Keeping up to date

Incorporating social network sites and employer branding in recruitment processes.

Authors: Malin Blomqvist
Myran Ekström

Supervisor: Thomas Biedenbach
[THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY]
Abstract

The use of social network sites (SNSs), such as Facebook and LinkedIn, by both organizations and the Swedish population is increasing. Previous publications in this research field lack empirical reinforcement and the empirical research that has been published often suggest a connection between recruitment via SNSs and employer branding. However, this connection has not yet been elaborated on or explained by previous research. Furthermore, both these research fields lack the insight of empirical studies conducted from a managerial point of view. The objective of this study is to contribute to these research fields by providing a holistic understanding about employer branding and SNSs role in recruitment processes from a managerial perspective. The recruitment process includes all activities from the origin of a vacant position to employing an applicant.

To gain insight into this perspective, a qualitative study was conducted with the methodological stances constructionism and interpretivism. HR-managers at eight organizations with 200 employees or more located in the northern part of Sweden were interviewed. A thematic analysis, in line with the research approach with inductive characteristics, was used to analyze the qualitative data collected from conducting semi-structured interviews. The themes are based on regularly discussed aspects found in the empirical data. These themes are: “Employer Branding”, “Benefits”, “Barriers”, “Communication Channels” and “Implementation”. The fundamental aspect of succeeding with implementing SNSs as a recruitment tool was found to be a supportive management. This resulted in a framework being developed that describes necessary actions to take into consideration by the management to successfully implement SNSs as a recruitment tool. It was found that employer branding is closely interlinked with the attraction stage of a SNS recruitment process. Therefore, the framework also incorporates the findings regarding the benefits that a strong employer brand will have on the SNS recruitment process.

This study provides theoretical insight of how SNSs are used to strengthen the employer brand in recruitment processes. The study also concluded that the interviewed organizations are in the early stages of implementing employer branding and SNSs in organizational contexts. The managerial perspective also provides an important theoretical contribution. Practical contributions include inspiration for how to design strategies to implement SNSs as a recruitment tool and an insight as to why it is important to adopt such strategies.
Acknowledgements

We would like to begin by thanking our supervisor Thomas Biedenbach for the guidance and constructive criticism during the writing process.

We would also like to extend a special thank you to the HR-professionals that we have had the pleasure of meeting. Without them, this study would not have been possible.

The support and encouragement of our families and friends has helped us through this degree project.

Lastly, we want to extend a supercalifragilisticexpialidocious thank you to each other.

Umeå

May 20, 2016

Malin Blomqvist and Myran Ekström
[THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY]
Table of Content

1. Introductory chapter ........................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 Subject choice ................................................................................................................. 1
   1.2 Problem background ....................................................................................................... 1
   1.3 Theoretical background ................................................................................................. 3
   1.4 Research gap .................................................................................................................. 4
   1.5 Research questions ......................................................................................................... 5
   1.6 Purpose ............................................................................................................................ 5
   1.7 Delimitations .................................................................................................................. 5

2. Scientific Method ................................................................................................................. 7
   2.1 Preconceptions ................................................................................................................ 7
   2.2 Ontology .......................................................................................................................... 7
   2.3 Epistemology ................................................................................................................... 8
   2.4 Research Approach ......................................................................................................... 9
   2.5 Research Design ............................................................................................................ 10
   2.6 Literature Search .......................................................................................................... 11
   2.7 Source criticism ............................................................................................................. 12

3. Theoretical framework ......................................................................................................... 13
   3.1 Recruitment .................................................................................................................... 13
   3.2 Employer Branding ......................................................................................................... 14
   3.3 Recruitment through the use of SNSs .......................................................................... 16
      3.3.1 Finding and attracting suitable employees .......................................................... 17
      3.3.2 Creating a network ............................................................................................... 18
      3.3.3 Establishing relationships .................................................................................... 20
      3.3.4 Drawbacks of using SNSs in recruitment processes ........................................... 21
   3.4 Selection Process .......................................................................................................... 21

4. Practical Method .................................................................................................................. 25
   4.1 Qualitative data collection ............................................................................................. 25
   4.2 Interview guide ............................................................................................................... 26
   4.3 Sampling technique and access .................................................................................... 27
   4.4 Conducting the interviews ......................................................................................... 28
   4.5 Transcribing .................................................................................................................. 29
   4.6 Ethical considerations ................................................................................................... 30
   4.7 Qualitative analysis ....................................................................................................... 31

5. Empirical data ..................................................................................................................... 32
   5.1 Recruitment .................................................................................................................... 32
   5.2 Employer Branding ......................................................................................................... 33
   5.3 Social media in an organizational context .................................................................... 35
   5.4 Attracting applicants and recruitment via SNSs .......................................................... 37
   5.5 Selection process .......................................................................................................... 40

6. Analysis and Discussion ..................................................................................................... 43
   6.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 43
   6.2 Employer branding ......................................................................................................... 43
   6.3 Benefits ........................................................................................................................... 47
   6.4 Barriers ............................................................................................................................ 50
   6.5 Communication Channels ............................................................................................ 53
   6.6 Implementation ............................................................................................................... 56
   6.7 SNS Recruitment Strategy and Outcomes Framework .............................................. 59

7. Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 61
7.1 General Conclusions ........................................................................................................ 61
7.2 Theoretical contributions .............................................................................................. 62
7.3 Practical contributions .................................................................................................. 62
7.4 Future research ............................................................................................................. 63
8. Truth Criteria .................................................................................................................. 65
Reference List .................................................................................................................... 67

List of Figures

Figure 1: Summary of methodological choices .................................................................. 11
Figure 2: Traditional recruitment process adapted from Behrenz (2001, p. 256) ............... 13
Figure 3: Employer branding framework adjusted from Sehgal and Malati (2013, p. 52) .... 16
Figure 4: Recruitment strategy and outcomes adjusted from Wazed and Ng (2015, p. 136) .... 18
Figure 5: SNS Recruitment Strategy and Outcomes ............................................................. 59

List of Tables

Table 1: Organizational Index ............................................................................................. 28
Table 2: Interview Index ...................................................................................................... 29

Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guide
1. Introductory chapter

This initial chapter will introduce the reader to the subject and give a brief overview of the existing literature within the concerned field of research. This will act as a background to the identification of a research gap and the establishment of research questions as well as a description of the purpose of this thesis.

1.1 Subject choice

Through our personal experience as users of social media, it has come to our attention that organizations are entering these sites to market themselves. We have also noticed a trend that organizations use these sites to post job vacancies to attract a wider range of potential applicants. This emerging trend is particularly noticeable and interesting to us, as we are approaching the labor market. The development of recruitment strategies and issues related to human resource management are fields of research that we consistently have chosen to immerse ourselves in throughout the duration of our education. These research fields, combined with the constant presence of social media in our daily lives have sparked our interest. In this study we will combine the usage of social media with human resource management as well as recruitment processes to gain a deeper understanding of the relation between these.

On a national level, Sweden is a country where the daily use of Internet is widespread. 93 percent of the Swedish population has access to Internet and 80 percent of the population uses it on a daily basis in their homes (Findahl & Davidsson, 2015). 92 percent has access to a computer, 77 percent has access to a smartphone and 59 percent has access to a tablet (Findahl & Davidsson, 2015). An astonishingly 53 percent has access to all three of these technologies (Findahl & Davidsson, 2015). Due to the way the Internet is used by individuals to communicate, establish relationships and assimilate information, there is no doubt that it is something that has an impact on the entire Swedish society. This makes issues related to new ways to utilize the capacity of Internet services, and the way that these are used, an interesting field to study.

1.2 Problem background

In conjunction with the Swedish population’s comprehensive Internet usage, Social media or social network sites (SNS) are occupying an increasing amount of time demanded of people in all age groups. In fact, the time spent on SNSs has constantly increased in all age groups over the past five years and this trend is also applicable to the number of different types of SNSs available (Findahl & Davidsson, 2015). The term SNSs is defined as Internet services that provide the possibility to create a profile within a specific system where you can make connections with other individuals using the same system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). Examples of these sites are Facebook and LinkedIn. Further, it is important to distinguish between social network sites and networking, as the latter refers to the act of initiating contact with new individuals and the previous to the system that enables connections to be made with existing and possible contacts (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). In this study, we will focus on the concept and usage of social network sites.

The age group that is most active on SNSs today belongs to Generation Y, which refers to individuals born approximately between 1980 and 1990. This generation has grown up with a rapid technical development and highly attentive parents, which has made
them seek constant stimulation and self-fulfillment (Weyland, 2011, p. 440). As a part of the workforce, individuals belonging to generation Y are generally highly conscious of the values and ethics of the organization they work for (Weyland, 2011, p. 440). After generation Y, generation Z follows (Fisher et al., 2014, p. 637), and it will take even more innovative efforts to attract and retain these as employees due to their lack of loyalty towards possible employers (Gayeski, 2015, p. 10).

SNSs are a relatively new concept to the world and to make sense of this new research field several pre-existing fields have been combined with the SNS concept. This has been done in order to increase the knowledge and understanding about the usage of SNSs and the impacts of this usage (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). In 1996 an Internet subscription was elected the “Christmas present of the year” in Sweden (HUI Research, 2016) and in 2006 the social network site Facebook granted access to a worldwide audience (Facebook, 2016). Globally, Facebook has about 1.04 billion daily active users (Facebook, 2016) and 5.1 million of these are Swedish (Statista.com, 2016). Overall, most of the Swedish population that are engaging in SNSs have a Facebook account and about half of these users are engaging in activities on Facebook on a daily basis (Findahl & Davidsson, 2015). Generally, the younger generations are engaged in activities on Facebook to a greater extent than the older generations (Findahl & Davidsson, 2015). According to Caers & Castelyns (2011, p. 442) recruitment professionals consider Facebook to be a private form of SNSs, but the information available on applicants is still taken into consideration in a recruitment process.

Another popular SNS is LinkedIn, which is a worldwide site where professional networks are established and developed (LinkedIn, 2016). Today, LinkedIn has over 400 million members and the demographic that increases the most is college graduates and students (LinkedIn, 2016). In Sweden, one of five Internet users have a LinkedIn profile and the age group that is most engaged in this SNS are individuals between the ages of 26 and 45 years old (Findahl & Davidsson, 2015). Even though Facebook has a larger amount of active users, Lewis et al. (2015, p. 4) states that recruiters prefer to use the SNS LinkedIn for recruitment purposes. With the younger generations engaging in these SNSs to a greater extent, it will become even more difficult to attract and retain employees belonging to these generations in the future (Gayeski, 2015, p. 10). This will make it even more important for organizations to make efforts to take things such as the employer brand into consideration in order to attract suitable employees in the future. Employer branding refers to actions to improve the organizational reputation in order to attract potential job applicants (Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 474). As mentioned, it will be vital for organizations to become more innovative in order to attract individuals belonging to generations Y and Z (Gayeski, 2015, p. 10). We therefore think that strategies and policies regarding innovative recruitment activities through SNSs can contribute to strengthening the employer brand and thereby increase the attractiveness. This is due to the younger generations strong relations to social network sites (Gayeski, 2015, p. 10). Since managers and HR-departments are responsible for the development of such strategies, it becomes interesting to study the subject from a managerial point of view.

A recent report stated that about 50 percent of Swedish organizations with ten employees or more are engaged in SNSs (SCB, 2015). In 2013, 15 percent of these organizations had a formal policy regarding the usage of SNSs (SCB, 2013a). However, about 50 percent of organizations with 250 employees or more had formulated a SNS
policy (SCB, 2013a). Swedish organizations use SNSs for a number of reasons, for example recruitment purposes and to develop the external perception of the organization (SCB, 2013b). The large amount of both individuals and organizations that engages in, and actively uses SNSs indicates that the subject is highly relevant in today’s society. This current relevance further increases the importance to study the topic of SNS usage from a managerial point of view.

1.3 Theoretical background

Research concerning recruitment activities on the Internet has been discussed in research since the 1980’s (Galanaki, 2002). Since then, the subject has progressively been studied and perceived as more important as technology has taken advancing steps to become essential in today’s society. Recent articles concerning recruitment through the use of Internet and more specifically, e-recruitment through SNSs has highlighted benefits that could be gained from utilizing this technology in a recruitment process. According to Allden and Harris (2013, p. 36) “e-recruitment” is the act of using the Internet for recruitment purposes, and El Ouirdi et al. (2016, p. 240) states that the term “social recruitment” refers to the same activity being carried out through the use of SNSs. These terms are not consistently used in previous research and will therefore not be used in this study. Instead, these activities will be referred to as recruitment activities via SNSs, through the use of SNSs or some variation thereof, to avoid confusion.

In general, studies have shown that recruitment via SNSs results in a stronger employer brand, which leads to a competitive advantage for organizations adopting this method of recruitment (Allden & Harris, 2013). Further research has proven that this correlation also applies when using SNSs for recruitment purposes (Carrillat et al., 2014, p.475; Ollington et al., 2013, p. 261). Examples of empirical research in this field include Carrillat et al. (2014) who studied how the way organizations choose to portray themselves, through their presence on SNSs, have an effect on potential applicants inclinations to view the organization as a possible employer in the future. How attractive individuals’ perceive the organization to be depending on the image portrayed on SNSs was explored in a study conducted by Sivertzen et al. (2013), and individuals attitudes towards employers use of SNSs in recruitment processes was further elaborated on in Lewis et al.’s (2015) study. The attractiveness of an organization as a potential employer can also be affected by individuals’ usage of SNSs and the content posted regarding the organization. The usage of SNSs for communication purposes can have both positive and negative affect on an organization's brand and therefore it is important for organizations to actively use SNSs to promote a positive and attractive brand (Kaul et al., 2015, p. 455).

From an organizational perspective Melanthiou et al. (2015) have studied more specifically how Cyprian organizations use SNSs to attract and screen applicants, ethical and legal implications and differences between industries. A similar view was taken by Ollington et al. (2013), where New Zealand based recruiters were interviewed to investigate how they use SNSs to screen and attract potential applicants. Further examples of research conducted that adapts this perspective includes El Ouirdi et al. (2016, p. 241) who studied what affect the Central and Eastern European recruiters intentions to use SNSs in a recruitment process. While these studies have explored how and why managers use SNSs for recruitment purposes, Girard et al. (2014) studied recruitment experts attitudes and perceptions towards the use of SNSs in recruitment processes.
Further, a study on entrepreneurial recruiters show that they perceive that using SNSs for recruitment purposes is a valuable tool when the vacant position possesses more specific characteristics, but perceived it to be costly and ineffective when trying to attract and screen applicants for vacancies possessing generic attributes (Ollington et al., 2013, p. 259). In contradiction, a study conducted in the hospitality industry concluded that HR managers found SNSs more useful when recruiting individuals for less demanding jobs than managerial or supervisory positions (Gibbs et al., 2015, p.177). The hospitality industry is used often to study recruitment processes via SNSs, as Ladkin and Buhalis (2016, p. 327) states that this is an industry where turnover is high and it is therefore an appropriate industry to focus on in order to study these issues. Gibbs et al. (2015) studied North American HR professionals within the hotel industry and their use and non-use of SNSs in recruitment processes, while Madera (2012) explored hospitality management students’ attitudes towards their future employers use of SNSs for recruitment purposes.

Overall, the existing literature indicates that recruitment via SNSs should be used as a complement to other recruitment strategies and tools (Doherty, 2010, p. 13; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 9, Fisher et al., 2014, p. 638). In addition, some research suggests that it is essential for organizations to include and adapt to the emerging trend of using SNSs as a recruitment tool by creating clear strategies for how to successfully use it (Lewis et al., 2015, p. 9; Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 498). Otherwise these organizations risk missing out on valuable opportunities to recruit highly suitable applicants (Fisher et al., 2014, p. 644). Even though SNSs are considered to be important for recruitment purposes many organizations oversees the benefits and opportunities generated by these (Melanthiou et al., 2015, p. 32). There is also an issue concerning how to approach applicants that are not active on SNSs as there is a risk that they will be treated differently or not reached at all (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 495).

1.4 Research gap

Practice has fast outpaced the theoretical development regarding the use of SNSs in recruitment processes (Roth et al., 2016, p. 288), and an insufficient amount of empirical research has been conducted in this field (Davison et al., 2011, p. 154). Therefore, there is a severe need for empirical studies within this topic, as a large amount of the literature published so far is not based on empirical findings (Ollington et al., 2013; El Ouirdi et al., 2016, p. 240). This has been observed and elaborated on by El Ouirdi et al. (2016, p. 241) who identifies the need to study this field from a managerial perspective and in regions outside of the United States. Melanthiou et al. (2015, p. 45) suggests that a comparative study between organizations that do and do not use SNSs for recruitment purposes could further highlight this area of research. In addition, and relating to employer branding, Arachchige & Robertson (2011, p. 44) suggest that future research should include a managerial perspective to further investigate what is needed to attract possible employees.

