

Acknowledgements

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Sincerely,
Alan Mahmodian & Mattias Svensson.



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

“The quest to attract female video game employees”

Employer branding: Factors limiting women to initiate a career in the video game industry

Alan Mahmodian^a & Mattias Svensson^b

^{a,b} *Graduate School at the School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg.*

Master of Science in Marketing and Consumption.

Supervisor – Peter Zackariasson

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify and discuss factors that limits women from initiating a career in the video game industry. In order to achieve this purpose, four focus groups were conducted, consisting of two male groups and two female groups. The focus group respondents were allowed to discuss several provided questions freely among the members. The discourse presented by the four focus groups was analyzed with Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). The analysis suggests several factors that differ between the male and female focus groups. There are three major factors limiting the female respondents in initiating a career in the video game industry: (1) self-efficacy; (2) role-models; (3) normative gender discrimination. The discussion of the issues outlined suggests that a combination of SCCT and employer branding can identify factors limiting women. Thus, allow the video game industry to be more prosperous in their recruitments.

Keywords

Employer Branding, Gender Discrimination, Women, Video game industry, Social Cognitive Career Theory, SCCT, Recruiting, Diversity, Marketing

Introduction

In today's global economy, companies are using human capital to gain a competitive advantage towards other companies (Alniacik & Alniacik, 2012). Berthon et al. (2005) explain that the competition for human capital has become almost equally intense as the competition for customers. To attract human capital, firms are spending great resources on employer branding methods (Alniacik & Alniacik, 2012). However,

Alniacik & Alniacik (2012) argues that employer branding is undeveloped in the academic research on the topic of; how gender affects a potential employees perception of employer branding. Despite this, the usage of employer branding is growing among companies (Alniacik & Alniacik, 2012). Seemingly, the Swedish video game industry have problems in using employer branding to attract female employees, as only about 20% of Swedish video game developers are women (Sundell & König, 2018).

Considering that almost half of all gamers are women (Yee, 2017), the lack of women becomes problematic, as Kroon (2018) argues, it is difficult to develop games for other demographics than your own, therefore, men might face difficulties developing games for women. Another reason for including more women is that diverse teams are better at noticing opportunities and consequences (Pena, 2018). Diversity is also shown to increase creativity (Baumgartner, 2018; Nielsen et al. 2017) and innovation (Ruiz-Jimenez & Fuentes-Fuentes, 2016). Further, if more women were introduced into the digital sector in the EU, the GDP of the EU would increase by 9 billion Euros (Delaleu, 2018). However, attracting more women can be very tricky, as the industry has long been very male-dominated (Beasley & Standley, 2002; Oakley, 2000; Ramanan, 2018). It has further been shown that men in the industry treats women in a negative way, and that men tend to promote men in the workplace, thus enforcing the male-domination (Gad, 2015; Sundell, 2018; Joleby, 2018). Women working in the Swedish game industry has reportedly been harassed both at work and in their private lives (Sundell, 2018). To exemplify the rhetoric often used in Swedish video game companies, Klas, a programmer in a Swedish video game company, states that:

Klas - *“There are lots of these dirty jokes, and “low blow” jokes. There is a pretty stereotypical view of what women think on certain aspects”.* (Excerpt from a personal interview with video game developer). (Mahmodian & Rydin, 2016 p. 9).

Employer branding seek to alter and manage the perceptions of potential employees and other stakeholders of a company (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Therefore, employer branding conducted by Swedish video game companies might be counteracted considering the negative work environment that women are experiencing. Kowert et al. (2012) and Kowert et al. (2014) argue that outdated prejudices and stereotypes still lingers in consumers’ and developers’ minds. Yee (2017) and Adams (2000) explains that some developers even assume that women make up only 5% of all core gamers (Someone who spend more time on video games than other activities). Passen et al. (2016) argues that these stereotypes remain as

women are often perceived to either play more casually or are perceived as less skilled, hence, not “true” gamers. The stereotype of a gamer as the pale white male still stands strong (Passen et al., 2016; Kowert et al. 2012; Kowert et al. 2014). These stereotypes are the result of how gamers are being portrayed in the media (Kowert et al., 2012). Kuznekoff & Rose (2012) finds that women receive three times as much harassment, compared to men, when they use their voice in video games, showing that women are not treated equally in video games. If women were seen as an equally essential clientele as men, rather than anomalies or outsiders, it would help the industry lessen its misogynistic tendencies and make it easier for women to stand up for themselves (Cote, 2017). Cote (2017) further explains that these stereotypes still stand strong as the most visible players are male, while successful female gamers are made invisible or even actively marginalized in the community (Cote, 2017; Oakley, 2000).

The purpose of this research is to contribute with knowledge to the academic area of employer branding and gender research on how the video game industry can attract more female employees. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research to better understand factors that might create barriers for women entering the industry. To better understand these barriers, it is necessary to compare women’s perceptions of the video game industry and to use the perceptions of men as a control group. This leads to the following research question: Which are the factors that limit women from initiating a career in the Swedish video game industry?

Literature review

Defining employer branding

The differentiation between a firm and its competitors as an employer is termed employer branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). A strong employer brand allows organizations to attract more talent and potential employees (Pritchard, 2014), but also creates difficulties for competitors to imitate the organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Ambler & Barrow (1996) define employer branding as “the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing

company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 8). Hence that the relationship between a company and the employee is an exchange of various mutual benefits. However, a definition presented by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) explains employer branding as a “process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors” (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, p. 502). This is similar to Pogorzelski et al. (2008) definition of employer brand as a method of communicating who you are, what you stand for, and what you want.

