And you already told me that you would prefer that the interview gets anonymised.
- I17: Ok.
- AW: Some additional background information for you: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am part-time PhD student at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the faculty of Business and Law. As part of my PhD research I am looking into the understanding of the term Employee Engagement of Human Resource Managers and CEOs in Germany.
- I17: Ok.
- AW: Now we moving on with you: Could you please state your full name?
- I17: Emine L.

AW: And in which position are you currently working?

I17: I am Managing Director at *[company name]* in Krefeld.

AW: Ok. In which industry are you working.

I17: Healthcare.

AW: Healthcare, ok. You are only operating in Germany or also internationally?

I17: Only in Germany.

AW: Ok. How many employees do you have in Germany?

I17: In Germany... well now it's the question if you only want to look into Krefeld or all *[Company Name]* services.

AW: Well, you could tell me both so that I have a better understanding of the size with respect to both.

I17: Sure. On the one side, at the side in Krefeld we have approx. 52 employees at the moment, while we have amongst all *[Company Name]* groups approx. 1,200.

AW: Ok. Where does the company originally come from? Is it from Germany?

I17: Yes.

AW: Do you believe that the German background of the company does have an impact on the company's culture?

I17: Yes.

AW: Now we moving towards the topic of Employee Engagement. So far have you heard about the term Employee Engagement before?

I17: No.

AW: No. Are you aware of the term "Mitarbeitemotivation" [Engl. translation "Employee Motivation"]?

I17: Yes.

AW: Or "Mitarbeiterengagement" [French pronunciation of "Engagement"].

I17: Yes, this I am aware of.

AW: Ok. In which context did you hear about the German terminologies?

I17: It is actually a process we are closely looking into here – "Mitarbeitemotivation" [Engl. translation "Employee Motivation"] and also keeping employees.

AW: So, also satisfaction?

I17: Yes.

AW: What did you hear in general about the term – besides in your current position and at your current employer.

I17: There are different events with respect to "Mitarbeitemotivation" [Engl. translation "Employee Motivation"] and for me as an employer it is interesting to understand which activities get official support during such events. Those were mainly my topics.

AW: How would you define the term "Mitarbeitemotivation"?

I17: Sorry, I did not get this?

AW: How would you define the term "Mitarbeitemotivation"?

I17: Define? It is about... well I would define... that it is about different topics: Satisfaction, keeping them, that they are happy in the organisation and that they are able to go

- through a development process within the organisation. So basically, that they do not get bored.
- AW: Ok. From your perspective what does this term mean with respect to the behaviour of an employee?
- I17: ... With respect to the behaviour of an employee... If someone is always ensuring the same quality of his/her work without decreasing I assume.
- AW: As an employer do you have an Employee Engagement strategy established?
- I17: A strategy not. We look into very individual solutions.
- AW: So, depending on the employee's needs?
- I17: Basically, yes. From organisational side there are various things which just simply need to be ensured. Especially, with respect to [...] certain conditionals which need to be ensured. This is how I would define it in healthcare.
- AW: Ok.
- Well, in your case, is the topic managed by you as general manager or is it a topic managed by the Human Resource department or by a central marketing?
- I17: It is operated by the management.
- AW: Ok.
- What are your aims when you establish different individual activities along the employees' needs? What your aim as general manager behind this?
- I17: My main aim is to ensure satisfaction and to create a development for the employees. However, my main aim is to ensure satisfaction.
- AW: Ok.
- This means the strategy you established in Krefeld was also developed by you? It was created in Krefeld and was not centrally provided?
- I17: No. General cultural values yes, so that we avoid certain things for our employees. These are included in the organisational concept, which is clearly defined from top. However, we evaluate individually what needs to be done to motivate employees in the locations itself.
- AW: Ok.
- Do you believe that the origin of the company being from Germany does have an impact on this "Mitarbeitermotivations"-strategy and the different activities you have in place?
- I17: I don't think so.
- AW: Ok.
- My next question looks into the key elements. You stated that you implement your strategy or more the various activities individually per employee. Could you share some example with me on what you have implemented to ensure strategic "Mitarbeiterbindung" [Engl. translation "to keep employees"], "Mitarbeitermotivation" [Engl. translation "Employee Motivation"]?
- I17: This really depends. It depends if you want to increase motivation for one employee while you want support a healthy lifestyle for another employee which might also result in motivation. However, also very clear labour conditions and keeping away certain fears. For example if they are off from work to avoid that they are scared to get called and we ask them if they could come and work.
- AW: Ok.
- I17: Summaries in general.