Taking all of these aspects into consideration and combining them with the overview of previous research presented above, we can identify a knowledge-gap in the current research. Employer branding is constantly mentioned in the research concerning the use of SNSs in recruitment processes as a benefit gained through the usage of SNSs for recruitment purposes. However, to the best of our knowledge there does not appear to
be any studies that explain or elaborates on how employer branding is related to the SNS recruitment process. As the majority of the literature existing today, discusses the topic of using SNSs for recruitment purposes on a non-empirical level, we want to increase the understanding through a qualitative study by combining employer branding with recruitment via the use of SNSs from a managerial perspective. This leads us to our research questions that will aid us in understanding these issues.

1.5 Research questions

How do organizations use SNSs to strengthen the employer brand in recruitment processes?

How do organizations use SNSs to attract applicants?

How do organizations use SNSs to select applicants?

1.6 Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to gain a holistic understanding about the role employer branding and SNSs have in recruitment processes from a managerial perspective. In order to reach this level of understanding, we will explore the way organizations use, or why they choose not to use, SNSs. We will study the entire recruitment process, which includes how SNSs are used to attract potential applicants as well as the activities on SNSs that are carried out to engage them to increase the inclination to apply for a vacant position. We will also study if, and how organizations use SNSs to select applicants and explore the general attitudes towards using SNSs in recruitment processes. Further, we will study in what way employer branding is incorporated into recruitment processes conducted via SNSs.

Due to the scattered focus of the existing research in these fields, the development of a holistic overview of SNS usage in an organizational context will contribute theoretically to the previous research. Our study will offer a way of filling in the gaps between the existing research and make it easier to understand the connections and links between the distinctive areas of employer branding and recruitment via SNSs. This study will also contribute practically by enabling the management to develop strategies to attract more talented and suitable job applicants by the use of SNSs. This is important as the younger generations enters the workforce and as the employees can be considered to be a valuable asset.

1.7 Delimitations

We are focusing on SNS usage in recruitment activities because this appears to be the area where SNSs are currently most used by organizations. The main geographic area studied is the north of Sweden to ease the access to relevant organizations. In order to conduct a study relevant in a Swedish context, we have decided to focus our study to the SNSs Facebook and LinkedIn. Twitter is not extensively used in Sweden and is therefore disregarded in this study, even though it is mentioned in previous research as a means of assisting the recruitment process. Instagram, on the other hand, is extensively used in Sweden but this SNS has a different network structure. It provides less information regarding individuals in comparison with Facebook and LinkedIn and has therefore been excluded from this study. A qualitative design was chosen for this study.
due to the fact that it allows for a deeper understanding of the subject. The theories chosen for the theoretical framework excluded theories that have a more general focus on SNS usage, as these did not contribute to the research questions being answered.
2. Scientific Method

We initiate this chapter with a description and reflection of our preconceptions. The ontological and epistemological stances will thereafter be presented and described. This is followed by our research approach and design. Finally, the chapter ends with argumentation regarding the literature search and source criticism.

2.1 Preconceptions

A study conducted within social sciences can be affected by a number of factors, one of these is the personal values of the researchers conducting the study (Bryman, 2011, p. 43). Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 40) suggests that the researcher should be objective, but preconceptions are difficult to avoid as they are a part of the researcher and very difficult to suppress completely. Personal values can affect all aspects of a study from the choice of research area to the analysis and conclusions regarding the collected data (Bryman, 2011, p. 43-44). We will not claim to be objective in this study. The subject choice, the choice to conduct a qualitative study and the related research design decisions are reflections of our combined values and interests.

Both of us perceives a presence on SNSs to be necessary in today’s society, mainly to find information and interact with friends and family. This preconception therefore extends to that most, if not all, larger organizations are actively using SNSs. One of us is convinced that organizations currently use SNSs to screen applicants. We belong to generation Y and might therefore be inclined to view SNSs as a more natural aspect of everyday life than older generations. Both of us use SNSs on a daily basis and do expect organizations to be present on these sites. Our personal use of SNSs includes finding information about people as well as organizations, networking and entertainment. We do not perceive our previous education to have an influence over our preconceptions regarding the relevant research fields discussed in this study. Further, we do not have any experience of working with recruitment or employer branding activities but have both undergone several recruitment processes and have been influenced by employer branding. These experiences might have an influence upon our analysis and conclusion. However, we will do our utmost to present the respondent’s opinions and attitudes as accurately to their statements as possible. This is important as we are aiming to achieve a deeper understanding about the practical use of SNSs for recruitment and challenge, rather than reinforce, our preconceptions.

2.2 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with reality and how the world operates as it provides two distinctive positions that lay a foundation for the assumptions made by researchers (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 130). Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 32) makes a further distinction between these two positions as they discuss social entities as either existing independently of social actors or as entities constructed by the activities and perceptions of social actors. The ontological standpoint will act as a foundation for the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 34), as well as for the choice of epistemology, research approach and the research design (Raadschelders, 2011, p. 920). There are two ontological positions that are traditionally used when conducting research, objectivism and constructionism (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 32). Objectivism describes a position that perceives social entities as independent, which means that the social actors do not affect external entities (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 131). In contrast,
constructionism suggests that the social entities are continuously created and changing (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 33). Creswell (2014, p. 8) suggests that these social entities are given their meaning and definition as a way of understanding the world when social actors interact. This means that these definitions will be different depending on when and where they are created (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 34).

Our purpose is to explore and understand the roles employer branding and SNSs have in recruitment processes. These sites are constantly changing and developing and because of this, it becomes relevant to take the ontological position of constructionism. The employer brand is connected to the organizational reputation. This is a social construct that is dependent on the observer and constructionism is therefore suitable for studying this phenomenon. The usage of SNSs as a tool during recruitment processes is a somewhat new concept and a proper way to utilize this has not yet been identified. This is an ongoing process and to gain a deeper understanding, we perceive constructionism to be suitable. An objectivistic stance would not allow us to gain the holistic understanding of the processes we want to study. The research questions are aligned with the chosen ontological position of constructionism, as we want to gain a deeper understanding of how employer branding and SNSs are used in recruitment processes. With this position the recruitment process, employer branding and SNSs are viewed as entities that constantly change as a result of the interactions of the social actors active in this surrounding.

2.3 Epistemology

Epistemology addresses the argument of what can or should be considered to be knowledge within a research field (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 26). Bryman (2011, p. 29) states that one of the main issues to take into consideration in this context is whether or not the social reality should be studied in the same manner as studies concerning natural sciences and with the same epistemological position. There are three positions to take into consideration when deciding upon the epistemology namely positivism, realism and interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 134-137). Positivism is the epistemology position aligned with the natural sciences and includes a preference of data collection concerning aspects that can be observed as well as tested and confirmed by hypotheses, leading to credible data (Creswell, 2014, p. 7). Therefore, taking a position of positivism would mean that only the things we can see and observe are considered to be knowledge (Raadschelders, 2011, p. 918). Realism is also an epistemological position that is build on scientific practice as it represents a viewpoint that reality is fixed and independent of the observer (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 136). This position is similar to positivism as both of them consider an external reality beyond the interpretations of the individuals within it (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 29). The final position is interpretivism, which is aligned with the understanding of individuals and organizations and their behaviors (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 29). Saunders et al. (2012, p. 137) states that with interpretivism as a standpoint it becomes important to understand the reality from the research subjects’ position as what is considered to be reality is complex and is interpreted by the social actors within it.

As we are taking constructionism as an ontological standpoint where social entities are constantly changing it is suitable to also take interpretivism as an epistemological point of view. Our research questions are concerned with gaining a deeper understanding of how organizations use employer branding and SNSs in recruitment processes, which means that we need to understand their point of view in this matter. Further, the purpose
is to gain a holistic understanding about the roles employer branding and SNSs have in recruitment processes from a managerial perspective. Interpretivism allows us to interpret the collected data to gain a deeper understanding in relation to its context. This would not be possible with positivism or realism as epistemological standpoints. These would not allow us to interpret the data or explore the connections between employer branding, SNSs and recruitment processes to the same extent.

2.4 Research Approach

When conducting a study there are three main approaches to take into consideration and choose between: a deductive, inductive or abductive approach (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 144). A deductive approach is mainly connected to the natural sciences and includes a proposed hypothesis or idea that is developed with help from existing literature and later tested thoroughly in order to either accept or reject the results (Creswell, 2014, p. 59). Further, a deductive approach includes a strive to explain a relationship between variables, which means that the study subject need to be measurable as well as generalizable (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 146).

In contrast with a deductive approach, the inductive approach does not ground the conclusions on assumptions but instead makes generalizations based on the conducted study (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010, p. 316). An inductive approach starts with the collection and analysis of data and a conclusion drawn from it, which later leads to the construction of theory and generalizations based on this collected data (Creswell, 2014, p. 65). The inductive approach is connected with the social sciences where the focus is to acquire an understanding of the world instead of proving a correlation between variables as with the natural sciences (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 146).

The third approach is the abductive approach, where the limitations with the deductive and inductive approaches are overcome, as they cannot guarantee either the correct way to select theory to base the hypothesis on or that the conducted study will lead to a theory (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 27). With the abductive approach it is possible to move back and forth between theories and data, thus combining the deductive and inductive approaches (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 147).

We have chosen an approach that is more of an inductive nature. This is due to the relatively new research field of employer branding SNSs and to the fact that there, to the best of our knowledge, have not been any studies conducted within these fields in Sweden. With this study we want to gain a deeper understanding of the involvement of employer branding and SNSs in recruitment processes. To increase the understanding of this subject we started by reviewing previous studies conducted in other geographical regions as the research focus in these fields are very scattered. However, we will not test a hypothesis, instead we want to gain more insight to the roles employer branding and SNSs have in recruitment processes from a managerial perspective. With the collected data of this study we aim to develop the theories within this field by letting the data guide our conclusions. We believe that a deductive study would require a more substantial base of previous research that can be tested by developing hypotheses. However, as these fields are scattered we decided to start by collecting previous research before conducting our study in order to learn what already had been done and to create new theories with an inductive approach that bridges the current gaps.
2.5 Research Design

The research design is a plan for how the research questions will be answered by conducting the study (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 159). The two main research designs are the qualitative or quantitative designs and the choice between these should be suitable with the choice of ontological and epistemological foundations (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 37). A quantitative research design is often focused on numerical data and on finding and examining correlations between variables as well as analyzing the data with the use of statistical techniques (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 311). This method is often associated with a deductive research approach where the focus is on testing the theories to either confirm or reject them (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Quantitative research is also associated with the natural sciences where the position of positivism often is embraced, as well as an objective view of the reality (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 38).

In contrast with a quantitative research design, the qualitative design generally focuses on relationships and interactions between individuals and on using different analyzing techniques to create theories (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 163). The qualitative research design is associated with an inductive approach in order to create new theories based on the collected data (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Further, this method is generally aligned with interpretivism as it focuses on how individuals interpret their reality (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 38). The qualitative research design is also associated with the position of viewing the reality as constantly changing and is therefore associated with taking constructionism as ontological position (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 312).

In line with the previous methodological choices of constructionism and interpretivism as ontological and epistemological standpoints as well as the inductive research approach and the purpose of our study, we have chosen to conduct a qualitative study (see Figure 1). The purpose of this study is to gain a holistic understanding about the role employer branding and SNSs have in recruitment processes from a managerial perspective. We consider the social reality as complex and in a recruitment process there are many individuals interacting with each other, creating and developing the social entities around them. Therefore, we perceive the research design most suitable with our purpose to be a qualitative design. This design will also be suitable for answering our research questions. With a qualitative study we can achieve this level of understanding by gathering as much information as possible from the organizations. Further, the choice of a qualitative study is also suitable with the inductive research approach. This is because a quantitative research design would not allow us to gain the same level of understanding as a qualitative study where we have the possibility to interact with practitioners. Neither is the methodological choices related to a quantitative research design relevant for our study. For example, it would be difficult to deduce hypotheses to test and explain our research questions with a scientific approach aligned with the natural science field.
2.6 Literature Search

The literature search helps to explore and understand the research that has already been conducted within a field and to clarify the research questions for new studies (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 72). According to Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 100) the reason for doing a literature search is to make sure that the study avoids being a repetition of preexisting research and to motivate its relevance. The literature review should be conducted early in the research process and can follow a spiral process (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 72). The first step is to establish search parameters, which is followed by a search and evaluation of the found literature before the parameters are updated and a new search is conducted and so on (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 72). We began our literature search by establishing keywords and search terms that we felt encapsulated the relevant area of research. These were words such as: social media, recruitment, e-recruitment, employer branding, management, human resources. We then entered these words into various search engines in different combinations to find as many sources as possible that suited our area of interest. The most used search engines were Business Source Premier, Scopus, Emerald journals, Wiley Journals and Google Scholar. We based our selection of articles to include in our literature review based on the requirement of being published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. This was to make a rough first selection to increase the quality of our theoretical framework. Based on the information gathered by the first search, we revised the keywords used to conduct the searches and added social recruitment and screening. The selection process followed the same requirements as the first time. When all of the selected articles generated by the searches had been evaluated and thoroughly read, further articles in the reference lists of the selected articles were selected in order to achieve an exhaustive literature review.

To enhance the arguments to study the selected area statistic and general information has been gathered and presented in the introductory chapter of this study. The statistics regarding general Internet usage in Sweden has been collected from the Swedish Internet Foundation, IIS, which we perceive to be a reliable source for this type of information. Further, the information about the number of worldwide Facebook and LinkedIn users was found on the information pages of the respective sites. We trust that the presented information on these sites is accurate or a close representation that will be sufficient to support our argumentation. The main source of information to formulate the methodological chapters has been academic books. This is because they describe general concepts that are relatively timeless. The books have either had an general orientation towards social science and business or a qualitative focus. The authors are respected within their fields and commonly used in previous research.
2.7 Source criticism

As there are limitations to the extent of empirical literature available in the concerned research field, the choice and selection of articles used in the theoretical framework is rather restricted. We have limited ourselves to articles found through our literature search on the search engines mentioned above. This was a conscious decision to facilitate the selection of articles published in well known and respected journals even though all of the used literature does not consist of empirical studies. The limited amount of research published in this area has resulted in a vast amount of articles being used to compose the theoretical framework of this study. Relevant aspects have been extracted from each article in order to facilitate the understanding and foundation of the empirical study. We do not perceive that this way of handling the previous research has undermined the previous studies conducted in this field. We have taken precautions to retain the essence of each article, avoid secondary sources and made sure that this essence has not been altered or compromised in the process of constructing the theoretical framework.

The majority of the literature applied to construct the theoretical framework was published from 2010 until today. As technology rapidly develops, it was important for us to base the theoretical framework on contemporary research. Some methodological sources are relatively old compared to the rest, however we did not find this to be alarming. This is because these concepts are still used in the same way as when they were introduced. The previous studies have been conducted in different countries situated in Europe, North America and Asia. The cultural norms that these studies represent are therefore limited to these areas. This will have an impact on our prior understanding of this research area before we conduct our own study and might influence us even though our study is focused on Sweden. We assume that the majority of the published research in this field is carried out by researchers that belong to generation X or older. We base this assumption on that authors belonging to generations Y and Z are not as likely to be published yet. This could mean that the current researchers are biased due to their age and the fact that they have not grown up with this technology. However, this research will act as a foundation for our study and we will develop and challenge their stances.
3. Theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce previous research that will aid with the interpretation of the results from this study and provide a frame of reference when developing our framework. The research presented in this chapter work as a foundation for the interview questions used to conduct the empirical study. The theories presented will start with a section regarding the usage of SNSs in general, followed by theories regarding the recruitment process. These theories will follow the same order as a recruitment process from attracting potential applicants to selection and screening activities.

3.1 Recruitment

Traditionally recruitment, or “staffing” is defined as activities with the objective to attract, select and retain employees compatible with an organization (Ployhart, 2006, p. 868). These attraction and selection activities can be divided into three parts: internal job planning, posting vacant positions and the selection process (see Figure 2) (Behrenz, 2001, p. 256). Internal job planning refers to the strategic planning that identifies future needs of the organization (Behrenz, 2001, p. 256). This plan can be used to detect when and what type of positions that will be required within the organization in the future. When this is established, the process continues with announcing the vacant positions through the appropriate channels and finally selecting the most suitable applicant for the position (Behrenz, 2001, p. 256). We are going to focus on the two final parts of this process, posting vacant positions and selecting the appropriate applicant. This focus was chosen due to the purpose of our study to gain a deeper understanding about the role employer branding and SNSs have in recruitment processes from a managerial perspective. More specifically, to answer the research questions of how organizations use SNSs to strengthen the employer brand in recruitment processes, attract potential applicants and select appropriate applicants.