Pritchard (2014) argues that an overview picture of the organization as an employer that is clear, convincing, and specific, is of high importance. Pritchard (2014) also explains that one reason potential employees choose a company, is based on past experience as a customer. Barrow & Mosley (2005) establish a theory when arguing for the compatibility of merging employer branding with the product and corporate branding. The argument is that there is a link between the product brand and the employer brand, the stronger and more positive the view is of the product brand, the more attractive the company is as an employer. The company's success is in return based on the degree of motivated and talented employees (Barrow & Mosley, 2005; Amber & Barrow, 1996). Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) also states that there is a connection between product-, corporate-, and employer branding and the possibility to unite them or if uniting them is not possible, they should at least be aligned. Thus, companies that can deliver a positive brand experience are commonly recognized as an attractive employer (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). However, Pritchard (2014) argues that companies that provide products or services that are perceived attractive on the market, usually get swarmed by job applications. This increases the risk of receiving applications of potential employees with a wrong or unrealistic impression of the company; a situation that can be evaded by strong employer branding (Pritchard, 2014).

Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) describes employer branding as a three-step process: 1) construction of value proposition, 2) marketing the value proposition, and 3) internal

marketing. The first step is to construct a ‘value proposition’ that can be incorporated in the brand. Sullivan (2002) explains in order for the manager to create a concept of company value offerings for potential and current employees, they need to use information about the organizational management style, the culture within the organization, employee quality, employment image, and overall impressions of services or product quality. According to Edwards (2009), employer branding helps the potential employee to receive clarification of the tangible and intangible offering the organization provides. However, Eisenberg et al. (2001) argues that employer branding provides a value proposition that is central message presented by the brand instead of representing the true offers from the organization.

The second step in the process of employer branding according to Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), is to market the value proposition to target potential employees, recruiting agencies, and placement counselors in external marketing. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) explain that while employer branding shares several similarities with corporate branding and product branding, they also share key differences. The first difference is that employer branding is focused on portraying a firm's characteristics and identity as an attractive employer. The second difference is that employer branding is both focused on internal and external audiences, while product and corporate branding are primarily targeting the external audience.

The internal marketing which is argued to be the third step has the current employees in focus with an aim to make it hard for other competitors to imitate. Internal marketing aim is also to create a relationship between the organization and its employees that is both strong and sustainable (Aggerholm et al., 2011; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). According to Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), employer branding can be divided into two directions, external marketing, and internal marketing showcased (see figure 1). They continue to explain that external marketing focuses on attracting

potential employees and create a strong employee image.

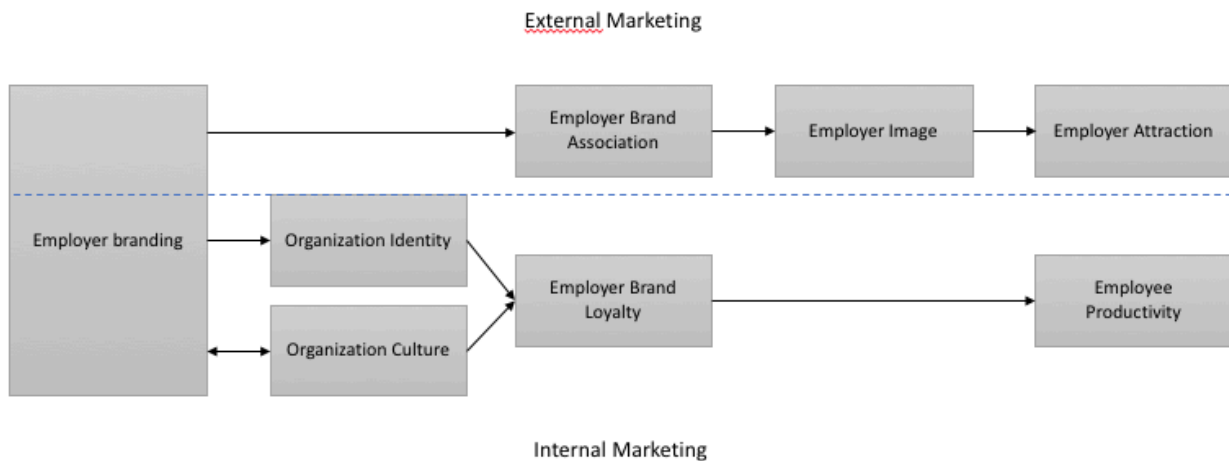


Figure 1. Employer branding framework (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, p.505)

Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) explain the external employer branding as a three-step process with the association as the first step, image as the second step, and attraction as the third step. Association can be defined by Dwane (2004) as anything that comes up in one's mind which can be connected to a specific product. Personal experience or other similar connections only results creating stronger associations to a brand (Chen, 2001). The strength of the association is also dependent on how information about, e.g. a product, is communicated and how it is connected to the image (Keller, 1993; Aaker 1991). Touminen (1995) defines congruence as what degree one association share a meaning and context with another association. Information that is coherent with current associations increases the chance for consumers to remember than associations that are incoherent (Touminen, 1995). Keller's (1993) theory is similar and add that consumers might have an expectation of what kind of association is connected to the specific image. This expectation is shaped based on previous experiences or other associations connected to the image (Keller, 1993).

Barrow & Mosley (2005) explains that brand association is the determinant of employer

image, and the brand image, which according to Keller (1993) is defined as a convergent of product-related and non-product related attributes, and symbolic and functional benefits that reside in the consumers' mind. Ambler & Barrow (1996) argues that there is an assumption of potential employees to be attracted to an organization based on their attitude and impression of the organization symbolic and functional attributes. The functional attributes are argued by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) to benefit from an objective perspective, such as; career development, parental leave, experience, and salary. The functional benefits are connected to one's need e.g. security and include a need for avoiding a problem (Keller 1993). In this case, a potential employee might have the need for economic security. The symbolic attributes are perceived as intangible factors, potential employees can perceive symbolic values as prestige or social acceptance in society (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). Symbolic benefits may, therefore, have a relation to the underlying need of social acceptance and personal expression (Keller, 1993). Keller (1993) claims that consumers value symbolic benefits depending on how it relates to their own self-image.