AW: Yes. Do you use a particular term to describe Employee Engagement? Some companies for example...

I17: No!

AW: No. Ok.

About the international terminology Employee Engagement we already spoke and you do not use it at all, you stated.

I17: Not at all.

AW: Ok. From your perspective, what are the biggest challenges you see with respect to Employee Engagement?

I17: Well, the biggest challenge is to integrate it into daily business – also economically.

AW: Ok.

I17: At least within our field of Healthcare Management.

AW: So, the question is more on the implementation site with respect to how do I get this included into my usually very tense and tight working day.

I17: Exactly.

In Healthcare Management we are facing the challenge that employees also need to cover the less interesting shifts on weekends or bank holidays. Here it is really important to start to find a way how you could reduce this. Here you have completely different kind of challenge.

AW: Yes. If you look less at your sector and more at the terminology itself in Germany, where do you see challenges which might occur with respect to “Mitarbeitermotivation”?

I17: Challenges... Spontaneously, I can't really say. ...No, I can't.

AW: Ok. We are also nearly done.

I17: Ok.

AW: Do you have anything which you want to point out so that I can investigate further?

I17: If I am honest, no.

AW: Ok. Then we are done. With respect to the questions; were they ok or do you want me to anonymise it?

I17: They were fine.

AW: Ok. Then I will just save the file.

Appendix 26: I18

AW: First of all, thank you very much for your participation in this interview. During the next approx. 45 minutes – max. 45 minutes – I will ask you various questions about Employee Engagement. These questions and answers will be recorded. If you wish that the transcript of this record should be anonymised please let me know so accordingly.

Some additional background information for you: My name is Andrea Wylegala and I am part-time PhD student at the Manchester Metropolitan University at the faculty of Business and Law. As part of my PhD research I am looking into the understanding of the term Employee Engagement of Human Resource Managers in Germany.

I18: Ok.

AW: Now we moving on to you. Could you please state your full name?

I18: Timo Wedekin.

AW: Mr. Wedekin, in which position are you currently working?

I18: Head of Human Resources for the central region at the *[company name]*.

AW: In which industry are you working?

I18: At restaurant chain.

AW: Ok, how many employees does your company employ globally at the moment?

I18: Approx. 5,000 employees.

AW: And how many are located in Germany?

I18: Well...

AW: Just roughly.

I18: Let's say approx. 4,000.

AW: Ok. 4,000.

Where does your company originally come from?

I18: From Germany, from Bremerhaven.

AW: From Germany.

Do you believe that the German origin of the company does have an impact on the organisation culture of the business?

I18: Definitely, yes.

AW: Ok. Then we moving on to Employee Engagement topic.

I18: Ok.

AW: Have you heard about the term Employee Engagement before?

I18: Yes. Indeed.

AW: Ok. In which context?

I18: At university. *(laughing)*

AW: At university, ok. So, during a HR class?

I18: Yes, exactly. During my Master's degree.

AW: Ok, during you Master's degree. And what did you hear about the term Employee Engagement.

I18: Well, in general that it is about bring something to life in an employee which ensures that employees like their work and that they are able to identify themselves with what they do and the company.

AW: Ok.

How would you define it?

I18: How I would define it?!

AW: Yes, how you would define the term Employee Engagement.

I18: Yes... that an employee... well... does have the opportunity – within his/her possibilities – to move things for the company. Creating respect for him/herself and for the company and therefore ensures security and affection for him/herself...

Really difficult, I have not yet thought about it.

AW: Yes.