The findings in the study carried out in 2001 by Behrenz (p. 275) suggested that Swedish employers are cautious when making decisions regarding recruitment. He concluded that this is due to Swedish employers strong desire to avoid costly mistakes (Behrenz, 2001, p. 275). As we are studying recruitment in a Swedish context, these findings will have implications for our study. Mainly when designing the study and when our results are put in relation to previous research conducted in these fields. These implications will for example be due to the results being influenced by Swedish culture and findings might diverge if compared with similar studies conducted in other countries and cultures. In a globalized labor market, the cautious Swedish employers are
going to face challenges in attracting competent employees as they are competing for talented employees with the rest of the world.

We have identified two prominent challenges in the literature that contemporary organizations face when competing for new talents in the globalized labor market. The ongoing “War for talent” describes the growing need for organizations to attract and retain competent employees as a result of the increasing globalization (Chambers et al., 1998, p. 47). It is vital that the management of existing organizations realize the strategic importance of recruitment activities to attract applicants and retain employees with a desired profile (Chambers et al., 1998, p. 48). As the employees are becoming an essential asset for organizations these activities are important in order to maintain a competitive advantage. This has caused the traditional recruitment strategies to change and develop as the competition increases (Ployhart, 2006, pp. 868-869). A contributing factor could be that society is becoming more dependent on the competence of the workforce as a success factor while organizations move away from a focus on manufacturing towards more service-oriented operations.

The second challenge organizations face is how to retain employees that belong to generations Y and Z due to their constant need for stimulation and satisfaction (Gayeski, 2015, p. 10). These personal traits suggest that the demand on organizations to provide satisfactory and creative work environments will increase in the future. The increasing globalization and the challenges involved in the retention of employees that belong to generation Y and Z makes it important to prioritize the development of contemporary recruitment activities. Further, in order to be an attractive employer for potential applicants it is also important to consider employee retention activities and efforts to change the internal structures to promote competence development (Chambers et al., 1998, p. 47). These activities can contribute to a positive organizational image that may be helpful in order to attract appropriate applicants for future job vacancies. The recruitment and retention of qualified individuals belonging to these generations will be vital for the survival of organizations. This is because they will become the future executive managers and loyalty towards the organization is important in order to maintain the trust of all the stakeholders of the organization.

The increasing globalization and the prominent role employees possess in contemporary organizations forces the employers to reassess the traditional recruitment process. It is no longer sufficient to simply post vacant positions to the employment office in order to attract talented and competent employees. Instead, organizations need to be innovative and creative in order to appeal to the younger generations and survive the War for talent.

### 3.2 Employer Branding

Ambler and Barrow (1996, p. 187) defined employer branding as perceived benefits gained from being employed or associated with an organization. However, this research area is relatively new and alternative definitions are constantly being presented. Sivertzen et al. (2013, p. 474) refined the traditional definition and states that employer branding refers to actions to improve the organizational reputation and attractiveness. The reputation is in turn defined as a social construct made out of “the organization’s previous actions and future prospects” (Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 474). We will embrace this definition throughout our study, partly because it combines previous research in a satisfactory way and because it mirrors our understanding of the concept.
We will mainly focus on the external aspects of organizational employer brand in this study, as those are the most prominent in a recruitment process. It is however important to mention that employer branding activities can be carried out both internally as well as externally. A strong employer brand will communicate the organizational values and a positive image throughout the entire organization (Sehgal & Malati, 2013, p. 51). The employer brand will therefore not only influence the perceptions of job seekers but extend to current employees as well. Sehgal and Malati (2013, pp. 51-52) suggest that internal employer branding activities increases the current employees commitment, performance and identification with the organization. Through the increase in identification, the employees become more loyal towards the organization, which in turn increases employee retention (Sehgal & Malati, 2013, p. 52). It is important that the employer brand communicates the organizational values accurately as deviations from reality can lead to internal conflicts and decrease employee satisfaction (Wilden et al., 2010, p. 65). Wilden et al. (2010, p. 65) states that this dissatisfaction can ultimately lead to increased turnover.

Research has shown that SNSs can be helpful to create a positive organizational reputation (Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 479). The organizational reputation, and thereby the employer brand, is in turn becoming an important aspect of attracting potential job applicants (Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 473). This is because a strong employer brand allows organizations to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011, p. 28). It is important that organizations have a clear understanding about the image they communicate, as they will attract applicants that identifies with that image (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011, p. 29). A clearly defined brand image will decrease the perceived risk of working for the organization, strengthen the organizational reputation and increase the organizational attractiveness (Wilden et al., 2010, p. 65; Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 479; Cable & Turban, 2003, p. 2259). Rampl and Kenning (2014, p. 229) states that employer branding activities are more successful when current employees communicate them as it increases the perceived sincerity of the message.

Sehgal and Malati (2013, p. 52) developed a framework that describes how employer branding contributes to increase the organization’s attractiveness as an employer (see Figure 3). The framework also shows that employer branding can be used to increase the retention of the current employees and encourage them to become more productive (Sehgal & Malati, 2013, p. 52). We feel that this framework is general enough that it can be adapted to activities carried out on SNSs even though it was not designed with employer branding activities on SNSs in mind. This is because the framework clearly illustrates employer branding in a way that is easy to understand and specific enough that it summarizes a lot of the theories that we have found relevant for our study. We have chosen to include this framework to clearly define the concept employer branding and describe the different aspects the concept holds.
3.3 Recruitment through the use of SNSs

One way of attracting attention and to market the organization as an attractive employer is through the use of SNSs. Current research shows that SNSs are fast becoming a common and popular tool used for recruitment purposes (Lewis et al., 2015, p. 1). This progress has emerged partly due to the large number of individuals, and thereby potential job applicants, that are active on SNSs (Girard et al., 2014, p. 110). This means that by creating an organizational profile on SNSs, organizations have the possibility to establish contacts with a large number of potential applicants that are interested in the organization. Research has also shown that the use of SNSs in recruitment processes is an essential complement to career websites and job boards in order to create relationships between the employer and potential applicant (Girard et al., 2014, p. 108).

According to Girard et al. (2014, p. 109), the use of SNSs for recruitment purposes and for activities to strengthen the employer brand cannot be dissociated into distinguished entities as they are interlinked by the nature of networks. Because of this, it is important to develop a strategy that facilitates the use of SNSs as an augmented tool for recruitment and activities to strengthen the employer brand (Girard et al., 2014, p. 108). This is a factor that contributes to the increasing popularity of using SNSs for recruitment activities and when strengthening the employer brand. By combining the efforts to use SNSs for recruitment and activities concerning the employer brand, the organizations can create a platform from which they can reach a large number of followers and interact with these. Today, active job seekers demand to have the possibility to interact and foster a relationship with a possible employer on SNSs (Girard et al., 2014, p. 110). This popularity does not appear to be a symptom of a fleeting trend as there is a consensus within the current literature that suggests that the usage of SNSs as a recruitment tool will continue to increase and become more common in the future (Lewis et al., 2015, p. 18, Doherty, 2010, p. 12).

Some of the benefits mentioned by the current literature regarding the use of SNSs in a recruitment process are cost- and time efficiency, a means of attracting and retaining the
younger generations, and a strengthened employer brand (Doherty, 2010, p. 11; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 9; Fisher et al., 2014, p. 638). The strengthening of the employer brand through increased visibility on SNSs has a positive effect on attracting potential applicants for future employment within the organization (Doherty, 2010, p. 12). Further, by the presence on SNSs, and a strong employer brand, loyalty towards the possible or current employer will increase due to relationship-building activities enabled by interactions through SNSs (Doherty, 2010, p. 12).

3.3.1 Finding and attracting suitable employees

It is not enough to simply be present on SNSs; organizations have to make active efforts to attract a large following in order to reach as many potential job applicants as possible (Parry & Tyson, 2008, p. 269). This means that it is not enough to create an organizational profile on SNSs and expect followers to create the content. The organization must invest time and make efforts to gain the interest of the followers in order for the followers to be willing to interact with the organization on these sites. In order to successfully use SNSs for recruitment purposes, Wazed and Ng (2015) developed a framework (see Figure 3) that describes necessary actions in order to reach a desired outcome in relation to the invested efforts. We have chosen to use this framework as an outline to the following chapters, complemented with other theories, to describe activities carried out in recruitment processes. This is because it is easy to understand and clearly shows the connections between the different activities. The original framework is adapted to Facebook and consists of three parts; “attract”, “care” and “initiate”, that aim to present the organization in such a way that it appeals to potential job applicants (Wazed & Ng, 2015, p. 136). It is important to create a strategy concerning these parts as the image that the organization portrays via SNSs will have an impact on the amount and quality of applications received when a vacancy is posted. Naturally, a more personalized and tailored image may attract applicants with a more specific profile, while a more general organizational image will attract a wider range of applicants. Research has shown that potential applicants focus on the career opportunities and salaries when choosing which industry to work within. As for the choice between organizations within the same industry other factors such as organizational reputation, trustworthiness and innovativeness become relevant to distinguish organizations from each other (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011, p. 43; Cable & Turban, 2003, p. 2260). Even though Wazed and Ng’s (2015, p.136) original framework is adapted to Facebook, we will adjust the reasoning for it to suit both Facebook and LinkedIn. Due to the similarities of these sites, we have decided that the framework will be helpful for describing necessary actions to promote the organizational images for both SNSs in a satisfactory way.

As SNSs allow a constant dialogue, the presence on these sites can be very time consuming (Henderson & Bowley, 2010, p. 249). It is therefore important to develop strategies for recruitment through SNSs and make conscious decisions about which SNS to use in a recruitment process (Doherty, 2010, p. 13). The reasoning behind this is that different sites and methods will attract different job applicants (Allden & Harris, 2013, p. 40), much like the impact of a defined image discussed above. In order to avoid a vast amount of unrelated applications, it is important that such a strategy is implemented (Lewis et al., 2015, p. 18). Wazed and Ng’s (2015) framework can aid organizations to develop clear strategies and we have adjusted it to suit the focus of our study. The following chapters will take a closer look at the different parts of the
framework that we have chosen to name “creating a network” (attract) and “establishing relationships” (care and initiate) (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Recruitment strategy and outcomes adjusted from Wazed and Ng (2015, p. 136).

3.3.2 Creating a network

The purpose of the first part, creating a network (attract), is to make use of the network structure of SNSs to attract a large following that engages as many potential applicants as possible and can be accessed easily (Wazed & Ng, 2015, p. 137). A large network provides the ability to reach a large number of contacts at a low cost and benefit from the way large networks continuously grows (Ollington et al., 2013, p. 256). The study conducted by Ollington et al. (2013, p. 256) suggests that individuals in larger networks are more inclined to connect their personal contacts to an organizational network, allowing it to grow at a rapid pace.

Having access to a large following is valuable as the labor market is very competitive, which forces organizations to develop new and innovative recruitment activities in order to successfully attract potential applicants (Sehgal & Malati, 2013, p. 62). Doherty (2010, p. 11) agrees that it is essential that organizations find new ways to attract, especially the younger job applicants, and argues that SNSs is a suitable means to accomplish this. Therefore, contemporary literature and research implies that the usage of SNSs for recruitment and activities to strengthen the employer brand is recognized as an effective way to attract potential employees (Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 479). In practice, HR-managers in the hospitality industry claim that their main use of SNSs is for attracting and engaging with job applicants, and SNSs are perceived as a powerful tool for this purpose (Gibbs et al. 2015, pp. 176-178). Even though this research and its findings are constricted to one specific industry, we believe that it suggests that industries with similar characteristics could benefit from using SNSs in a similar fashion.

One way to successfully develop a large network of followers is through taking advantage of the benefits of a strong employer brand. This is supported by research that suggest that organizations consider recruitment activities through the use of SNSs as a crucial aspect of promoting the employer brand (Allden & Harris, 2013, p. 40) Employer usage of SNSs has been proven to have a positive effect on the employer
brand, which improves the organizational reputation that attracts potential applicants and eventually increases their inclination to apply for vacant positions (Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 479; Doherty, 2010, p. 13; Sehgal & Malati, 2013, p. 52). Potential applicants consider a positive reputation to be an indication as it suggests that working for the organization in question will be both satisfactory and rewarding (Cable & Turban, 2003, p. 2260). Maxwell and Knox (2009, p. 903) states that the employer brand will be perceived as more attractive if the organization can present and communicate its success factors in a convincing way. These factors should be clearly defined and sincere in order for the employer brand to attract potential applicants (Wilden et al., 2010, p. 70). Managers can develop an employer brand that both suits the value of the employees, as well as the organizational values through combining these and adapting the employer brand accordingly (Maxwell and Knox, 2009, p. 904). A strong employer brand will emphasize the organization’s unique personnel privileges, cultural norms and values, as these are vital factors that attract individuals who are compatible with the organizational values (Sehgal & Malati, 2013, p. 62; Wilden et al., 2010, p. 69). This is because individuals are more inclined to view an organization as an attractive employer if they believe that working there will provide enough personal benefits that supports their perceived image of themselves (Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 479). Applicants will value different traits in organizations depending on which industry they are targeting (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011, p. 42). It is therefore important to be aware of what organizational values current employees and potential job applicants find appealing in order to attract suitable applicants (Arachchige and Robertson, 2011, p. 43). However, Bellou et al. (2015, p. 1212) suggests that investments’ made in the employees that strengthens the employer brand is highly valued regardless of industry.

A way of communicating the employer brand externally is to engage current employees in SNS activities and allow them to express their personal experiences regarding the employer on these sites (Cascio, 2014, p. 122). If the employees identify themselves with an organization, they engage in activities and behaviors that increase their identification with the specific organization, leading to a strengthening of the employer brand (Maxwell & Knox, 2009, p. 897). If the employees express loyalty towards the organization through accentuating the positive organizational traits it will contribute to strengthening the employer brand and increase the attractiveness of the organization (Rampl & Kenning, 2014, p. 228). However, research suggests that there are differences in the perception of the employer brand between applicants and current employees and organizations therefore need to focus on how to distinguish these groups in order to communicate the employer brand accordingly (Maxwell & Knox, 2009, p. 896). If the employees perceive that the organization is successful they become more positive towards, and engaged in, the employer brand (Maxwell and Knox, 2009, p. 903). It is therefore important that organizations clearly communicate success factors as well as the organizational values and cultural norms internally throughout the entire hierarchy. This is in order to ensure that these success factors are relayed to potential applicants in a desired way through the use of SNSs (Cascio, 2014, p. 122). The employees are able to bring the aspects of the organization that distinguishes it from other employers into attention and these aspects will differ significantly depending on the organization (Maxwell & Knox, 2009, p. 897). It is therefore vital that organizations are aware of the attributes that differentiate them from their competitors in order to exploit these in the internal and external communication. Engaging the employees’ to strengthen the employer brand will make it easier to attract potential job applicants as their messages
will be perceived as personal and trustworthy (Maxwell & Knox, 2009, p. 904; Wilden et al., 2010, p. 70).

### 3.3.3 Establishing relationships

The final two parts of Wazed and Ng’s (2015, pp. 136-137) original framework are designed to encourage the initiation of a relationship between the organization and the individuals they have attracted (care). While the last part (initiate) is designed to inspire action as a response to stimuli provided through the organization’s SNS activities (Wazed & Ng, 2015, p. 137). The objectives of these two parts of the framework are highly integrated; care and initiate will therefore be treated as one and the same, “establishing relationships”, in this theoretical framework. As mentioned earlier, SNSs facilitates a dialog between the parties that may eventually evolve into a relationship between them as a byproduct of the organization’s recruitment activities (Girard et al., 2014, p. 110). This is one of the useful aspects of SNSs that would not be possible to exploit if organizations were to limit themselves exclusively to traditional recruitment activities (Lewis et al., 2015, p. 6). Activities to engage job applicants in building a relationship with organizations could refer to answering a question that an organization posts on an SNS. Research has concluded that SNS posts that has a brand-focus, as well as contains aspects of entertainment and is cognitively challenging at an appropriate level are the most effective in order to generate responses from the followers of the organizational network (Carrillat et al., 2014, p. 489). We perceive that adapting a brand focus is important as it is vital that the potential job applicants associates the organization’s presence on SNSs with the physical organization. We also perceive that the aspects of entertainment and stimulating the followers’ cognition can make the message stand out from the flow of information that is constantly ongoing on SNSs. This could contribute to making potential applicants more inclined to participate in a dialogue with the organization.