However, Ambler & Barrow (1996) presents a different view than Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and argues for a three-factor theory. Ambler & Barrow suggest that the psychological, functional and economic benefits are the factors that create attractiveness toward potential employees. An argument that is similar to Berthon et al. (2005) five-factor extension called EmpAT. Based on Ambler & Barrows (1996) three-factor theory, Berthon et al. (2005) argues that the five factors; development, application, interest, social, and economic is key factors when attracting and retaining employees. When these factors are being integrated with the company employer brand, the chances for better attracting talents than the competitors' increase (Brethon et al., 2005).

Although Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), Ambler & Barrow (1996), and Berthon et al. (2005) have their differences in defining external employer branding, their theories all share one key component: the process that the potential employee undergoes when comparing their own personal needs, personalities, and valuations against the employing organization image. The probability for a potential employee to find an organization attractive is dependent on how well the organizations' brand image reflects the potential employee's own belief and valuations (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). If the potential employee finds their own belief and values to match the organization a person-organization fit is established, which is defined by Handler (2004) to be a concord of an individual's belief and

valuations of norm, culture, and of the organization.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (figure 2.) describes individuals' cognitive-person variables that aid individuals' to change and impact the course of their career development. These cognitive-person variables are self-efficacy, outcome expectation, interests, and goals (Lent et al., 2000; Inda et al., 2013). SCCT also contain the person inputs (e.g. gender, age, and ethnicity) and the background contextual affordances (e.g. social support or role models). Rajabi, Papzan & Zahedi (2012) explain that person inputs and contextual affordances are the most important variables for creating the cognitive-person variables. This is because the individual cognitive variables are analyzed through both the person inputs and the contextual variables. Thus, SCCT can show how the person inputs and the contextual variables can impact an individual's self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interests, goals, and actions (Inda et al., 2013). For this research purpose, SCCT is eminently applicable as it encompasses not only what individuals desire and their self-efficacy, but also the surrounding influences that affect their self-efficacy and expected outcomes. SCCT is further one of the three main career development theories in the vocational literature and one of the most prominent in theory based research on women's career development (Hackett & Kohlhart, 2012).

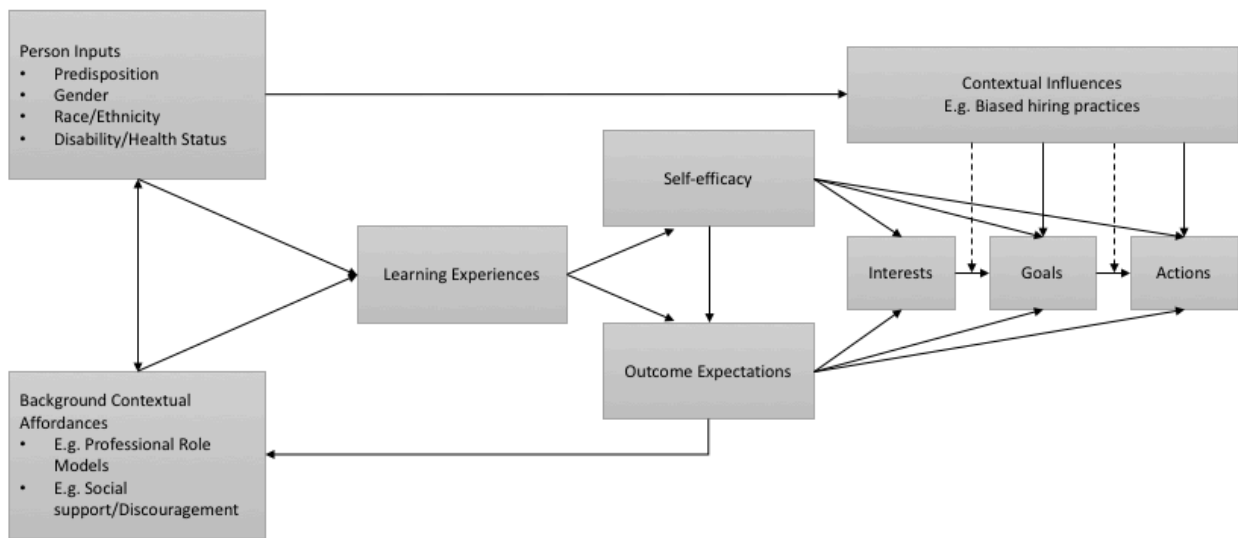


Figure 2. Model on SCCT as presented by Lent et al. (2000)

Person Inputs

Lent et al. (2000) explain that the person inputs are what differentiates individuals from each other. Person inputs consist of race/ethnicity, gender, predispositions and disability/health status. As seen in the figure, these person inputs have a relational impact on background contextual affordances, learning experiences and contextual influences. The person inputs have been shown to have a great influence on one's learning experiences as well as one's self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Rajabi et al. 2012). Later interests, goals, and actions are also influenced (Lent et al., 1994; Rajabi et al., 2012). Lent et al. (1994) emphasize how race and sex are not only biological constructs and that the psychological and social significance of race and sex are hard to deny. Race and sex become relevant as they evoke reactions created by the social/cultural environment, and not because of their physical presence (Lent et al., 1994). For example, boys and girls are socialized into specific gender roles, and therefore become biased in which cultural activities they create a high self-efficacy (Lent et al., 1994). However, Lent et al. (1994) also suggest that individuals have a basic skill potentiality and depending on how it interacts with environmental resources, it might influence interests. Hence, one's genetic disposition can influence one's interests in career development.