- From your perspective what does Employee Engagement mean with respect to the behaviour of an employee?
- I18: Behaviour?
- AW: Yes, for example how is Employee Engagement reflected in an employee's behaviour?
- I18: I think this is what I just said. For me it is what I mentioned before that it is a very trustful relationship with your employees and through communication. So that s/he also trusts the organisation. Well, that s/he is appreciated. I guess this is the question.
- AW: Ok. Do you know if your company does have an Employee Engagement strategy in place?
- I18: I know this and I can answer to this with a 'No'.
- AW: Ok. Well, do you use individual elements which are linked to Employee Engagement? Usually, they are topics stated such as employee surveys, health management, idea management – do you manage any individual activities?
- I18: Just very rarely. However, much more individually within the different sales areas. Nothing which is aligned and established for all sales areas at once all over Germany.
- AW: Yes. So, this is part of HR in your case or communications?
- I18: It's part of HR in the individual areas.
- AW: Ok, so managed by regional HR.
- I18: Yes.
- AW: What's your aim behind these individual activities?
- I18: Aims are definitely to increase "Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit" [Engl. translation "employee satisfaction"] and to reduce our staff turnover and our sick rate.
- AW: Ok. Do you develop your activities – you mentioned that you develop your activities per area – so this is not developed country-wise but in the individual regions depending on their requirements.
- I18: That's right.
- AW: Does this mean that the international divisions do the same for their region or is this provided by the German branch?
- I18: I cannot really say if they do something in this field as our international partner are all Franchise partner and they would run such activities individually.
- AW: Yes.
- I18: Our Austrian branch does also create this individually for themselves.
- AW: Ok. Do you believe that the origin of the company, as a Germany business, does have an impact on the activities you implement?
- I18: I believe so. As a traditional company with nearly more than 125 years of history the origin does have an impact.
- AW: How is this expressed?
- I18: How this is expressed ... well, as a traditional company and we work with people who are with the company from more than 30 and sometimes even more than 40 years. And those employees have completely different requirements and also raise completely different demands towards the company than our temporary staff who are just working there for a short time and well... leave soon on their own. I believe this is a big difference.
- AW: So much more long-term oriented.

- I18: Exactly.
- AW: Well, you mentioned earlier on that you are very strongly working toward increasing “Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit” [Engl. translation “employee satisfaction”] and reducing staff turnover – would you mind sharing some of the activities without sharing too many details which you implement to increase “Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit” [Engl. translation “employee satisfaction”] and to reduce staff turnaround?
- I18: Well... good question if I am allowed to.
- AW: If not, then we leave this out.
- I18: I would prefer to leave it out.
- AW: Ok let’s leave this out. Well... do you use a particular term internally for Employee Engagement?
- I18: No.
- AW: So, you do not use Employee Engagement, but also not “Mitarbeitermotivation” [Engl. translation “employee motivation”? You also mentioned earlier on “Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit” [Engl. translation “employee satisfaction”] seems to be a used term?
- I18: No.
Well, we do not have one unique term which we use throughout the company about which we as HR people would say ‘this is actually what drives us at the moment’. Everything we do is individual and everybody has a different focus.
- AW: Ok.
- I18: So, it is not uniform.
- AW: Neither uniform, not the international term Employee Engagement is used.
- I18: I do use it, but only since my university time.
- AW: So, this also varies from one HR person to the next HR person.
- I18: Absolutely.
- AW: If you now look at the term in general. Also on the things you have learnt during university and also the things you worked on during your Master's degree: Which challenges do you link to the term Employee Engagement in general?
- I18: Challenges?
- AW: Yes.
- I18: [...] Well, I need to think first.
I believe it is a ... well... I can only link it to the company and here I would say that it is – also taking the previous questions on tradition into consideration – in our case it is challenged by the diverse groups of people we have in the company. If I reflect on this, we have our main administration office with... how to call them... Bachelor alumni and so on, also with people who completed their Abitur [Engl. explanation: Diploma from German secondary school qualifying for university admission] and we have our restaurants where we usually have unskilled people with a completed qualification in this field.
- AW: Ok.
- I18: Therefore, it is rather challenging to address all people with the same strategy or with similar activities at the same time. And the challenge I see is to develop a concept with respect to Employee Engagement which covers all our restaurants and is targeting all our branches to address all our employees. This is the challenge for me in our case.

AW: Very strongly related to the implementation and how I can create something which addresses the entire team?

I18: Yes, exactly.

This is the challenge I am currently facing and where I am currently developing concepts to tackle this.

AW: Yes. Well, when you think about the term more general, less related to the company, where its challenges are in Germany. Maybe you have heard about something before. Maybe also from other HR managers who stated they have a particular issue with the term related to something. Do you have additional idea on this matter?

I18: I have to admit that I have never thought about the challenges in Germany in general. It was always just related to the company and also at University we never talked about challenges.

AW: No problem. No problem. So we are also nearly done, Mr. W.

Do you have anything ...

I18: But these were no 45 minutes?!