There are several reasons for organizations to continuously make efforts to develop and maintain a strong relationship with potential job applicants. These connections are for example valuable when vacant positions present themselves in the future and potential job applicants in the organizational SNS network may be considered (Lewis et al., 2015, p. 18; Girard et al., 2014, p. 110). This is especially important when targeting the younger generations due to their extensive use of SNSs and their expectancy for organizations to use these (Doherty, 2010, p. 11, Fisher et al., 2014, p. 640). The relationship building activities can increase the job applicant’s loyalty towards the organization, making it less likely that the applicants accept job-offers from competitors (Doherty, 2010, p. 12). Sehgal and Malati (2013, p. 52) support this and add that an effort to create a strong employer brand enhances the organizational culture and identity. This results in a higher employer loyalty as well as an increase in productivity (Sehgal and Malati, 2013, p. 52). It is to a greater extent important that organizations engage in activities to maintain such loyalty as today’s employees become more inclined to switch jobs and employers mid-career (Cascio, 2014, p. 127). There is also a tendency that ties within the network become weaker as the network grows. It is therefore essential that the efforts to maintain a dialogue with potential job applicants through SNSs are ongoing and to adapt the activities to suit strategies customized for different SNSs (Wazed & Ng, 2015, pp. 439-340; Ollington et al., 2013, p. 256). A strong employer brand can assist in retaining strong ties within a large network (Ollington et al., 2013, p. 261).
3.3.4 Drawbacks of using SNSs in recruitment processes

Despite the benefits that can be gained through engaging in SNSs, research has shown that many organizations display a reluctance towards using these sites as a tool to carry out recruitment and relationship building activities. It appears to be difficult to communicate the benefits of SNSs as a recruitment tool. The behavior to resist the use and implementation derives from perceived limitations concerning resources such as time, funding, and conflicts with the organizational culture (Melanthiou et al., 2015, p. 42; Alldén & Harris, 2013, p. 40). Some research suggests that organizations do not perceive information on SNSs as reliable (Melanthiou et al., 2015, p. 42). The choice not to engage in recruitment activities through the use of SNSs might therefore be caused by the perceived lack of reliable information (El Ouirdi et al., 2016, pp. 246-247). This could be because these sites are not designed for the purpose of facilitating a recruitment process. Information regarding personal attributes and interests that are not relevant for a potential employer is easily accessible, which might cause cases of discrimination when SNSs are used in a recruitment process (Doherty, 2010, p. 13, Lewis et al., 2015, p. 9). Another drawback is the time it takes to process the extensive amount of applications recruitment via SNSs generates (Lewis et al., 2015, p. 6; Melanthiou et al., 2015, p. 38; Fisher et al., 2014, p. 638). The managers must therefore understand and communicate the benefits of SNSs as a recruitment tool to their HR-departments (El Ouirdi et al., 2016, p. 247). As suggested by Girard et al. (2014, p. 117), a supportive management will facilitate and encourage the integration of SNSs as an integral part of the recruitment process by communicating its benefits.

3.4 Selection Process

While there is a resistance to using SNSs in the “attraction stage” of the recruitment process, research has shown that it is commonly used to evaluate and screen applicants (Melanthiou et al., 2015, p. 43; Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 493; Vicknair et al., 2010 p. 7; Clark & Roberts, 2010, p. 509; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 8). One reason for organizations to thoroughly screen applicants is the liabilities they face if they recruit an inappropriate applicant (Thomas et al., 2015, p. 309). We perceive that a poor decision might lead to hiring an applicant with insufficient competence that fails to achieve the objectives set forth by the organization. It could also result in hiring an individual that is not suitable for the organizational culture or in line with the fundamental values the organization strives for. SNSs are used for the purpose of screening the applicants, as it is an easy way to gather vast amounts of information. However, the opportunity for potential job applicants around the world to engage in SNSs are very different due to the lack of Internet access, and the differences in cultural norms is also a factor to take into consideration (Ladkin & Buhais, 2016, p. 338). Our study focuses on the geographical area of Sweden where a majority of the population has access to the Internet. Regardless, it is important to consider that there still is a segment of the population that does not have access to the Internet and therefore might not have the ability to create a profile on, and engage in, SNSs. This absence increases the risk of these individuals being overlooked in a screening process (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 495; Thomas et al., 2015, p. 316). The reason for these individuals being overlooked is due to the employers comparing information in the applications with information that other applicants expose on their SNS profiles (Roth et al., 2016, p. 274). Even though all of the information available on SNSs might not be relevant for the recruitment process, it is still available and may be taken into consideration. This could cause individuals without SNS profiles
to be overlooked. Another risk with this technique of screening applicants is that it makes it possible to detect and gather damning information concerning a job applicant’s personal attributes that may be difficult to disregard when pursuing the selection and screening process (Brown & Vaughn, 2011, p. 223; Ladkin & Buhalis, 2016, p. 333). Further, the applicants might not be in control over all of the information available on SNSs concerning their identity, resulting in privacy issues during a recruitment process (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 495). However, Doherty (2010, p. 12) argues that the information gathered from screening an applicant’s SNS profile may contain more current information than a CV provided by the applicant, and therefore could be more useful in a selection process than traditional screening would be.

Research states that organizations screen the applicant’s networks to gather as much information as possible about the individual (Root & McKay, 2014, p. 205). However, the applicants are uninterested or unaware about the information available about them on SNSs (Root & McKay, 2014, pp. 205-206). This implies that the applicants might be unaware of, or lack the understanding as to, how organizations use SNSs to screen applicants in a recruitment process. However, we assume that this attitude might be different depending on which SNS is concerned. For example, the control and consciousness of the information on LinkedIn might be greater than on Facebook. Research suggests that information provided on a job applicant’s SNS profile will have an impact on the likelihood of them being hired and the salaries they are being offered (Bohnert & Ross, 2010, p. 345). Smith and Kidder (2010, pp. 494-495) suggest that the decision to hire depends on how the recruiter interprets the information on SNSs and make a hiring decision based on if the applicant's identity is in line with the hiring organization's identity and values. The recruiter might make decisions that are biased since the information on SNSs often is incomplete (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 495). If recruiters discover inappropriate information regarding an applicant on SNSs during their screening process, they have a tendency to exclude this individual from advancing in the recruitment process (Bohnert & Ross, 2010, p. 345). This can cause problems when potential applicants, or individuals in their social networks, enter false or inaccurate information about the applicant on public SNS profiles (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 495). Individuals in the applicant’s network can also post information concerning them on SNSs without consent, resulting in the job applicant losing control over what information is available on SNSs (Clark & Roberts, 2010, p. 516). Thomas et al. (2015, p. 317) recognizes this and states that as the information gathered through the screening process might not always be reliable because there is a risk that the recruiter makes a decision based on misleading or false information. As the usage of SNSs in recruitment processes increases, applicant’s tendencies towards acting unethically can be discovered but it also increases the risk of these tools being used by the recruiter in an unethical way (Girard et al., 2014, p. 111). This could for example happen if the recruiter makes a decision not to hire an applicant based on discriminatory factors gathered on SNSs. However, it is important to emphasize that it is the unethical behaviors that can be discovered and displayed through the usage of these tools, and not the tools themselves that are unethical (Girard et al., 2014, p. 111).

The distinction between corporate and private usage of SNSs has a tendency to get mixed up as SNS usage within organizations increases (Girard et al., 2014, p. 115; Doherty, 2010, p. 13). Due to the possibility to continuously screen applicants and the mixed use of SNSs for both social and professional purposes, it is difficult for applicants to customize the information available to suit these premises in order to enhance their prospects of employability (Roth et al., 2016, p. 289). This could both be beneficial and
a disadvantage, which emphasizes the importance of the establishment of guidelines and rules concerning the usage of SNSs in an organizational context (Girard et al., 2014, p. 115; Thomas et al., 2015, p. 319). Studies have shown that applicants perceive the organization’s use of SNSs for selection and screening purposes to be unfair and decrease the intent to apply for vacant positions (Madera 2012, p. 1279; Stoughton et al., 2015, p. 80). The reason being that SNSs is not considered to be job-related, and therefore contains private information that the applicants do not wish to share with a potential employer (Madera, 2012, p. 1280). There is a possibility to limit the information that is publicly displayed on, for example Facebook, through the use of privacy settings (Ladkin & Buhalis, 2016, p. 333). In spite of this, applicants state that they have consciously censured their personal information on SNSs to conceal it from potential employers (Root & McKay, 2014, p. 204; Vicknair, et al., 2010, p. 9).

These are some of the reasons for why Clark and Roberts (2010, p. 516) argue that the use of information on SNSs for screening purposes needs to be regulated as there is insufficient control over the information and that it is a breach of the applicant's privacy. Thomas et al. (2015, pp. 313-314) points out that there are recruitment professionals that claim that this type of screening should be illegal since it is perceived to be too intrusive on applicants personal lives. To the best of our knowledge, the Swedish legal system has not regulated this type of screening. However, there are laws regulating direct and indirect discrimination as well as different types of harassment (SFS 2008:567). 1§, ch. 2 in the law of discrimination (Sw.: Diskrimineringslag) (SFS 2008:567) protects both current employees and new applicants from being discriminated by the employer. When applying for a vacant position, the individual is protected from discrimination throughout the entire recruitment process, including the selection of candidates for a position and all procedures carried out by the organization during this process (Gabinus Göransson et al., 2013, p. 63).

The law of discrimination also applies if the organization decides to withdraw the vacant position without selecting anyone for the job as this might be done to avoid hiring undesired applicants, which is considered to be discrimination (Gabinus Göransson et al., 2013, p. 63). Even though these regulations mainly are protecting the applicants they also support the employing organizations, as the individual making the discrimination claim needs to prove that the organization has in fact acted discriminatory (Gabinus Göransson et al., 2013, pp. 66-67). The evidence can consist of documentation of biased interpretation of requirements stated for the job, such as education and work experience. If there is evidence to support the discrimination claim the burden of proof switches to the organization that now has to show reasons for why the applicant was not employed by the organization (Gabinus Göransson et al., 2013, p. 71). Even though this law is not specifically constructed to target discrimination through the usage of SNSs it still is applicable in a recruitment process and therefore it is important for organizations to take it into consideration. Organizations should consequently establish policies for using SNSs for screening applicants in order to avoid liabilities in case an applicant claims that his or her privacy has been compromised. The organization should be able to justify that the information gathered from SNSs concerning a potential applicant is relevant for the job vacancy (Thomas et al., 2015, p. 321). These policies should suit both current employees and job applicants while they also incorporate the organizational values to be directed to these two groups accordingly (Sengupta et al., 2015, p. 321).
Despite these privacy and discrimination concerns, some research claims that younger applicants both expect and accept that organizations view their profiles if they are public (Davison et al., 2011, p. 155; Roth et al., 2016, p. 287). We perceive that a large amount of the managers currently involved in recruitment processes belong to generation X. As they screen information posted online, we suspect that a difference between generations can be exposed. This difference can be based on the attitudes individuals that belong to different generations have towards personal information being available on the Internet. In general, the younger generations use Facebook as a tool to build networks that will help them move forward in life and the older generations use it to reconnect with friends and reminisce (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 493). The younger generations tend to have a more relaxed and unfiltered attitude towards exposing personal information online compared to with generation X (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 497; Thomas et al., 2015). As we understand it, Generation X is more reserved about what information is posted on SNSs it may affect their inclination to recruit individuals from younger generations who are more unreserved about personal information being available on their SNS profiles. There is also a higher risk that younger individuals post inappropriate information on SNSs and since the information on the Internet is permanent it could have negative impacts on their future employability (Clark & Roberts, 2010, p. 516).
4. Practical Method

This chapter will thoroughly describe the way we have conducted the empirical study. We begin with the data collection and interview guide, which describe our approach to the type of interviews we conducted and how we designed the interview guide. This is followed by our sampling technique, the access we gained to the interviewees and a more careful description about how the interviews were conducted. We then describe how the interviews were transcribed as well as ethical considerations and conclude this chapter by presenting the method we have chosen for the analysis.

4.1 Qualitative data collection

Due to the qualitative research approach adopted in this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted. Semi-structured interviews are characterized by a flexible design that allows the interviewer to ask questions in different sequences from interview to interview (Bryman, 2011, p. 415). The questions are open ended and the interviewer is able to ask spontaneous questions in order to achieve a deeper understanding regarding the subject discussed (Bryman, 2011, p. 206). This type of research design is generally used to understand attitudes and gain more thorough answers (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 378). Further, semi-structured interviews are common when taking an interpretivist position for the epistemology and there is a desire to understand the meanings for the respondents reasoning (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 378). We have chosen this interview design to avoid receiving yes or no answers, and rather encourage the respondents to motivate their standpoints. Semi-structured interviews also allow us to discuss the respondents’ answers in order to ensure that we are interpreting their opinions correctly. The choice of using semi-structured interviews is also aligned with the ontological and epistemological stances. As the constructionist point of view considers the world as constantly changing it becomes relevant to explore and understand the positions of the respondents more thoroughly in order to understand the managerial perspective studied. Since interpretivism is connected with the usage of semi-structured interviews, this position further strengthens the decision to choose this type of research strategy. The semi-structured interviews contribute to a deeper insight into the research area, which also is in line with the inductive research approach.

We are focusing on gaining a deeper understanding about the role employer branding and SNSs have in recruitment processes from a managerial perspective. This means that we will study the current situation with the use of a cross-sectional research design. This design is often used for quantitative studies and involves data collection from several parties at one point in time, which is combined to identify patterns and relationships (Bryman, 2011, p. 64). However, Bryman (2011, p. 68) argues that this design can be applicable on qualitative studies, especially when semi-structured interviews are conducted. We want to understand how organizations use SNSs to strengthen the employer brand in recruitment processes as well as understand the way SNSs are used to attract and select applicants. This means that we want to identify current relationships between these, which means that a cross-sectional design is appropriate for this study.
4.2 Interview guide

When conducting semi-structured interviews an interview guide is constructed where the questions are clustered into themes that will be discussed during the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 486). The questions and themes should represent the research questions and the theories collected within the area in order to answer the research question and compare the results with previous research (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 488). Our interview guide is based on a combination of the questions and statements used to study similar research questions in the studies conducted by Ollington et al. (2013) and Girard et al. (2014). The purpose of Ollington et al.’s (2013) study was to interview recruitment practitioners to identify how “recruiters use social networks to effectively attract and screen prospective job applicants?”. They did this by exploring how recruiters use SNSs to create a large network of talents and position themselves as connectors between potential applicants and organizations (Ollington et al., 2013, p. 254). Girard et al. (2014) aimed to “clarify areas of agreement and disagreement regarding the integration of social media in recruitment strategies” by providing statements that recruitment experts had to take a position on. Their study resulted in an overview of French recruitment expert’s current opinions about using SNSs in recruitment processes (Girard et al., 2014, p.117). Our study differentiates itself from these previous studies as we aspire to gain a deeper understanding about how and why organizations use SNSs to recruit. Our study further provides a different approach than previous studies by including the concept of employer branding and investigate how it is related to the use of SNSs in recruitment processes.

We have adapted the questions and statements used in these studies to fit the purpose of our study. In order to gain the holistic understanding of SNSs and employer branding’s roles in recruitment processes, additional questions inspired from the research presented in the theoretical framework has been added. The questions have been appointed into themes based on the theories in our theoretical framework. These themes are; traditional recruitment, finding and engaging with suitable applicants combined with employer branding as well as the selection process (See Appendix 1). After the interview questions were created, they were tested on fellow students to get additional insight into if they would be relevant for our study. Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 489) state that this is an important step as it gives the chance to revise the questions before the interviews are conducted. These measures were taken to avoid leading questions but we cannot completely ensure that this objective was fulfilled. However, the semi-structured strategy allowed us to ask follow-up questions to understand the interviewees’ perspective concerning the different themes. According to Behrenz (2001, p. 275), Swedish employers are cautious and want to avoid costly mistakes in their recruitment process. In order for us to gain as much relevant information as possible we adapted the questions to better suit the cautious Swedish norm. This was done through asking general questions that encourages a discussion that opens up the opportunity to ask more targeted supplementary questions. The questions were written in Swedish, as all of the interviewees are native Swedish speakers. In the interview guide, the term social media was used instead of SNSs, as this is more viable used in everyday language but refers to the more exact definition SNSs.
4.3 Sampling technique and access

In order to fulfill the purpose of our study, answer our research questions and in line with our methodological stances, we needed to interview organizations that have the ability to contribute with relevant information. We decided to focus our sample to organizations located in the north of Sweden. This decision was made in order to ease the access to organizations relevant for this study. This also led us to use a purposive sampling method where the focus is to select and come in contact, only with respondents relevant to our study. A purposive sampling method is generally adapted to obtain relevant information to answer the research questions of a study (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 430). We decided to focus our sample on relatively large organizations that meet certain criteria ensure that they would be relevant for our study. This was because SCB (2013a) presented that about 50 percent of organizations with 250 employees or more have established SNS policies, as mentioned in the introduction. This suggested that larger organizations were more likely to be using SNSs in their recruitment processes. The criteria concerning the choice of organizations were adapted to suit both those that are using SNSs for recruitment purposes and organizations that do not. For the organizations that are using SNSs they should have an online presence on, at least, Facebook but preferably on both Facebook and LinkedIn. Further, the organization should preferably have posted vacant positions in the recent past on their Facebook wall or on a separate tab linked to their profile. Our demands concerning the organizations that do not use SNSs to recruit was for example that they should have a relatively large number of employees, preferably over 250. This requirement was to ensure that there is regular turnover within these organizations and someone responsible for HR-related tasks in-house. The turnover aspect is important as it generates a need for a regular recruitment process, possibly through SNSs. However, consideration to industry and location has been made in order to facilitate the sampling process.