Background Contextual Affordances

Lent et al. (2000) argue that the background contextual affordances relate to a professional context. It includes what types of career role models, social support or discouragement one is exposed to when one is active in curricular and extracurricular activities. These are important during the individual's education, career, and in the decision-making process and work as a moderating factor (Lent et al., 2000). For example, if a female student of video games would have few relatable career role models, this would influence her learning experience and later, her self-efficacy and outcome expectations. The same applies if she would not receive the amount of social support she needs to stay motivated and engaged in her education or profession. Further, Lent et al. (2000) explain that contextual affordances (e.g. family involvement) and self-efficacy are stronger predictors than one's personal interests when making career choices.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy as a concept explains how much an individual perceives oneself as being able to complete a specific task, i.e. the personal belief of how much control one can exercise on a given event that affects one's life or one's own level of functioning (Bandura, 1993). Those individuals that are highly efficacious do not see

tasks/problems as something they want to avoid, rather, they see them as challenges they want to master or overcome (Bandura, 1977). Rogers & Creed (2011) highlight this relationship showing that self-efficacy and career goals are affecting career planning. Similarly, it has been shown that a high level of self-efficacy and high outcome expectations lead to a greater interest in setting career interest and goals (Rajabi et al., 2012). Bandura (1993) mean that self-efficacy is the psychological mechanism that affects personal agency the most. Bandura (1993) also argues that individuals set higher goals and commit stronger to them if they have a stronger self-efficacy. When self-efficacy is high, individuals tend to visualize successful scenarios and when self-efficacy is low, individuals tend to visualize unsuccessful scenarios (Bandura, 1993).

Outcome Expectations

Outcome expectations explain what consequences an individual is expecting after a task has been performed, "If I do this, what will happen?" (Lent et al., 2000, p. 41). It is separated from self-efficacy in that an individual can have high self-efficacy in completing a certain task, but, as the individual know that e.g. negative consequences will take place after the task, the individual might decide not to pursue this specific task.

Contextual Influences

The contextual influences (see figure 2.) can be both environmental support and environmental barriers. These are variables that directly affect the formation of goals as well as actions and work as a mediator on the creation of goals and actions. Therefore, they can impact an individual's choice of career (Lent et al., 2000; Inda et al., 2013). The contextual influences can be for example, the quality of one's informal career contacts or if one is discriminated against in a hiring process (Lent et al., 2000). The contextual influences work as a moderator in the way that individuals are for example, less likely to advance their interests into goals and goals into actions if they have been negatively influenced by a biased hiring practice. Fassinger (2008) mentions that external barriers such as hostile educational climates, hostile workplace climates or discriminatory occupational practices can lead to an internalized oppression.

This internal oppression can later lead to the individual lowering their self-confidence and self-efficacy. Hence, lead to individuals compromising their achievement and obstructing their aspirations.

Environmental influences and women

Dill et al. (2008) has shown that sexualized images of women affect men and women differently. When men were shown images of objectified or hypersexualized women in video games, they became more tolerant towards other men sexually harassing women in real life. Contrary, women became less tolerant towards sexual harassment after seeing the same images. Suggesting that men might see women's stories of sexual harassment as myths, blaming the victim or give the real perpetrators weaker sentences.

Ji et al. (2004) found that boys and girls in the eighth grade are affected by their perceived gender ratio for a specific vocation. Boys and girls tend to have a higher interest and higher self-efficacy for vocations where more of their own gender are employed (Ji et al., 2004; Betz & Hackett, 1981). When expressing oneself and entering roles, individuals are aware of their gender identity and what kind of roles and expressions they can make (Ji et al., 2004). This awareness combined with the stereotypes of occupations create a "self-defined social space" (Ji et al., 2004, p. 144) and, therefore, guide individuals to what careers are appropriate for each individual. The perceived support or perceived barriers are also weighed in these decisions, for example gender discrimination concerns, family values and support for the work, and can impact the student's choice in career. Role models could be one answer to creating more resilience in students and help them choose occupations where they face adversity and where the opposite gender is dominant (Ji et al., 2004). Paa & McWirther (2000) showed in their study on high-school students, that women are more influenced by their mothers, female friends, and female teachers. For men, however, the results were varied and they were equally influenced by their fathers as by their mothers. This can be explained by the abundance of male role-models, it might also be a sign of why support from women or girls are more important, as

they have fewer competent career models (Paa & McWirther, 2000; Hackett & Kohlhart, 2012; Hill et al., 2010) and that female talent is being underutilized (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004).

Further in the analysis, the outlined SCCT model will be used as a tool to guide the analysis. Discussions on individual's previous experiences will be analyzed through their gender and whether their experiences might have influenced their self-efficacy, outcome expectations and therefore, their interests, goals and actions in vocations.

Methodology

In order to answer the research question, four different focus groups were arranged. During the focus groups a semi-structured questionnaire was used, this was to ensure that the questions shown in appendix 1. would be answered, but, also to allow for posing new questions that emerge during the interview. As Bryman & Bell (2012) recommends, the respondents were warmed up with some easy opening questions and, also by presenting the researchers' background and education. Bryman & Bell (2012) also recommend presenting the research purpose. However, this was omitted as the researchers wanted the respondents to have a casual and normal conversation over the topics and not say what they might think that the researchers wanted to hear. The research purpose was presented after the focus group and none of the respondents had expected the intended purpose, indicating that the respondents were not biased in any way.

Permission was given to record the focus groups and the respondents were promised that any sensitive information will be kept secret. This was done as Eriksson & Kovalainen (2011) recommend recording interviews, as information might otherwise be forgotten and allows for a more thorough analysis, further, taking notes might also disturb the respondents. Through using interviews as a way of doing research, it is possible to identify underlying motives, values, and opinions (Bryman & Bell, 2012). These were later analyzed through the application of theories on employer branding and SCCT. But as it was sought to identify possible underlying thoughts and values, the

questions and the way the researchers posed the questions were made sure as not to taint the interviews with biases or implicit questions.