AW: No, these were no 45 minutes. However, the length does vary extremely I have to admit. Is there anything else which you would recommend that I should add this or look into this further with respect to Employee Engagement? Maybe also something which you heard about during university where you believe this could be of interest to me and I should look into this.

I18: I believe that you are much better informed than me and that I cannot really give you any recommendations on this matter.

AW: Ok.

I18: I would really like to but I believe I am not so much involved with the topic. I am pretty sure you could share recommendations with me instead.

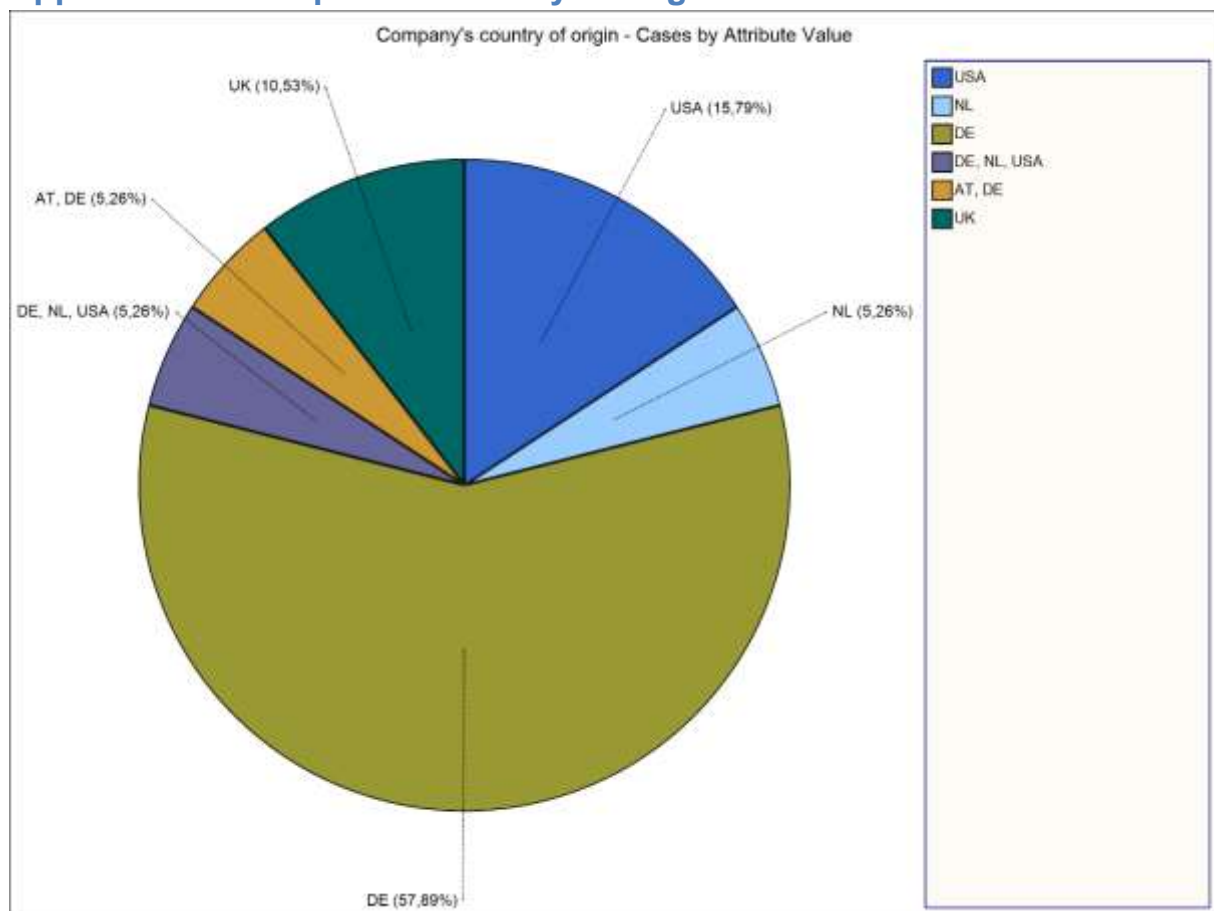
AW: Ok. No worries. If it is fine with you I will now save the record. Would you prefer to keep the company out?

I18: Yes, I would say so.

My name you can state.

AW: Ok. So you yes, but the company not.

Appendix 27: Companies' country of origin



Source: Developed by the author