With a qualitative research approach it is difficult to know how large sample is needed in order to gain the necessary amount of information to analyze and later fulfill the purpose of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 436). For this study, a total of 22 organizations were contacted with the request to participate in an interview concerning their usage of SNSs. These organizations were found through listings of organizations in northern Sweden, where the focus either was on size or employee turnover. Eleven of these organizations responded to the request and in the end, eight of them agreed to let us interview them. These organizations are all active in different industries and with a few different types of corporate form (see Table 1). As for the size of the organizations, they all have more than 200 employees but most of them have less than a thousand. Only one of the organizations has more than 5000 employees. Since the interviewees will be anonymous we decided to give them names that suits their industry. This was done to ease the comparison between the interviews when we present the empirical data. The interviewees were all women and are all working with HR where they are working in, or managing, the HR department for the organization. One of the interviewees is a regional manager but is working for an organization specialized in HR, which makes the interviewee appropriate for this study. The organization within the recruitment industry is somewhat different than the other interviewed organizations as they have recruitment processes that are for internal positions, for their customers and for working as a staffing agency. Since these processes are concerned with recruitment purposes, we find this organization to be suitable for this study.
## Table 1: Organizational Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Name in the study</th>
<th>Corporate form</th>
<th>Number of employees (approx.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Processing</td>
<td>Food Producer</td>
<td>Economic Association</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Economic Association</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Limited Company</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>Limited Company</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Limited Company</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Food Distributer</td>
<td>Economic Association</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Agency</td>
<td>State Agency</td>
<td>Government Agency</td>
<td>+5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>HR Consultant</td>
<td>Limited Company</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.4 Conducting the interviews

The location where interviews are conducted will affect the respondent and therefore the collected data (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 386). The interviews were conducted at the different organizations office facilities, except for one that was conducted in a coffee shop. This meant that most interviews took place in an environment that is familiar and comfortable for the interviewees and unfamiliar for us as interviewers. We felt that it was more important for the interviewees to feel comfortable as we are depending on them to give us information and for them to reveal their personal attitudes and perceptions regarding the discussed matters. It could be a disadvantage that one of the interviews took place in the coffee shop. However, it was conducted relatively early in the day and at a table that was fairly secluded. This meant that we were almost alone and the location itself contributed to a relaxed setting. We do not think that the location of this interview had any significant impact on the interviewees answers compared to the others and is therefore treated as equally reliable. The interviews were all recorded on our cell phones, having them positioned on the table in between the respondents and us. The cell phone is a very neutral object for the majority of people today and we did not find this to be distracting to the respondents or us. The respondents often had their personal cell phones positioned in a similar way on the table besides them. We decided to conduct the interviews in Swedish as we predicted that this would encourage the interviewees to speak more freely.

The interviews were conducted in two installments over the course of four weeks in order to give us time to develop our interview questions (see Table 2). It is important to continuously analyze the data in order to properly understand and develop the data.
collection and to avoid being overwhelmed (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 562). In the first installment, we conducted five interviews in four days (excluding the weekend) and during the last installment that began two weeks later we conducted the last three interviews in three days (also excluding the weekend). These interviews are approximately between 45 and 60 minutes each. Even though a larger sample would have given us more information, we considered the eight interviews that we conducted to be enough since we reached a satisfactory amount of data.

### Table 2: Interview Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Length of Interview</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Producer</td>
<td>HR-developer</td>
<td>44 minutes 58 seconds</td>
<td>30-03-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>HR-Manager</td>
<td>61 minutes 47 seconds</td>
<td>31-03-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>HR-strategist</td>
<td>46 minutes 43 seconds</td>
<td>31-03-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>HR-specialist</td>
<td>60 minutes 59 seconds</td>
<td>01-04-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>HR-Manager</td>
<td>52 minutes 50 seconds</td>
<td>04-04-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Distributer</td>
<td>HR-Manager</td>
<td>52 minutes 20 seconds</td>
<td>15-04-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Agency</td>
<td>HR-Manager</td>
<td>61 minutes 37 seconds</td>
<td>18-04-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Consultant</td>
<td>Regional Manager</td>
<td>47 minutes 42 seconds</td>
<td>19-04-2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.5 Transcribing

After the interviews had been conducted, the recordings from these were transcribed in Swedish as a first step in analyzing the collected data. A transcription of an interview is done in order to comprehend the meanings of the respondents’ opinions and to interpret these as correctly as possible (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 494). Since we have taken an interpretivist position it becomes important to interpret the views of the respondents and therefore we need to be able to analyze what they said as fair as possible. Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 494) states that recording the interviews also limits the distractions as the interviewer does not have to take any notes, which in turn might make the respondent more restrictive with the answers.

We decided to write down everything we could remember about the setting and atmosphere of the interview immediately after each meeting. These notes proved to provide us with valuable insights in addition to the transcriptions of the recorded interviews. Firstly, they made the memories of each interview more vivid and eased the amount of information we could remember from each interview. Secondly, it helped when writing the empirical data as certain information was shown during the interviews, either on paper or in the environment, and therefore difficult to learn from a transcript.

When the transcripts were finished we reviewed them, coding them in the same categories as the theoretical framework. This was done to ensure that all the relevant
information from each interview were highlighted and presented in the empirical data. The information gained through the transcripts was then presented in English in the same order as the theoretical framework and the interview guide in the chapter: empirical data. This structure was chosen to easily identify and understand the different areas discussed during the interviews without losing any important information in the process. The different interviews and transcripts were compared to each other to see if there were any differences in opinions or the way their processes are conducted. This comparison was done in order to gain as much insight into the subjects as possible, strengthening the results of the study.

4.6 Ethical considerations

It is important to note that we only are in control of the way we have conducted the study as well as how we have chosen to present and interpret the information. We are not in control over how the organizations choose to approach us as well as the information they provided. We have taken measures to ensure that this study has been conducted in an ethical way and that the raw data will be handled with care after the study has been executed.

One of the most important aspects to take into consideration when conducting a qualitative study is the respondent as they are providing the necessary information. When conducting a study, the researchers should protect integrity, respect, privacy, confidentiality and have the consent of those taking part (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 231-232). We chose to offer anonymity to the individuals that agreed to be interviewed as well as their organizations in order to protect these aspects. Anonymity increases the reliability of the results and it is important that the data is presented in such a way that the persons involved cannot be identified (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 231). We did not feel that the names of the interviewees would contribute to the reader’s understanding about the study. Further, we do not expect that the interviewed HR-managers or their organizations can be identified even if we chose to name the interviewees by general industry affiliation. This is because they belong to a large geographical area, which means that there are a lot of organizations affiliated to each industry. We have no intention of forwarding the identities of the interviewed organizations to any other parties, now or in the future. This choice contributes to protect the interviewees privacy and for them to remain confidential. All of the approached organizations received through information via e-mail regarding the purpose of the study in order to make an informed decision regarding participating. We also provided our contact information and encouraged the approached organizations to ask any questions or approach us with any hesitations regarding the study. Except information about the study, we also included information about anonymity. The interviewed organizations had complete control over the environment during the interviews and were also allowed to decline us recording the interview.

We did not consider the questions that were asked to be intrusive or related to sensitive information. The purpose has not been to uncover sensitive information as the recruitment process in Sweden is relatively standardized and well known. This has resulted in that the ethical consideration of respect for others has been protected. As we are not writing this thesis on commission or have any personal connections to the organizations, there is no conflict of interest. This protects the integrity of this study. We have not engaged in any unethical activities resulting in data falsification and have not pressured or edited the statements of the interviewees.
4.7 Qualitative analysis

When conducting a qualitative analysis it is necessary to understand the different ways to analyze qualitative data in order to choose a method that is appropriate for the study at hand (Rapley, 2011, p. 273). The four most common methods for a qualitative analysis are the framework, thematic, interpretative phenomenological and grounded theory analyzes (Rapley, 2011, p. 274). These methods all have the feature of exploring the collected data in order to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying issues and meaning behind the statements made by the participants (Rapley, 2011, p. 276). For this study we have chosen a thematic analysis, as it will allow us to develop a framework from the data collection in line with an inductive research approach. A thematic analysis means that the researcher searches for themes within the coded data that relates to the research focus and contributes to the development of research within the concerned research field (Bryman & Bell, 2015, pp. 599-601). Since the research field is scattered a thematic analysis is appropriate as it allows us to find patterns within the data and bring forward new theories within this field.

We began our analysis by coding the transcribed interviews. It is possible to select which codes to use by identifying code words in the data or by using predetermined code words derived from previous literature and research (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 557). We decided to let the gathered data determine the choice of code words to avoid getting stuck in the linear recruitment process structure, which could have resulted in important aspects being ignored. To increase the accuracy of the coding of the interviews, the same transcription can be coded by several individuals and compared (Watt Bolsen, 2007, p. 94). We both coded all of the transcribed interviews in order to ensure that all of the relevant aspects of the data were included in this study. When the data has been coded the next step is to rearrange it. The data is rearranged in order to develop and analyze relationships between different categories (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 560), which is in line with our inductive approach. After coding and dividing the data into themes, we connected the data with the theoretical framework in order to discuss the findings and develop our own framework.
5. Empirical data

This chapter presents the empirical findings of our qualitative study. This presentation begins with general discussions about recruitment, employer branding and SNSs in organizational contexts. We continue by presenting findings specifically related to the usage of SNSs when finding and attracting suitable employees as well as in the screening process.

5.1 Recruitment

When conducting the interviews, we noticed that all of the organizations had very similar approaches to their recruitment processes. This allows us to present a general recruitment process that appears to be used by these organizations. They described that the first step is to analyze the need to recruit a new employee that appears when a departure or retirement occurs, or as the organization grows. This is discussed internally and a decision is made to recruit while a job specification is prepared. The second step is to develop a job advertisement and to choose which channels to communicate it through. This is when the HR-manager or specialist, in conjunction with the concerned parties, decides if the position should be advertised internally, externally or both. When the application deadline has passed, all of the applications are processed and a first selection is made. At this point, some of the remaining applicants get an invitation to attend a job interview, where different parties from the organizations are involved. The interviewed organizations carry out reference checks, and in some cases personality tests, on the most interesting candidates before extending a job offer to the most suited applicant. The terms are negotiated and an introduction process is started. The organization generally notifies the applicants that surpass the first selection via phone and the remaining via e-mail. At the end of the process the HR Consultant mentioned that if the recruitment is done for a customer they bring the customer in to the interviews and decision stages and it would also be their decision of who to hire. After the process, Food Distributor mentioned that they save all the applications for well over a year. This is done both in case applicants contact them with follow up questions regarding their application and if there would be a situation where discriminatory issues are brought forward. When the recruitment process, or parts of it is done by others within the organization, the HR department work to support the recruiters throughout the process. Food Producer, Service and Health mentioned the importance of this process being done thoroughly and Food Producer further said that it could be costly for the organization if they were to hire an unsuitable applicant.

Health, Service and Real Estate all emphasized that this process can be adapted depending on a number of factors such as: type of position, number of applicants and timeframe. Health gave us the example that “It depends on how quickly we need them and sometimes we have been lucky that there, all of a sudden, is an ideal applicant for the position and then we don’t go through all of the steps.”. If the position generates a large number of applicants, the process might be more extensive and go through more selection stages. Both Health and Real Estate mentioned that there also is a risk that no suitable candidate fulfills the profile of requirement during the recruitment process. In these cases, the organizations are forced to revise the requirements, revisit the applications or start a new recruitment process. Food Distributor also mentioned that this could be the case for specialized positions where it is difficult to find an applicant that is qualified for the vacant position.
There are several challenges that the interviewed organizations face when undergoing a recruitment process. According to Real Estate “A lot of people may be studying here at the universities, but then they move further south”. There are fewer large organizations in the north, which also means that there are few advanced job positions. State Agency said “Often it is love of some kind that affect [the decision], if you don’t have, if you aren’t someone moving back to your home town of course”. It appears to be difficult to motivate people to move from the south even when reaching out to them through events and sending out targeted job advertisements. However, Health stated that they do receive applications from people who live further south in Sweden that are willing to move for a vacant position. In general, there are fewer people living in the northern regions, which both Real Estate and Service mentioned has forced their organizations to adapt their recruitment policies. They further described that their organizations have started targeting younger generations in order to establish a connection and interest to these future potential applicants.

5.2 Employer Branding

All of the interviewees agreed that the corporate brand and employer brand are closely interlinked. Food Producer, Real Estate, Service and Health stated that their organizations have started to consider the employer brand as separate from the corporate brand. However, they have not yet actively engaged in activities to specifically strengthen the employer brand. Energy is working for an organization that has clear policies and a strong vision that they are actively working towards as they aspire to strengthen their employer brand. She further stated that the traditional approach is to focus on the corporate brand and the employer brand is something that generally develops organically as a side effect of activities to strengthen the corporate brand. The development of such strategies are in the early stages within the organizations that Food Producer, Real Estate, Service and Health work for, and no clear policies or guidelines that specifically concerns employer branding have been created so far. Energy and Food Producer both mentioned that the concept of employer branding is relatively new and they have started the work to connect and package this concept with concerned parties within their organizations. Food Producer also said, “we have not yet decided on how to move forward but we have decided that we should do it. It costs a lot of money to work with employer branding but we are now talking about packaging: ‘who we are’. State Agency mentioned that they have had focus groups where their employer brand were discussed and what perception others might have regarding the organization. Food Producer, Energy and Real Estate stated that one way of strengthening the employer brand is to focus on internal activities to increase the employee loyalty and engagement. Food Producer said that “I want to package and market [what we offer] internally, like: ‘are you aware that we have this, and this and this?’”. This is what we offer, and sometimes it is taken for granted, that we offer it.” She further mentioned “We will get help from our communications specialist, she is really great at it, on how to communicate. Then we will develop a plan for it”. This is supported by Energy who considered collaborating between different functions within the organization such as HR, communications and marketing to be vital when developing a strong employer brand.

Real Estate, Service, Health and State Agency do not claim that their organizations actively work towards strengthening the internal employer brand at the moment. However, all of the interviewees mentioned that their organizations are making efforts
to increase the employee’s perception of organizational cohesiveness. This is done by promoting recreational and leisure activities provided by the organization as well as internal training programs. These activities are designed to motivate and inspire the employees to increase the overall well being of the workforce. Real Estate mentioned that “We have an annual employee survey to check, and it is very important that the things that need improving are followed up afterwards”. They use the result of this to make improvements to the organization and measure the result of such changes. Food Distributor said, “when it comes to the employees we invest a lot, I don’t remember what the key figure is but we also measure educational days per year and invest a lot in further education”. HR Consultant said that they try to highlight when an employee has done something special or performed well. To increase the loyalty and pride, Energy and Food Producer mentioned that their organizations recognize their employees by showcasing their stories on internal or external platforms. These can for example consist of biographical descriptions or information about their contributions to the organization. This can increase the understanding about the different business units and the work that they do.

The positive effect of the strong internal employer brand should according to Food Producer, then be communicated externally, increasing the reliability of the message. Service emphasized “we are doing our value readjustment and how we are going to work with those parts and values and how to connect it with our employees as well” and she further stated that the point is to be visible. Energy stated that they consider SNSs to be an important media to market themselves as attractive employers. State Agency also mentioned, “It is both about being visible and showing what you can do when working within [the organization], how it is, why it is good, why it would be interesting. But also to be visible with specific positions as well”. Energy further said that it is important that the message is focused around what distinguishes them from their competitors and discussed the importance of the corporate brand and employer brand complementing each other as “these brands should strengthen each other, so the communication has to be in sync.”. The employees appear to be a great asset in the efforts to strengthen the employer brand. HR Consultant mentioned that they post images and interesting activities on Facebook that includes their employees to externally show their organizational culture. Real Estate said that satisfied employees can, for example, facilitate the recruitment process by recommending job openings to personal contacts. Real Estate, Health and Energy considered that with a strong internal employer brand they assume that their employees will spread this positive image to their networks and surroundings. They rely on this in situations when the employees represent the organization at, for example, trade fairs. State Agency further said “These candidates can be there [on SNSs], and the fact that you can share with each other, it is the most important part for us to get our employees to follow or like and share our profiles”. Featuring employees and information about their work as well as their experience with the organization as an employer can also strengthen the employer brand. This can inspire potential job applicants to consider the organization as an attractive employer. However, Energy mentioned, “It is done to provide an understanding, a personal touch. That said, yes, but we are looking into it right now, is this how we want to show ourselves? I don’t know yet”. Emerging trends and the importance of transparency were discussed during the interview with Energy. New technology allows employees to rate their employers anonymously, which allows applicants to form an opinion about organizations as employers prior to sending in an application. Energy therefore
considered the internal employer brand to be a vital aspect of attracting potential applicants.