Every topic was sought to be discussed in the focus groups, already after the first two focus groups, one male and one female, all the topics were adequately answered. Later, to reach a better saturation and to identify potentially different answers of the topics, two other groups were conducted as well, one male and one female, the last two had very similar discussions and therefore, no more focus groups were conducted. All four focus groups lasted approximately two hours as this was enough time to adequately discuss all the questions. To ensure that the respondents had not yet initiated their careers, young university students, 20-29 years of age, were chosen to participate in the focus groups. The names of all focus group participants were changed into fictitious names to ensure their anonymity. Further, one female focus group consisted of eleven students at the University of Skövde and one male focus group consisted of four students at the University of Skövde. They studied video game developing with various focuses on music, game writing, design, and graphics. The remaining two focus groups were one female group consisting of three respondents and the last focus group consisted of three male respondents, they studied IT and computer engineering. The differing educational backgrounds did not show any significant differences in their discussion of the topics; therefore, it was not considered in the analysis. The large number of respondents in the first focus group was intended to create a natural flow in the discussion. The smaller groups of respondents were chosen to create more in-depth questions and answers from the respondents, however, the smaller groups also achieved a good discussion without stimulation from follow up questions. Men and women were divided as it was sought after to observe if there was a difference in the presented discourses. Without being affected by members of the other gender, what topics are women and men discussing the most regarding video game developing?

One negative aspect of holding interviews and focus groups is that the events spoken of have

already happened in the past. Therefore, the results will vary from an actual observation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011). However, as what is being studied has happened to the respondents, asking about events will provide insights into what motivates actions and how actions are perceived. This is a very important reason for why qualitative interviews were chosen in this study. The thoughts of how a company's and society's discourse and actions are perceived by women was sought after. Focus groups have been claimed to be especially good on "challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, and class" (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011, p. 7).

As the cultural meanings of social actions sought to be researched, it was chosen to do an analysis on how women perceive certain issues. Acting as a control group to the women, the discourses the male respondents presented was also studied. Eriksson & Kovalainen (2011) mean that a discourse analysis allows for studying the cultural meanings through the use of language and also to study which consequences occur from these cultural meanings. Language can be seen as social action, due to this, studies of how discourse produces knowledge and studies of the politics of discourse have implied that discourse is always intertwined with power relations. A critical discourse analysis was chosen as the study want to perceive employer branding based on the female participants discussion. The analysis was based upon the coded material from the focus group discussions. After transcribing the focus groups, certain categories of data emerged, such as gender discrimination, role models or competence. The data was placed into each specific category and later analyzed through these categories.

Analysis

Complementing employer branding and self-efficacy

Applying SCCT as an analysis tool on what the female respondents discuss, it becomes apparent that if the video game industry were to only apply employer branding methods, it would not be sufficient in attracting certain employees to the industry. The majority of the female respondents found the video game

industry interesting and knew of their existence. Several of the respondents also found the video game industry interesting as they either appreciate creativity and innovating thinking the video game industry is associated with, or that they played video games in their spare time. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) could argue that a match has been established between the employer and some of the female respondents in shared values and personalities, creating employer attractiveness. However, this is not enough as the female respondents are still reluctant to apply for positions in the video game industry. Charlotte states that the video game industry is a "really nice" industry, with numerous creative aspects. However, she worries that the work environment will be male-dominated and gender discriminating. Something the majority of the female respondents agreed with. The discussion provided by the focus groups, also discovered that female IT and video game students tend to doubt their own level of competence in accomplishing future professional tasks. Contrary to this, both male focus groups had a different discussion regarding their thoughts and associations of the video game industry as an employer. The discussion in the male focus group was more concerned about managing tough competition from peers rather than mistrusting their own competence or worrying about gender discrimination. William claims that one cannot simply register in queueing system for a position but must instead fight and claim a position. Stella, from the female group explains that; if she were to increase her self-confidence and dare to apply for jobs, she would then need to receive more knowledge in creating video games. Thus, women were found to have a disbelief in their own ability to perform in the workplace. While men trust in their own competence but argue for tough competition.

Alicia - "I mean... yes... when you search for a company and read about it, you see like, triple-A studios want three years of experience. I was like... okay?! I just graduated from school and now I hear this? I have heard that they ask for a lot, but this? More knowledge than they actually need... I mean, do I even have a chance?"

Jennifer - "Well, it is a little like you questioning your own competence and belief... Like If I don't know this then I'm not good enough"

Alma - "I don't want to be in a situation that I can't handle... Because there is nothing good that can come out from that"

William - "Very tough industry, very... that you have to like sell yourself. It's not just like you can put yourself in the queue for a fill-in as a compositor at EA DICE. It's more that you have to advertise yourself and claim your position."

Michael - "Heard more and more lately that it's a cut throat business if you know what I mean? Its like politics within the company, taking creds, blaming others and things like that just to promote yourself, you push others in front of the bus so to say."