Health, Service, Food Distributor, State Agency, Energy, HR Consultant and Food Producer all have a somewhat clear perception about the organizational reputation and Energy, Food Distributor and Health mentioned that this is something that they will or currently are measuring within their organizations. All of the interviewees have a clear image of their reputation as employers and are making efforts to understand it better with either employee satisfaction surveys or dialogs at the beginning of employment or at the time of resignation or retirement. The interviewees explained that their perceptions of the external reputation is based on information associated with the corporate brand that is gained through, for example surveys concerning brand image and general perceptions of societal attitudes.

Generally, the understanding appears to be that if the corporate brand is strong it will attract more potential applicants as the organization is perceived to be a preferred employer. Health considered that this is connected to the organization’s overall popularity and Real Estate, Service, State Agency and Food Producer linked the strong employer brand to the perception of the organization as secure and stable. Further, Health connected this with the work environment as it partly can be mirrored in the organizational culture and attract applicants that feel a connection to the atmosphere. Real Estate also mentioned that personal connections with the organization can be a contributing factor when considering the organization as a potential employer and that their employees often distribute the information regarding a vacant position to their networks. Health stated that, “We clearly write that an application is internal, but of course it leaks out. We have said that it is okay if we get external [applications] and we do look through them, but it’s not something we include if we know that the others are sufficient. But I think it’s because many have friends... friends, friends on Facebook so it is enough that someone posts [information about the vacancy] for it to spread”.

Food Producer and Real Estate expressed that their organizations make efforts to discuss the employee's perceptions of the organization as an employer upon recruitment and resignation. These discussions are used to ensure that the communicated image of the organization is in line with the employee's working experience and to make improvements for the future. Real Estate also mentioned that much effort is made to present the organization fairly during the interview stage in the recruitment process. She further said, “The person should want to have us a year or so after being employed. Because if we have spread false advertisements, well then [the person] will disappear, because then the person will not be satisfied”. Even those who are rejected should be left with a desire to apply for the next job opening. All of the interviewees stated that the communication with the rejected applicants therefore is very important in order to maintain their interest and positive perception of the organization. This communication may end at an e-mail or be on-going depending on the desire to hire the concerned applicant for another position or at a later date.

5.3 Social media in an organizational context

Most of the organizations are relatively new to incorporating SNSs into their strategy, as mentioned by Food Producer, Service, State Agency and Real Estate. Both Food Producer and Service also said that they have received encouragements from personal- or business related contacts to better utilize SNSs in their work. These encouragements
have highlighted the importance of engaging in SNSs to reach the organization’s target audience and as a marketing tool. HR Consultant mentioned that for them it was considered to be natural to use SNSs. State Agency and Food Producer mentioned that the lack of resources is a reason for why it takes time for them to develop a strategy of how to use SNSs. Energy, whose organization has been more proactive in the work of adapting these newer technologies stated that it is vital to have a presence on SNSs to get noticed due to the contemporary societal norm to always be online. All of the interviewees stated that their organizations are making efforts to become more active on Facebook. State Agency said “We are in the starting blocks and are looking a little bit at how we can work more with, well Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are those that we are mostly looking at”. Facebook is a media that Energy, Real Estate, HR Consultant and Food Distributor stated that all age groups and target groups are engaging in even though Food Distributor suspected that this media might not reach generation Z. However, Real Estate, HR Consultant and Health all expressed a belief that the younger generations might be more open minded about information on SNSs. In general, all of the interviewees agreed that people presents a more personal and private image on Facebook while LinkedIn is used to display career related information.

Food Producer, Health, Energy and Food Distributor specifically mentioned that their organizations use Facebook to market the products and services that they offer. All of the interviewees agreed that it is a media that is used to effectively distribute important or entertaining information to their stakeholders. Health emphasized that they aspire to update their SNS profile regularly to keep it interesting while Service mentioned “It was also about, the Facebook-information day we had, it was the same there that maybe you should not ‘spit out’ everyday because in the end people will not see it”. State Agency mentioned that it is important that the communication department approve of the content before it is posted on their SNSs. As for LinkedIn, it is not as commonly used and Energy suggested, “it is clear that it is more academic. So it is, mostly it is those who are using, if you say LinkedIn anyway. This perception is supported by Service and Health who argued that they do not expect to reach applicants suitable for their lower positions on LinkedIn. State Agency also said “At LinkedIn we mostly see a direction towards the technical professions. [Some of our services], well within HR, business administration, media or communication and these technical professions, these candidates can be found there. This was also mentioned by HR Consultant, who said “I think LinkedIn, on the other hand, includes all ages, but there is much more high competences, I mean people with higher positions or have 20 years of experience within a field”.

Service motivated her organization’s current effort to develop their profile on Facebook as she said, “we have not worked so much with our visibility, it is something that is under development as we speak, we are changing our strategies. We use our Facebook page more to be visible” and further she said, “the focus is not on showcasing our employees, instead it is more to profile us, to show the corporate brand”. This has led to discussions about how to manage the presence on these sites, something that appears to be a current topic of discussion at Health’s organization as well. The most common issues regardless of platform are focused around how to formulate the messages, when to upload these and how to respond to comments. Service elaborated on this by describing an internal resistance of adapting the SNSs. This is because an additional task has been added to the employees and because they are experiencing a knowledge gap. To decrease the uncertainty and empower the employees, Service described that
they have made efforts to encourage the employees to share the responsibility of managing the SNSs profiles. She stated, “the manager does not have to be the only one to post [messages on SNSs]. We had a day where we talked about what rules there are for posting competitions, what types of competitions there are, you cannot add whatever you want. What type of communications to add, what we should write, how we express ourselves, a lot about communication”. State Agency also mentioned that they have experienced some hesitation as to what they can post since the communication department is in charge of the information distributed through the SNSs. To overcome this, the organization has arranged different workshops and meetings with the employees to find a common ground between departments.

There appears to be a general confusion as to what messages will generate “likes” and comments on SNSs. This is expressed by both Health whose organization is in the early stages of discovering the opportunities of using SNSs as a communication tool and by Energy whose organization has a more developed approach. The posts that seem to generate most feedback are competitions or challenges, images with a high recognition factor or humorous posts. Health described the surprise that one of their competitions has been so greatly embraced by their followers on Facebook. Energy described that it is difficult to predict which posts will generate the most response by the followers as it constantly fluctuates. However, she emphasized, “I think you have to be quite brief. It should be, it should be quite... Because you know it yourself, you are pretty fast at scrolling and then there has to be a picture or some text, not too complicated”. It is important to differentiate the organization’s message from the constant flow of information that is constantly ongoing on SNSs. It is also a strategy that will increase the chances of raising enough interest to make the followers notice and read the message. State Agency mentioned that they learned from Facebook representatives that when an organization post something with a link to another site, for example their website, Facebook pushes it further down the information flow or only show it to some target groups. This is done as a way to keep the individuals on Facebook and not direct them to other websites. Food Producer also stated that it is important to make sure that the communication on SNSs mirrors the values of the organization and is in line with the corporate brand. Even if the messages get adapted to different medias, it should be aligned with the corporate communication style and image.

5.4 Attracting applicants and recruitment via SNSs

When discussing SNSs and recruitment processes, the interviewees stated that they mainly use SNSs to post job advertisements. However, Service has not yet used this opportunity but has been encouraged to do so in the future. Energy, Real Estate and Health have advertised vacant positions using LinkedIn and most of the interviewees stated that they have used Facebook. The reasons for using SNSs appears to be that it is free of cost and an efficient way to spread the information. Food Distributor brought up the cost issue of advertising vacancies through the traditional channels. Health said that as long as they get a sufficient amount of suitable applications through advertising their job openings on SNSs, they will not spend money on advertisements in newspapers or job-boards online. HR Consultant mentioned the benefit of reaching out to a large network of applicants when using SNSs. Health also said that the sharing feature on Facebook enables the advertisement to reach out to a lot of people, including working professionals that are not currently aware or interested in searching for a new job. Real Estate also appeared to value the opportunity to reach a large target group free of charge.
and talked about how she encourages her colleagues to share the job advertisements they post on SNSs with their networks. She emphasized that it is voluntary to share the organization’s posts and that the purpose is to reach as many people as possible. State Agency mentioned that they need to get more followers on SNSs in order for these sites to generate more response when posting vacant positions.

The different representatives of the organizations interviewed have different approaches as to how to use SNSs to advertise vacancies. For example, Food Producer stated “we should always post these [vacancies] online, it is partly based on the feeling in the community, if there is a boom or recession, if it is easy to reach people or not and where we want to find these people.” She described that this decision is made in conjunction with the management and that each case is discussed separately. The main objective to post vacant positions on SNSs is that it should generate a suitable applicant. The possibility to fulfill this objective will therefore determine if it is posted on SNSs. Energy’s organization use their LinkedIn page to post all vacant positions and Facebook as a complement to reach the great mass of people engaged in that SNS. Her experience is that LinkedIn is more useful than Facebook to communicate this type of information, as it is easy to target specific target groups via LinkedIn. She expressed “These professionals are a bit trickier to reach. You have to be smarter and try to predict, and of course LinkedIn is a good way to reach them, but we can not reach them all”. They also use LinkedIn as a way of raising awareness and attract attention by visiting interesting candidates profiles. The candidate will then receive a notification that the organization has visited the profile. Food Distributor mentioned that “we have a profile on LinkedIn, and some applicants simply try to send a friend request, and in general I have not met them”. HR Consultant mentioned that they could send friend requests through LinkedIn to individuals with interesting profiles in order to send a message to them about a job vacancy available within a certain field. The interviewees have in common that they claim that they post vacant positions on SNSs to attract potential applicants to apply for specific posts. Their main objectives are therefore not to generate a general interest of the organization as a possible employer.

Service’s organization has not yet actively used SNSs to advertise vacancies but she said that “I see us posting advertisements that we are looking for people, welcome with an application or, that I can see. To be visible and to be able to post through that channel.” However, she mentioned, “the downside is as always that, like when you post [vacancies] at the employment office, you get everything. Everybody applies”. Service, Health and Food Distributor described that they tend to receive an unmanageable amount of applications when they have posted job advertisements through the employment office. They agree that this is because people who are using the employment office’s services are forced to apply for all positions they possibly can. This results in applications with insufficient or irrelevant qualifications that occupy a lot of time to process. However, Health’s experience with advertising vacancies on Facebook is that they receive less irrelevant applications. Service, Health and Food Distributer also mentioned that they receive many spontaneous applications. Service said that this decreases their need to advertise vacant positions, especially for the lower positions. Health further said that these spontaneous applications that they receive are more general and that the individual often has to send in a more specific application for a vacant position as well.
The interviewees stated that they post vacant positions internally, on the organization’s website, in newspapers and on online job boards in addition to, or instead of, advertising vacancies through the employment office. Service mentioned that she does not think that posting vacancies on SNSs will eliminate the traditional channels as she predicts that different medias attract different target groups. HR Consultant also mentioned that the trend is going towards advertising on SNSs and unless there will be a retro trend regarding the traditional channels, these will decrease. Most of the interviewees were not particularly versed in where the applicants first notice their job advertisements. Food Producer mentioned that they track this information as the applications are sent in. Real Estate and State Agency mentioned that they have looked into it in the past but has not conducted this type of investigation since they became more active on SNSs. Health expressed that she thinks that most of their external applicants have seen their job advertisements on both SNSs and on their webpage. She continued by arguing that if the number of applications were to decrease significantly, they would take measures to look further into what channels to use for promoting job advertisements. In general, Food Producer, Health, Energy, and Food Distributor mentioned that they are experiencing a decrease of popularity of advertising vacancies in daily newspaper. However, Energy, State Agency and Real Estate stated that they still receive applications from people who have seen the job advertisement in the newspaper or at the employment office despite the decrease in popularity of using these channels. Service described SNSs as a complement to the traditional channels, a sentiment shared by Real Estate.

Real Estate continued the argumentation by expressing “sometimes I get a bit disappointed on the fact that you do not find more [potential applicants], both on the Internet and on social media, and these jobsites, that it is so few. I can get a bit... since it is so easily accessible”. However, Health and Food Distributor appeared to be satisfied with the response they get from advertising job vacancies on SNSs. As mentioned above, Health perceives the applications generated by a job advertisement on a SNS to produce a satisfactory amount and quality. Food Distributor shares this perception and stated that she generally perceives the applications generated from SNS job advertisements to be of a high quality and relevance. She also mentioned that “the applications sent in via Facebook are sometimes less extensive, and it might be because, it is not so strange since the advertisements posted via Facebook sometimes can be less extensive as well”.

Food Distributor has experienced that applicants ask questions via SNSs relating to posted vacancies. These are questions regarding the advertisement itself or their progress in the recruitment process. Furthermore, HR Consultant regularly reaches out to potential applicants to inform and inspire them to apply for job vacancies. Otherwise, none of the interviewees have received questions regarding job advertisements via SNSs. Real Estate mentioned that applicants generally call her if they have questions regarding the job advertisement and she thinks that this communication can be beneficial as it is an opportunity to establish a first impression of an applicant. She also said that they try to establish an interest for the organization as a potential employer by attending employer fairs and through collaborating in projects with local schools. Even though different organizations aspire to target different age groups and adapt their employer fair attendance accordingly, this is a strategy that was also mentioned by Energy, State Agency and Food Distributor as something they use. Real Estate stated that they want to engage more in these types of activities in the future and mentioned...
that the reason is to target a younger audience. This is partly because they want to inspire the younger generation to choose an education that will give them the competence that the organizations are dependent on and partly because they want to market themselves as attractive employers.

Real Estate expressed a belief that SNSs will probably become more viably used to advertise vacancies in the future. HR Consultant also mentioned that these sites will become more used as the trend also is to have more knowledge and constantly be active on SNSs. However, Real Estate thinks that it might take a while for job seekers in northern Sweden to embrace and adapt to this way of communicating vacancies. She perceives that job seekers in the southern part of Sweden may be more inclined to search for jobs via SNSs and thinks that this could be a result of the prominent differences of the labor markets in different parts of Sweden. These are differences that concern amount of job seekers interested in different geographical areas and amount of hiring organizations in these areas. Real Estate also shared that she had discussed this matter with contacts in the south of Sweden and that they together had arrived at the same conclusion. Energy raised the discussion about finding new communication channels as the traditional ones are perceived to be irrelevant for them and Food Producer speculated that it might become popular to utilize SNSs as a way to target the younger generations. Using SNSs to attract generation Z was discussed by both Real Estate and Food Distributor. Real Estate said, “The younger generations, when you start reaching them more and more, then I think it will be a bit faster”. She further speculated that this is because “Well, they have grown up with it [SNSs], we have not.”. As current SNSs are developing in a rapid pace and new SNSs are being launched, Real Estate expressed curiousness about what functions might be developed in the future. Food Distributor however mentioned that they have not started looking at other SNSs at this point, as reports have shown that the younger generations still actively uses these sites even though they might not post information there. HR Consultant also mentioned that the younger generations are more selective when it comes to job vacancies. She therefore considered them to be more difficult to reach as they are not searching as actively for jobs as older generations, which makes SNSs a tool to advertise towards these younger generations.

5.5 Selection process

As mentioned before, the interviewed organizations carry out a reference check concerning the relevant applicants after conducting the interviews. Service said that their organization uses an external source for the reference checking and Health mentioned that they, at a few occasions, have brought in external parties to assist with the process. The other interviewed organizations carry out this process in-house. Further, Real Estate suggested, “you have the interview, you have the tests and you have references. And none of these can way more than the other”. She further said that it is important to remember that the references themselves might not always be reliable as the reference could be biased. This she explained as “You don’t know who the reference is, you don’t know, it could be the best friend even if it was the manager because they might be really good friends”. State Agency agreed as “we use references as well but with those there is a low validity, among the lowest”.