SCCT implies, having a high level of self-efficacy and positive outcome expectations are crucial to develop enough interest and goals in order to take actions toward one's employment goals. Meaning that companies with high employer attractiveness might still experience lack of applicants from particular groups in society. The women in the focus group frequently mentioned the high demands from the industry and how hard it will be to live up to these demands and to be scrutinized by colleagues and bosses. Showing that they do not perceive that they have a very high ability to exercise control over the events that might take place in a work environment in the future. It further shows that they have negative outcome expectations from working in the industry. For example, Jennifer mention that she is questioning her own knowledge and is, therefore, implying that she might not have the ability to successfully handle future situations. The male respondents present another reality, they did not disbelieve their own competence, at least not to the same extent. They argued instead to face other challenges such as tough competition. Thus, having a higher self-efficacy than their female peers in accomplishing their task in the video game industry. Another reason for male respondents having higher self-efficacy might be that boys and girls have been shown to have both higher interest and higher self-efficacy for jobs that employ more of their own

gender (Ji et al., 2004; Betz & Hackett, 1981). This theory can be acknowledged through the number of male applications that the video game industry receives every year, resulting in a more male-dominated workplace. The knowledge from our study thus add to previous knowledge in that the men in this study share a different discourse than the female respondents. The SCCT model has presented that even if the female respondents match with the organization's image and its symbolic and functional values. There are still norms within society that construct a low self-efficacy among the female respondents, that might result in potential female employees not being susceptible to an attractive employer brand.

Role Models

These differences in self-efficacy seem to be interrelated with what type of role models the male and female respondents look up to. As there is a difference in self-efficacy, one can argue that there is also a difference in the type of role models. Rajabi et al. (2012) argues that person inputs and contextual influences are of great importance for a person's cognitive variables. Men and women obtain different person inputs from birth. These physical differences have no effect on its own, but as societal norms and individual prejudices exist, they create barriers for women to build careers in particular industries, such as the video game industry. As the female respondents have faced adversity through their whole upbringing, their goals and ambitions have been affected. Lent et al. (2000) might argue that because they are women (person inputs), it provides them with worse learning experiences than men. Consequently, receiving a low self-efficacy and therefore, ambitious goals seem remote to them. The male respondents, however, tended to be more inclined towards idolizing individuals who aspire or have accomplished extraordinary deeds. As an example of this, the male focus group discussed Elon Musk and the feats he has accomplished. A parable of their discourse of Elon Musk was taken to that of religious figures. Elon Musk was seen as a visionary and someone worthy of worship. In the focus group, Joachim states that these visionaries do not work for selfish reasons, they do it for the benefit of the whole world. Thus, the reason to why the male respondents looks up to them. Contrary to this

portrayal of role models, the sources of inspiration for the female respondents were female role models with experience from enduring suffering and hardship such as gender discrimination, inequality, and career opposition. Attributes, which the male groups never discussed. Hence, the role models the female respondents idolized could be anyone they could relate to.

Victor - "... I look up to people that are skilled, add value to things, is positive, happy, try to make people feel better and also do good things. E.g. Elon Musk, a core role model for me. He does a lot of cool stuff. I look up to people that are further ahead in their careers than me, then you have something to strive for."

Michael - "A good role model for me inspires ambition, I want to become like this person, therefore, I will work. Of course, it should be sociable and pleasant, but to inspire ambition is big for me because ambition is something I recently discovered within myself."

Natalie - "Game developers that come from nothing... What should I say... They picked up the fight in this tough industry that we all decided to enter. It is no welcoming industry, it is really tough... especially for us girls."

Michelle - "I have my mom (as a role model), because she has come a really long way in her career... and also been a manager. She did it relatively quickly as well... I think that is impressive, so I think I have her as the main role model. My dad is also my role model. It is often your parents you look up to since they teach you so much... And she did it during the 90s/00s, when it was not as equal in Sweden (referring to the IT industry)."

The female respondent's statements are in line with what Fassinger (2008) explain, how women are more influenced by their peers and by social support. This might be explained by the fact that women the society have fewer competent career models (Hill et al., 2010). Which is confirmed by the discussion provided by both female focus groups. Contrary, the men in the society have an abundance of male role models (Paa & McWirther, 2000; Hackett & Kohlhart, 2012). Which is confirmed by both

male focus groups that already receive much social support from the established stereotypes surrounding video games and a career in the video game industry. Therefore, male respondents do not apprehend social support to the same degree as the female respondents. Their person inputs are already in line with what society think the ideal video game employee should be like. This might be the reason for why the male respondents did not state their own parents as important role models or mention them as influential characters. These differing person inputs give rise to different learning experiences for women and therefore, a lowered self-efficacy. Hence, it is suggested that self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interests, goals and actions would also affect the contextual affordances, such as role models. As women in our study look up to role models that have walked the same path and faced similar challenges as themselves. Choosing role models like this reinforces that women are bound to face adversity and set a benchmark for what they want and think they are able to achieve. The discussion among the male and female focus group confirms the suggested theory presented by Hill et al. (2010). The female respondents existing role models might confine their career advancement due to lack of encouragement to achieve self-actualization and extraordinary accomplishments. Instead, the existing lack of role models might instead reinforce negative associations present in society and their employer. Which further, give the female respondents negative learning experiences. Hence, further strengthening the currently low self-efficacy.

Normative gender discrimination

A male-dominated workplace has a direct effect on what Rajabi et al. (2012) stress to be important in construing social cognitive variables: person inputs and contextual affordance. Therefore, one might argue that the differences in self-efficacy in the male and female focus groups might originate from the different person inputs and contextual affordances both groups have. One reason for female respondents having a lower self-efficacy is that they are surrounded by much more negative perspective regarding them working in video games and IT. The respondents from both

female groups explained how they often are subject to harassment when they attend in a male-dominated environment. Cote (2017) would argue that women are seen as outsiders in video game content and that misogynistic tendencies then are increased. Jennifer explains that "as soon as you mention that you are a woman in a game, you start receiving negative comments about how bad you are". These negative influences are reflected in the women in the focus groups when they are asked to discuss potential barriers to their careers:

Michelle - "That's how I feel with my lab supervisor. Even when I am doing my lab work, he says things like "oh, you little sweetie" (men lilla gumman). I think that when you enter the workforce you will get even more of that mentality".

Charlotte - "... These old prejudices that still lies in the bone marrow in people... If you are like 158cm tall then you cannot show that you are as competent".