To learn how the interviewed organizations use other methods to screen the applicants the discussion was directed to the usage of SNSs for this purpose. Service, Energy, HR
Consultant, Real Estate, Food Distributor, State Agency and Health said that they at some point have turned to SNSs in order to look at a profile of an applicant but they all state that this has not resulted in anything definitive for the recruitment process itself. Food Distributor stated that if they believed that they could gain something from screening via SNSs they would do it, but as of now it is not a part of their recruitment process. State Agency also raised the issue regarding if it is acceptable to look at individuals’ private profiles unless they specifically referred to them in their application. Food Producer mentioned that they do not use SNSs for this purpose. Further she said that, “I don’t think that I would go in and look up everybody. I don’t know, not today, I have not even thought about doing it.” Health further said that they only have done this on a few occasions but that the intention mainly was to see a picture of the applicant. She also mentioned that “I see more and more, and if it is, what to say, a general trend or something, that [applicants] write so little about themselves and their personal life”. Further she said that the applications provide a substantial amount of professional information but lack personal information, which makes it difficult for the organization to know how they are as individuals and if they match the organizational culture and values. She also suggested that this could affect the organization’s intentions to use SNSs to learn more about the applicants in the future. HR Consultant further said that she would not recommend screening through SNSs or take a stand regarding the information as it could be considered as discrimination.

According to Real Estate, using SNSs to screen their applicants has not been an asset so far. The primary focus when screening applicants have been to see if everything is correct and in line with the application, which Energy also mentioned that they have looked for when screening applicants. Energy, State Agency and Real Estate said that it is important not to dig too deep for information as the applicants are entitled to some privacy on their Facebook pages and that it would take a lot to make the findings from screening vital for the recruitment process. The information gained through SNSs could also be misguided, as Service said, “I do not think that you should put so much emphasis on Facebook, because you do not see the entire truth there. It is a lot, I mean, you choose what you post. For better or worse.” However, Energy mentioned that they at one point found positive information from screening an applicant on SNSs as the interview had not highlighted all the activities that they found qualifying. She further said that it is important to remember that screening applicants only is a complement to the other parts of the recruitment process, but that it is however a useful tool that is available to them. Service also mentioned that the reference checking is the more substantial part of the screening process where the applicants are screened more thoroughly. However, as this is outsourced they are not aware of how the reference checking is conducted or how extensive the process itself is. HR Consultant said “these parts [screening via SNSs] are rather irrelevant according to me, the focus should instead be on the resume and cover letter”.

When screening applicants Real Estate, HR Consultant and Service said that the information gained through LinkedIn and Facebook is different as Facebook contains more personal information and LinkedIn has a professional focus. Food Distributor mentioned that they probably would put more effort into screening the applicants via LinkedIn than Facebook. However, Real Estate further mentioned “There [LinkedIn] you might check, is it correct and so on. On the other hand, you can't trust that information either and you still have to do a reference check”. When visiting a profile on LinkedIn the applicants get notified about who has visited their profile, as mentioned
by Energy, Real Estate and Food Producer. Real Estate and Food Distributor further said that this makes it less desirable for the organization to screen applicants via LinkedIn, as it also is costly to be anonymous on the site. However, Energy said “We use it sometimes to go in and leave, if there is a person we are interested in we can go in and look at the person’s profile deliberately so that it should get a flash that, oh, a recruiter at [the organization] has looked at my site, what do they want?”. This is done systematically as well for individuals within certain fields as a way of drawing attention to the organization.

During the interviews it was also discussed at what stage of the recruitment process the screening of applicants is conducted. All of the interviewees mentioned that the main way for their organizations to screen the applicants is done through reference checking. This screening is done at a late state of the process, which usually occurs after the interviews and tests have been conducted. If the screening is done by the help of SNSs it has been done in different stages of the recruitment process. Service mentioned that they sometimes screen applicants on their SNSs when they are recruiting for higher positions and that this have occurred before they invite applicants for interviews. In contrast, Energy said “We do it, to some extent. Later in the recruitment process, when approaching the end you can go in and look quickly but I would not say that it is something vital, everybody has a right to a private life”. Real Estate also mentioned that they occasionally use SNSs for this reason but did not specify when in a process it is done. She further mentioned that there sometimes is limited time for the recruitment process, which partly could be why they only screen via SNSs at some cases.

To further get an understanding on the screening part of the recruitment process the interviewees were asked what trends they see in the future. When asked if screening via SNSs will become more common in the future, Food Distributor said, “Yes, I think so. But if you go to Facebook for example, and also LinkedIn, you can’t see much if the person has chosen to make the profile private, it is only if it is a friend of a friend that you might get in. So the question is, to what use. Yes I think so, but the question is how much you will see”. Food Producer mentioned that they might screen applicants via SNSs in the future if it becomes relevant for them to do it. She also suggested that it might be a possibility to use SNSs to headhunt and proactively search for potential candidates in the future. Service suggested that screening via SNSs might be something that in general will be in the future, but she do not believe that it will become a determining factor in recruitment processes. She also stated that the use of LinkedIn for this purpose might be more relevant in the future as the information gathered there is of a professional nature. Health mentioned that Facebook might be used more often for screening applicants in the future and that it therefore becomes more important to consider the material that is uploaded on this site. If the material that is found on SNSs in the future regarding an applicant is entirely contradicting to the organizational values, this individual might not be hired even if the applicant is qualified for the job.
6. Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter we will present the different themes that we have developed from analyzing the empirical data. We will incorporate the previous research presented in the chapter: theoretical framework and discuss each theme individually. The themes addressed in this chapter are: “Employer Branding”, “Benefits”, “Barriers”, “Communication Channels” and “Implementation”. These will be the foundation for the framework presented at the end of this chapter.

6.1 Introduction

The presented themes are connected and related to each other as they are all aspects or factors that facilitate, alternatively hinder, implementing recruitment activities carried out via SNSs. The themes can be seen as parts of a recruitment process where each theme addresses different aspects along the way. We begin by identifying and discussing in what stages of a recruitment process employer branding is integrated. How the employer brand can be strengthened is also an important aspect of this theme. This is followed by benefits of using SNSs in recruitment processes as well as how a strong employer brand can enhance these. Next, barriers that hinders organizations from embracing SNSs as an attraction and selection tool is identified and discussed. The two final themes address the current strategies regarding SNSs that the interviewed organizations are working according to. The first of these themes is focused on what communication channels to use and in what way, while the concluding theme discusses important aspects to take into consideration when implementing SNS strategies. All of these themes will contribute to the development of a framework that describes strategies for implementing employer branding and SNSs in recruitment processes.

6.2 Employer branding

The first theme that we have identified addresses that the interviewed organizations consider the internal and external activities to strengthen the employer brand as closely interlinked. When talking about the organizational reputation, a lot of the organizations started talking about what they do to take care of their current employees. This made us realize that the perceptions of the current employees regarding the organization as an employer is closely connected to how they think that their reputation reflects externally. It also became clear that this reputation, or external employer brand, was seen as a trait that can contribute to attracting potential job applicants. This is supported by the finding made by Cable and Turban (2003, p. 2260) that suggested that the organizational reputation is an indication of what it would be like to work for the concerned organization. We therefore consider this to be a process where it is important to start with developing the internal employer brand and thereafter focus on the external employer brand. This is because the employees have been proven to be helpful to promote the external employer brand (Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 479; Doherty, 2010, p. 13; Sehgal & Malati, 2013, p. 52). Further, the organizational image will have an impact on what applicants are attracted to apply for vacant positions (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011, p. 29). Based on this we think that the external employer brand and thus the organizational reputation, can work as a marketing tool and express the organizational value that will attract potential applicants with similar values.

As a first step in the process of using the employer brand to attract potential applicants, Food Producer, Energy, Real Estate, Food Distributor and HR Consultant explicitly
mentioned the importance of employee satisfaction. They stated that it is important to engage in internal activities in collaboration with their employees in order to unite the organization and to strengthen the organizational culture. Sehgal and Malati (2013, pp. 51-52) stated in their framework that internal employer branding activities increases the performance, commitment and identification with the organization. Further, they stated that an increase in identification with the organization leads to the employees being more loyal towards the organization (Sehgal & Malati, 2013, p. 52). In addition, Maxwell and Knox (2009, p. 897) stated that when employees identify themselves with the organization they will engage in activities that further increase this identification and thereby strengthens the employer brand. The interviewed organizations are mainly engaging in activities to increase the fellowship between colleagues and business units. They are doing this by encouraging and providing opportunities to take part in recreational and leisure activities as well as internal educational programs. Some of the organizations also mentioned that they measure the satisfaction of their employees by conducting surveys or further promote their employees by showcasing them externally. We perceive such activities to contribute to strengthening the internal employer brand, even if this is not the term used by the organization when they described them to us.

Many of the interviewed organizations mentioned the importance of having a strong foundation internally before promoting themselves as employers externally. This appeared to be because they wanted to anchor the external employer brand in a strong organizational culture. This would increase the credibility of their message and the possibility to promote themselves as an attractive employer. Chambers (1998, p. 48) expressed the importance of employee retention activities in order to promote the organization as an attractive employer. We believe that these internal activities are an important foundation for the external employer brand. This is important because, as mentioned, the internal employer brand anchors the values of the organization internally. In turn, this contributes to a more credible external communication that will attract more suitable applicants. As strategies are created to strengthen the internal cohesiveness, they will also work as a way to strengthen the employer brand externally and attract potential job applicants. However there is a difference between the activities to promote the employer brand to the existing employees and to potential applicants. Maxwell and Knox (2009, p. 896) stated that it is important for organizations to make a distinction between the strategies regarding activities to strengthen the employer brand targeted to these two groups. All of the interviewees stated that they have strategies for strengthening what we perceive to be the internal employer brand. However, Energy is the only organization that has intentional strategies for promoting the external employer brand. We think that one of the problems causing the lack of strategies for the external employer brand is that a lot of the organizations are not aware of the term employer brand or its importance. If the interviewed organizations were to become more knowledgeable and aware of their employer brand, it would be easier to create these types of strategies. This is because an awareness of the importance of employer branding would motivate efforts to learn how to promote the employer brand to these target groups.

The second step to this process, following the work organizations do to strengthen their internal employer brand is their activities to strengthen the employer brand externally. The organizational reputation is improved by the employer brand and can be influenced by the employees’ usage of SNSs. This is a strategy to further attract applicants and increases their intentions to apply for a vacant position (Siivertzen et al., 2013, p. 479; Doherty, 2010, p. 13; Sehgal & Malati, 2013, p. 52). Energy, Real Estate and Health
discussed this as they mentioned the importance of their employees’ expressing their loyalty towards the organization when trying to attract applicants to apply for vacant positions. They mentioned that they see it as a given that their employees spread positive information concerning the organization to their networks. However, we do not only see spreading information about one's employer on SNSs as beneficial, we also see a risk with the employees spreading this type of information via their networks. This is because the organization loses the control over the message and if the information is sensitive or negative, it can be damaging to the organization. With the easy access to distribute and share information, the damaging message could spread quickly and such damage can be difficult to repair. It is therefore important for the organizations to set up guidelines regarding their employer brand and develop a clear strategy for how to communicate it externally. However, research shows that the employer brand is strengthened when employees who identify with the organization contributes to activities to strengthen the employer brand (Maxwell & Knox, 2009, p. 897). This is not something that the interviewees expressed that they take into consideration. Based on this, we think that managers should facilitate the development of a strong internal employer brand because it will decrease the risk of employees spreading damaging information intentionally. Instead, the employees would make efforts to spread positive information that will strengthen the employer- and corporate brand. Because of the loyalty, a strong internal employer brand can develop and the employees are not inclined to engage in activities that can be damaging to the organization.

The interviewed organizations are currently working with, for example, trade fairs to promote their employer brand. Food Producer, Energy and HR Consultant have started engaging in activities on SNSs such as showcasing their employees, their jobs and their experiences of working for the organization. When working with SNSs as a communication channel, the organizations have a powerful media to show potential applicants things like the working environment within the organization. With a thoroughly developed strategy for how to implement it, they have an increased chance of doing it successfully. This has been elaborated further by Maxwell and Knox (2009, p. 903), who stated that the employer brand is perceived as more attractive if the organization can communicate its success factors in a convincing way. We think that promoting the employees externally can show potential applicants what it means to work for the organization, as we feel that the competences in an organization often are a part of such success factors. Cascio (2014, p. 122) mentioned that one way to communicate the employer brand externally is to engage employees in SNS activities and let them show their experiences with the organization as an employer. As mentioned above, the interviewed organizations are planning to showcase their employees externally as well as internally. This would be done as a way of promoting the organizational culture and the daily operations, both targeted at other employees and potential applicants. We think that these types of activities will increase and spread to other organizations as well since the employees can be used to promote the employer brand in an easy and trustworthy way in order to attract applicants to vacant positions. This strategy might be especially suited for the organizations we have interviewed because they generally are divided into different business units. We believe that this strategy would have a positive impact on the internal and external employer brand, the larger the organization is and the more diverse job descriptions there are. We make this argument as we imagine that organizations with homogeneous job descriptions and fewer employees do not struggle to feel connected to each other in the same way. In
these cases it could still be beneficial as this exposure of the employees would strengthen the external employer brand.

With a strong employer brand the organizational culture and values can be promoted in order to attract compatible applicants (Sehgal & Malati, 2013, p. 62; Wilden et al., 2010, p. 69). Service and Food Producer emphasized the importance of including the organizational values when promoting the employer brand and communicating via SNSs. The organizational culture was also mentioned by Health as an aspect that increases the possibility of receiving relevant applications for job vacancies. The employees are an important part when communicating this culture externally as they are the ones who help create and maintain the organizational culture. Based on the discussion above, we believe that the employees can be an important asset to organizations in the final step of this process, which is attracting applicants. This is because they can be involved in promoting the employer brand in a trustworthy way. Doherty (2010, p. 12) stated that the visibility on SNSs strengthens the employer brand and thus have a positive effect on attracting potential applicants. This could partly explain why the interviewed organizations are not intentionally working with employer branding activities via SNSs. Their visibility on these sites may have generated some unintended effect on their employer brand in such a way that it has not been necessary to consider specific employer branding activities. However, we believe that if the management was to develop strategies for promoting their employer brand it will strengthen it in a more powerful and direct way. This would make it possible to have more control over the perception of the organization as an employer. We also think that if the organizations were to become more active on SNSs for the purpose of recruiting and strengthening the employer brand, they will increase the possibility to create stronger relationships between the organization and potential applicants. This could be beneficial as research suggest that such relationships can increase the loyalty and intentions to apply for vacant positions (Doherty, 2010, p. 12). Currently, none of the interviewed organizations indicated that they strive towards establishing personal relationships with their followers on SNSs with the intent to recruit them later on. Even though research suggests that these types of relationships can be beneficial (Doherty, 2010, p. 12; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 18; Girard et al., 2014, p. 110), it requires a lot of time and resources to target specific individuals and maintain this contact. It may be justified to make efforts to create such contacts with a higher, more specific position in mind. However, this would mean that a specific post is on the verge of being posted and not with the intent to create a network just in case. It would be possible to develop meaningful relationships with specific target groups that are relevant and shares the same values as the organization. This would decrease the time and effort it would take to establish and maintain contacts. When a position becomes vacant, these contacts within the target groups can be used as a basis for recruitment.

Attracting potential applicants will be easier when engaging the employees in the activities since the message is considered to be more personal and trustworthy (Maxwell and Knox, 2009, p. 904; Wilden et al., 2010, p. 70). Food Producer, Energy and Real Estate said that they experience that the reliability of the communicated message increased if they involved their employees in the communication. Based on this, the message becomes more trustworthy if the information is communicated by an employee as the receiver has a person and a face to relate to. Allden and Harris (2013, p. 40) stated that to promote the employer brand, recruitment activities via SNSs are important. Since the interviewed organizations are in the early stages of recruiting via SNSs, we were not able to fully establish an insight as to how these activities affect the
employer brand. However, as we have described in this theme, the internal and external employer brand appear to be connected to the attraction stage of the recruitment process. As organizations engage to care for their current employees, they will strengthen the external employer brand via their employees and increase the amount of applicants who relate to the corporate image these employees communicate. We therefore consider the employer brand to be an important part of promoting and attracting suitable applicants for vacant positions. In order to attract applicants it becomes important for the management to develop and implement strategies regarding the internal and the external employer brand. This is because they are both important aspects of this process. As more jobs become service related, the employees become more important assets for the organizations. It will therefore become even more important to attract suitable applicants in the future.