Lisa - "I think it is more ok to see men as these super geniuses and smart. But I think women are rarely seen as these super geniuses and perceived to be great..."

It was stated in both female groups that they see and hear plentiful about other women being harassed and some of them has also experienced harassment in their private lives. Due to this, the female respondents are expecting to be exposed to some kind of harassment in their future workplaces. However, the discourse from the two male focus groups did not show any signs of them being harassed for being men. The discussion even revealed that some of the male respondents were oblivious to the fact that women are being harassed in their educational program.

Robert - "I have never ever heard that guys nagged on girls here, like, "your game design is bad just because you are a girl".

Adam - "No! No work or nothing have I heard or seen to be criticized on a gender basis".

However, Michael, did not agree with Adam and Robert, as a counter-argument, presented a known event that took place at the university:

Michael - "...They only chose close friends (for a school game project), which happened to be female, then people just assumed that only girls were allowed. "oh, so it must be a girly game" then it will not be as good, then everyone started nagging on them".

Robert - "mm okay, then it must have been very young guys that were nagging on them".

The counter-argument presented by Mikael is something the majority of the female respondents would agree with. In the discussions, they explain that they have previously been questioned or harassed for creating too girly products. As Robert plays many video games with sexualized and objectified women, he might be more accepting or oblivious to women being harassed during real-life events, a theory that supports Dill et al. (2008) claim. Robert further takes a defensive stance to the counter argument and responds that the men who harassed must be very young. A response one might argue to be a subconscious self-mechanism in trying to separate the other men from himself and his own actions. Negative influences like this are something many women frequently have to endure. These events are according to SCCT learning experiences and arise due to their person inputs. The different treatment due to their person inputs leads to women having different learning experiences than men. Negative learning experiences like this can be seen as an internalized oppression which can further lead women into lowering their self-confidence and their self-efficacy, a relation that Fassinger (2008) would argue for. Fassinger (2008) means that a relationship like this might compromise previous achievements as well as lower future expectations of what individuals aspire to achieve. Showing that women would also have lower outcome expectations than men. According to SCCT, these lower outcome expectations and the lower self-efficacy would make women less interested in working in the industry. Leading them to change their goals and the actions taken towards accomplishing these new goals.

There is a self-reinforcing circle that maintains a negative influence towards the female respondents, thus creating barriers for the women to initiate a career in the video game industry. When fewer females take action to apply for a position in the video game industry, it results in a male-dominated industry. The male-dominated industry creates more associations of being discriminating towards women. The industry creates these association by having a workplace consisting of a majority of male employees, thus validating norms in society that the industry is more suitable for men. A second process of creating these associations is through the practices of creating video games that continues to affirm that women are not allowed. This is done e.g. through the lack of female characters or that female characters are sexualized. In accordance

with Pritchard (2004) and Barrow & Mosley (2005) theory, potential employees use their experiences and associations to a company's product to create an image of the company as an employer. As these practices validate, yet again, existing female discriminating norms in society, the employees also create female discriminating associations directly towards the industry. Consequently, the female discriminating associations and norms will lower potential female employees' self-efficacy, as shown in the focus group. Making the female respondents questioning their competence and increasing their reluctance to apply for positions in the video game industry. Hence, creating the circle of negative influences presented in figure 3 below. The circle depicts how the various influences contribute to the creation and recreation of the other influences.



Figure 3. Circle of negative influence.

Measurements to reduce the male domination of the industry has been taken. One such measurement is that of quotas, a measurement Lent et al. (2000) would call a contextual influence. The female respondents in the focus groups frequently mention quotas, often in a negative sense. Wilma explains that she thinks it might be hard to feel that you are hired because you are the best, and not because of some quota

that the company is trying to reach. The doubt over whether one is hired because of a quota or not, accentuates any previous doubts in their self-efficacy. Quotas were also discussed among the male respondents, the majority of the male respondents reacted negatively towards quotas and argued that competence should be prioritized above and over. Some men provided examples and stories of when women have been

quoted into the company on the expense of a competent male applicant. Other men emphasized the importance of always prioritizing competence before gender when hiring.

Wilma - "I think one challenge will be to feel that you are hired because you are the best and not because you are a woman".

Michelle - "Am I hired because I am skilled or because of some quota? ... But I think quotas are needed in our society today, but hopefully, we do not need it in the future".

Ronja - "We become the accessory again... They tried to make it more equal, but yet again it is like Ms. Pac-man".

The discussion among the male respondents indicates that they assume to be more competent than women, regarding IT and video games. This could be explained through the norms of the video game industry being more suitable for men than for women. These norms further explain why men predominantly see competition as a barrier to acquiring a job and not their own competence. By perceiving quotas as something negative, one can assume that the male respondents believe their female peers to be less competent. Thus, believing quotas would be at the expense of a competence man, and for this reason, believe that men should on the first-hand work in this kind of environments. However, the men that participated in groups that advocate gender equality had different views on the matter. They brought up how absurd it is to claim that quotas would lead to companies hiring less competent employees. Further emphasizing how there are plentiful competent women. The other male respondents agreed to some extent but considered it as an argument of not needing quotas as competent women would have the same degree of chance in becoming hired.

The female respondents possess a greater awareness of the existing norms in society, as they have been adjusting to the male discourse since childhood. Hence, not having the same luxury as the male respondents in not needing to consider themselves with the female

Adam - "It should not matter... That the person is more talented should be more important when one applies... They should evaluate how much the person knows, and nothing else".

Victor - "... but I do not think it is such a positive thing. I believe they should evaluate based on competence and personality".

Anton - "They should absolutely only evaluate based on competence to 100%, and not evaluate based on gender".

It was clearly noted that when men discuss quotas, competence is a factor that is discussed as well. William even stated during the discussion that it is interesting that competence is always brought up as a counterpart to quotas of women, thus that women are assumed to be less competent.

respondent's reality. The female respondent is therefore likely to be aware of the societal norms regarding how it is thought that quotas can lower competence. The female respondent's negative perception of quotas can, therefore, be linked to the perception men hold towards quotas. One might think that women have a positive attitude for quotes, but that is not the case: Women aspiring to work in the video game industry are clearly aware of the biased hiring practices that they will experience. This awareness might then affect their perceived self-efficacy of their future professional tasks. The lowered self-efficacy will then affect their interests, goals, and actions, as they do not feel as worthy as they actually are. This is due to the societal norms that influence quotas to become a symbolic inconvenience for women as it goes against their subconscious need of acceptance and appreciation. A theory in accordance with Keller (1993) that argues does factors to be what people strive for. Because the female respondents are directly or indirectly aware of how the men perceive quotas, they do not want to have their competence questioned by either their male colleagues or by themselves.

Conclusion

Self-efficacy: SCCT revealed that the female respondents are unsusceptible to an attractive employer brand due to a factor that has been identified as low self-efficacy. The low level of self-efficacy results in women questioning

themselves, to doubt their competence, and make them hesitate in applying for positions in the video game industry.

Role-models: The female respondent's low self-efficacy combined with a scarcity of female role models repel women from idolizing visionary role models that are more occurring among the male respondents. The female respondents source of inspiration were female role models with experience from enduring suffering and hardship. The existing role models that the female respondents idolize confine their career advancement and reinforce an already negative learning experience. Thus, lowering the self-efficacy further.

Normative gender discrimination: The male-dominated video game industry validates societal norms that video games are products for men. Thus, creating a normative gender discrimination in the society that provides the female respondents with negative learning experience, resulting in low self-efficacy and lower outcome expectation. The existing societal norms and the female respondent's low self-efficacy cause quotas to become a symbolic inconvenience that goes against the female respondents' desire for acceptance and appreciations.

Discussion

How would society be experienced by women if one assumed that the discussion the male respondents had would portray all men within society, or at least within the world of IT and the video game industry? Our research suggests that if the majority of men in society shared the discourse and jargon the male respondents utilized, the video game industry would be viewed as a hostile environment for our female respondents. Both the male and female respondents are in an agreement that competence is of priority in a hiring process. However, when quotation of women is introduced in the discussion the risk of competence degradation is brought up by the male respondents. The male respondents' perspective of quotas implies that the male respondents partake in a discourse they are unaware of, as the majority of them believe it to be necessary to increase the number of women in the video game industry in order to improve

it. The reason for the jargon utilized by the male respondents is explained by the discriminative norms towards women that exists in the society. The discriminative norms explain to the members of society that women are not suitable to work within the video game industry. The discriminative norms are in turn strengthened by the mentality and jargon that the male respondents utilize. The norms also affect the female respondents' self-efficacy and their view of quotas. Consequently, resulting in a lack of women in the video game industry and a lack of visionary role models for women. A negative circle of influence is therefore exposed that without extraordinary changes, will continue in reinforcing gender discriminating norms and create limitation for women to initiate a career in the video game industry.

In order to break this negative cycle, the video game industry need to incorporate the identified factors that could limit women from initiating a career to their employer branding strategies. The research has showed that by only implementing employer branding strategies, could result in organizations investing a lot of resources in developing an attractive employer brand with relevant symbolic and functional benefits, but still become unsuccessful in convincing the female respondents to apply for a position due to the factors identified by SCCT. Our research suggests that the video game industry must start creating strong female role models and encourage women to be more visible in the company's media channels. Thus, supporting career women to become visionaries for other women. This might improve the discriminative norms that exist in society and help change the view and jargon of women among all members of society.

Furthermore, on a societal level, a gender-neutral view of IT and programming must be advocated to young adolescents. Our research implies that changes in societal norms might improve women's self-efficacy, thus allowing them to be more receivable to the employer branding of the video game industry. The female respondents encountered negative experience from childhood by parents and peers that argue that some professions are less suitable for women. The negative experience continuous in school from male peers that question the female

respondent's competence during projects. By introducing IT and programming to the elementary school on a national level, students will view both women and men within the video game industry as a natural phenomenon. Thus, in long-term shifting the existing discriminative societal norms to a more including societal norms.

Future research

Factors have been identified which inhibits women to start a career in the video game industry. However, these results might not be generalizable to every woman within the video game industry. The discussion among the female respondents might be different among e.g. female minority groups or female with 20 years' experience in the video game industry. A

greater understanding of how other groups of women are affected by the identified factors is a fundamental and necessary prerequisite for a prosperous development of employer branding strategy. Thus, create possibilities to better understand how factors influence women in society in a generalized perspective.

This research has successfully portrayed how SCCT could support employer branding by identifying factors overseen by employer branding strategies. Greater attention is therefore required for research on the integration of SCCT with Employer Branding. SCCT could provide data that can be used in employer branding strategies to create relevant and desired associations to increase employer attractiveness.

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Appendix 1. Focus group interview questions.

Question 1 – How much has your given education prepared you for your future career?

Question 2 – What are your thoughts when you think of the video gaming industry as an employer?

Question 3 – What is meaningful to you at a workplace?

Question 4 – Can you please describe a good role model?

Question 5 – What type of support do you deem necessary to achieve your career goals?

Question 6 – Which factors affect your choice in career?

Question 7 – Which challenges do you think you will face at the workplace?

Question 8 – What improvements should the video gaming industry do, in order to improve as an employer?

Question 9 – What do you think is the difference between video gaming companies and other IT-companies?

Question 10 – Why do you think there are so few women in the video gaming industry?

Question 11 – Are women needed in the industry? Why or why not?

Question 12 – If they are needed, how do you increase the number of women in the industry?