6.3 Benefits

We noticed that the organizations are in the early stages of incorporating SNSs and employer branding into their recruitment processes as we analyzed the data from the interviews. However, they expressed a positive attitude towards using SNSs for these purposes. Therefore, the second theme that we have identified is the benefits generated by engaging in recruitment activities through the use of SNSs. This is because the organizations are trying to develop these strategies and to become active on the relatively new communication channels on SNSs. This development clearly supports the statement made by Lewis et al. (2015, p. 1) who stated that SNSs are becoming popular tools in recruitment processes. Up to this point, all of the interviewed organizations except Service have posted job vacancies on these sites, either sporadically or systematically to attract applicants for vacant positions. However, they have not yet fully evaluated the results of these efforts. Nor have a lot of the interviewed organizations developed clear strategies for how to proceed with these activities and how to incorporate recruitment activities via SNSs into the organizational operations in the future. According to Girard et al. (2014, p. 110), job seekers demand organizations to be active on SNSs in order to create and nurture a relationship between these parties. The interviewed organizations themselves have a desire to engage in activities on these sites and consider it to be necessary in order to be perceived as a modern and contemporary organization. They believe that their external stakeholders appreciate their current presence on SNSs. So far, the organizations we interviewed have not experienced that potential applicants have expressed a desire to use SNSs to develop personal relationships with the organization. They told us that instead, the main focus on their SNSs is generally to promote the corporate brand. These activities also appear to be those that receive the most response from their followers such as comments and “likes”. Because the use of SNSs in a corporate context is relatively new, the organizations do not have the necessary experience to develop long term strategies. However, the organizations do express a desire to use SNSs and to keep up to date. We believe that this desire stems from the technological development and social adaptation. Because of this desire, the organizations will regularly attempt to engage in SNSs. As this progresses, they will acquire the experience needed to design appropriate strategies in the future.

The interviewed organizations expressed different reasons for engaging in creating an organizational presence on SNSs. One of these is that such a presence is considered to be essential in order to keep up with the technological development and the other is that it is seen as a given to actively use these sites. The consensus is that it is necessary to
have a presence on SNSs. This is supported by Girard et al. (2014, p. 110) who suggested that this approach is due to the large amount of people active on these sites. We believe that since a large amount of people actively use these sites, the realization of the potential amount of people who can be reached via an organizational SNS presence can affect organizations to engage in these sites. Sehgal and Malati (2013, p. 62) discussed the importance of large following on SNSs to keep up with the competitive labor market as it forces the organization to find innovative recruitment activities to attract potential applicants. Adapting the recruitment process was discussed by Service, Health and Real Estate. These organizations stated that it is more difficult to find and attract suitable applicants for job vacancies for certain positions or certain geographical locations. Ployhart (2006, pp. 868-869) also stated that it has caused the traditional recruitment strategies to change and adapt to the current state of the labor market. To reach the potential applicants who remain in smaller cities or the younger generations, keeping up with the technological development will be vital. This is one of the reasons why we think organizations should strive to become more active on SNSs. With new technologies constantly emerging we believe that it becomes even more important for organizations to keep up and engage in medias where the large mass of people are active. If organizations were to fall behind this development, they risk missing the opportunity to reach out to these target groups. However, some of the interviewees mentioned that, at this moment, the newspaper and other traditional media still is useful to attract applicants. They argue that the usage of SNSs for this purpose should complement the use of traditional medias. A reason for this could be the established norms in the areas they are operating at this time. These appear to include that people still read the daily newspaper, which makes posting job advertisements in them justified. Real Estate stated that the geographical area they operate in is characterized of such norms. We believe that the technological development will progresses and SNSs will become more integrated into the norms, both in general and in recruitment processes, in the areas where the interviewed organizations operate in the future. We therefore believe that it is important for the management to continuously develop the SNS strategies and keep an eye on their external stakeholder. This should be done in order to prevent losing them to technologies that the organization has not yet actively started using.

Previous research found that some of the benefits of using SNSs in recruitment processes are cost and time efficiency, attracting and retaining younger generations and that it is a way to strengthen the employer brand (Doherty, 2010, p. 11; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 9; Fisher et al., 2014, p. 638). One of the benefits mentioned by Real Estate, Health and Food distributor is the savings that can be made by advertising vacant positions via SNSs compared to traditional media. In general, the daily newspaper industry is appearing to be decreasing drastically. We believe that this is because people consume information differently today, mainly via platforms online. This is because of the speed and easy access to these types of medias due to the ability to access them, not only via computers but also, through our phones. We therefore argue that it would be relevant for organizations to follow this trend and use the Internet for recruitment purposes in addition to using them to promote their corporate brand. As many different target groups are currently active on these sites, we believe that it will be sufficient to advertise via SNSs to reach potential applicants in the future. This will also result in a lot of savings, provided that this way of posting job advertisements remain free of charge. This is of course as long as you do not want to pay for the possibility to sponsor specific posts in order to make them even more visible.
The large amount of people that can be reached through these sites is another reason mentioned as a benefit (Doherty, 2010, p. 11; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 9; Fisher et al., 2014, p. 638). It was brought forward during the interviews that it is easier to reach the younger generations via SNSs today as they are actively using these sites. However, many interviewees stated that they currently perceive that virtually everybody engages in SNSs, especially Facebook. This means that large amounts of individuals from older generations are actively using these sites. It is therefore not only possible to reach younger generations through SNSs, but older generations can also be reached by advertising on these sites. This seems to be considered as a great benefit of posting job advertisements on SNSs by the interviewees. Health and Food Distributor mentioned that they feel like they receive a sufficient amount of applications when advertising via SNSs. They also stated that they do not use traditional media or the employment office to promote vacant posts anymore due to this development. However, as SNSs become more regularly used for these purposes the sites could change their policies and start charging organizations for these services. This would mean that they do not only charge organizations for the service to directly market the information to certain target groups but for other activities as well. A similar issue was brought forward by State Agency who addressed the possibility for SNSs to suppress posts that link to other sites. This is also a risk when advertising on SNSs for recruitment purposes. Especially since it is common to post a shorter message about a vacant position on SNSs and then leave a link to the organization’s website for further information. This further highlights the importance for organizations to monitor the policy changes of these sites and develop strategies to keep up with this development in the future.

Another benefit of using SNSs is the possibility to use them to strengthen the employer brand (Doherty, 2010, p. 11; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 9; Fisher et al., 2014, p. 638). However, as the interviewed organizations are in the early stages of developing strategies for incorporating an employer brand focus on their SNS profiles, this has not always been a conscious strategic decision. Instead it is something that many of them are planning to incorporate into their future strategies. This is to more clearly and actively promote their employer brand both internally and externally. Nonetheless, we believe that the interviewed organizations have used SNSs to promote themselves as attractive employers to some degree even if they have not developed clear strategies for this. In many cases, this has probably been done unconsciously. We make this argument, as we could understand from the interviews that the organizations have carried out different activities on SNSs where their employees have played a prominent role. The interviewees also mentioned that they consider SNSs as an important tool to become visible as a brand and an organization for their customers as well as for potential applicants for vacant job positions. Many organizations that we have talked to do not appear to focus on using SNSs to promote themselves as attractive employers. This does not mean that the interviewed organizations are unaware of the concept of employer branding. For example, Energy realizes that SNSs can be used to promote their employer brand and see it as a benefit. However, some of the organizations did not express that they have developed strategies to incorporate promotion of the employer brand via SNSs. We got some indications by the interviewed organizations that some of them are becoming more aware of their employer brand, for example Food Producer. As observers, we think that this development will grow to include all of the organizations. The reason why this has not yet been regarded as an issue is that a lot of the organizations are very popular employers. We do not suggest that this popularity will
decrease but maintaining a positive reputation requires hard work. One way of keeping ahead could therefore be to realize the full potential of the benefits that could be gained through using SNSs to strengthen the employer brand.

In all of the interviews, the future regarding the use of SNSs was discussed and some interviewees included the perspective of including employer branding in this process. Real Estate and HR Consultant explicitly stated that they expect the usage of SNSs to increase and that it will be more commonly used in recruitment processes in the future. Lewis et al. (2015, p. 18) and Doherty (2010, p. 12) both support this as they state that the usage of SNSs in recruitment processes appear to remain to be an important part of the recruitment process and is not a temporary trend. The interviewees express that this is especially salient when engaging in activities to attract potential applicants. This appears to mainly be related to activities to post job vacancies and activities to promote the employer brand. Based on this and the continuous technological development, we predict that the corporate SNS usage will increase even further in the future. The sooner the organizations adapts to this development, the greater advantage they will have. This is because they will have had time to develop strategies and experience. The interviewees further expressed that they think that the usage of SNSs for screening purposes will become more regularly used. However, the interviewees are more cautious about this part of integrating SNSs into the recruitment process in defiance to previous research. Several studies and researchers have found that SNSs are commonly used to screen applicants (Melanthiou et al., 2015, p. 43; Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 493; Vicknair et al., 2010 p. 7; Clark & Roberts, 2010, p. 509; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 8). According to the organizations that we have interviewed, using SNSs to screen applicants is not currently considered to be a beneficial aspect of SNSs. We think that one underlying reason for this could be that the organizations are at the early stages of incorporating SNSs and employer branding into their recruitment processes. They have therefore not considered how SNSs could be used in the screening process in the future. Another reason could be the cautiousness and insecurity of the reliability and the acceptability to use SNSs when screening applicants due to the norms of the Swedish society. This will be discussed more thoroughly in the theme “Barriers” below.

6.4 Barriers

As mentioned, a lot of the organizations are relatively new to the concept of using SNSs in recruitment and employer branding activities. Because of this, they expressed a reluctance or hesitation of integrating it into their operations. Therefore, a theme that we have identified from the empirical data is the reluctance and hesitation towards using SNSs in recruitment and employer branding activities. This proved to be especially true when talking about the selection and screening process, despite the results of previous research that claims that SNSs are commonly used to screen applicants (Melanthiou et al., 2015, p. 43; Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 493; Vicknair et al., 2010 p. 7; Clark & Roberts, 2010, p. 509; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 8). We believe that this could be a result of the organizations being in the early stages of implementing SNSs and as a result of this, they are unfamiliar with how to perform screening activities via these sites. According to Behrenz (2001, p. 275) Swedish organizations are more cautious when it comes to making recruitment decisions as he addressed that this cautiousness is based on the desire to avoid costly mistakes. This could help explain why the interviewed organizations are reluctant to using SNSs when screening applicants. This could also be a reason as to why many organizations are in the beginning of implementing strategies to use SNSs in recruitment and employer branding activities overall. Melanthiou et al.
(2015, p. 42) stated that some research has shown that organizations do not see information gained via SNSs as reliable. This issue was also raised during many of the interviews as the interviewees mentioned that the information might not be truthful or relevant for the recruitment process.

One barrier to implementing the use of SNSs in recruitment processes appeared to be an uncertainty and fear associated with using SNSs. Service expressed some uncertainty regarding the amount of applications that could be received when posting job vacancies on SNSs. Girard (2014, p. 110) stated that there is a large amount of individuals, and thereby potential job applicants, active on SNSs. With a large amount of individuals on these sites they could easily spread the information about a job vacancy throughout their networks, resulting in a larger amount of applications received by the organization. Lewis et al. (2015, p. 18) reasoned that a strategy to clearly define the organization should be implemented in order to avoid a large amount of unsuitable applications when advertising job vacancies on SNSs. The greatest concern discussed regarding the amount of applications was the fact that they could receive irrelevant applications. This is something that Service, Health and Food Distributor have noticed when publishing job vacancies via the employment office. As a large amount of individuals from different generations and target groups are actively using SNSs this concern was also directed towards posting job vacancies on these sites. The organizations that are more experienced with using SNSs in recruitment processes state that they do not perceive that the applications generated by this results in a vast amount of unsuitable applications. However, the uncertainty of the less experienced organizations remain, as more individuals frequently engage in these sites. It is possible to direct the advertisements to specific target groups when posting vacant positions on SNSs. We think that this could decrease the risk of receiving a vast amount of unsuitable applications, as only the targeted individuals would see the posts. We also believe that the fear of an unmanageable amount of applications is based on the lack of experience. This is because the more experienced organizations do not appear to have this fear. If the less experienced organizations were to try to use SNSs more extensively in their recruitment processes, they would probably realize that they would not have the same problem as with the employment office. In general, we believe that using SNSs in recruitment processes will become more common in the future as the trend shows a movement from traditional media to SNSs. The target group that can be reached via SNSs increases as these sites become more popular and more people engage in these. This also means that the target group that can be reached by job advertisements on these sites increases. Further, the trend towards SNSs becoming more frequently used could mean that the individuals that today apply for jobs via the employment office could transfer their attention to find vacant positions via SNSs. This could lead to the organizations receiving a vast amount of applications unsuitable for the vacant position once again in the future.

Further, State Agency mentioned the amount of resources needed to develop a strategy for how to use SNSs and this prolongs the time it takes to implement it in their daily operations. This is supported by Wazed and Ng (2015, p. 136) whom with their framework suggested the necessary actions needed to present the organization in a way that it attracts applicants. In order to attract applicants that are suitable for the job vacancy the organization needs to be able to present itself in a way that attracts these individuals. We think that this also could be a reason for why it has taken some time for the interviewed organizations to implement strategies for employer branding and recruitment via SNSs as it takes time to develop and implement strategies that will be
successful. Many of the interviewees mentioned the difficulty of knowing what to post on SNSs to draw attention from their followers. This could also be the reason when it comes to promoting the employer brand in order to attract potential applicants to the organization. Arachchige and Robertson (2011, p. 29) stated that organizations need to have a clear strategy regarding what image they are communicating, as it is this image that applicants will identify with and apply for job vacancies accordingly. This could also be a reason for why the organizations so far have been somewhat reluctant and insecure about using SNSs in their recruitment processes and employer branding activities as they first have to be sure about what image they are communicating. We believe that if the interviewed organizations were to further develop strategies for what image they want to communicate as an employer it will be easier for them to also develop strategies for how to communicate it externally. All of the interviewed organizations seem to have a desire to keep up with emerging trends. We therefore believe that the organizations that currently do not have a strategy for SNSs in recruitment processes or employer branding, will develop and implement it in the future. The insecurities regarding the usage of SNSs for these purposes seem to be relatively minor and as we could identify from the data, the organizations themselves consider these to be something that they can overcome.

Another barrier is the uncertainty of the benefits and privacy issues when using SNSs for recruitment and employer branding purposes. Many of the interviewed organizations expressed, to some extent, a restrictive approach when it comes to using SNSs to screen applicants in a recruitment process. Most commonly they mentioned that they have not gained any benefits from doing it up to this point. This could be why they have not regularly used SNSs as a screening tool. However, Food Producer mentioned the importance of being thorough in the recruitment process since recruiting an applicant that is not suitable for the vacant position could become costly. Thomas et al. (2015, p. 309) support this by stating that a reason for screen applicants comprehensively is to avoid liabilities if an inappropriate applicant is hired. Based on this, we believe that the use of SNSs in a screening process will become more common in the future due to the amount of information concerning applicants that is available on these sites. As SNSs become more regularly used in general in recruitment processes we think that this aspect will become used as a standard routine as well. Many of the interviewees raised the issue of privacy when screening applicants on SNSs, as it is easy to uncover information that is not relevant for the job position. It is easy for an employer to access personal information regarding applicants on SNSs, which could lead to discrimination in the recruitment process (Doherty, 2010, p. 13; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 9). This seems to be one of the reasons why the interviewed organizations are restrictive in their screening process. One of the organizations also mentioned hesitation due to the uncertainty of the laws regulating screening via SNSs. We have not been able to find any laws or regulations specifically regarding screening via SNSs. However, it is important for organizations to keep the discriminatory laws in mind, as they can be applicable to all types of discrimination.

Research states that information available on SNSs can affect the decision to hire an applicant due to the perceived gap between organizational identity and the applicant's identity (Smith and Kidder, 2010, pp. 494-495). It could also be affected by inappropriate information and affect the intention to hire or the salary that is offered (Bohnert & Ross, 2010, p. 345). On this matter all of the interviewees were clear that the information available on SNSs is often incomplete and that they do not base their decisions to recruit on information gathered from these sites. With the increased usage
of SNSs, we think that there is a possibility that this will change in the future. We believe that as SNSs get more integrated in recruitment and employer branding activities the legal system will eventually adapt in order to regulate these issues. Therefore, organizations need to keep up and be aware of any changes in case such laws or regulations become applicable to their activities. As of now, we perceive that the interviewed organizations are restrictive and careful enough to avoid activities that could be seen as discriminatory or unacceptable by applicants. Some research suggests that the younger generations are aware and accept that organizations view their profiles on SNSs (Davison et al., 2011, p. 155; Roth et al., 2016, p. 287). This was also something that was mentioned in some of the interviews but they seem to think that it is more acceptable to view and evaluate applicant’s profiles via their SNS activities if they have made the decision to link to it on their resumes. Research suggests that the different generations have different approaches to what information to share on SNSs (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 497; Thomas et al., 2015), and that this can have an impact on the younger generations employability (Clark & Roberts, 2010, p. 516). We did not find enough information to support or deny these statements in the cases of the organizations that we have interviewed. However, the organizations we talked to seemed to have the opinion that everyone is allowed to have a past and a life. Still, we believe that it is difficult to say if it is possible to fully disregard information on SNSs once you have seen it. It is therefore important to take these issues seriously and develop policies as to how SNSs are to be used in similar contexts. Even more so in the future as this technological development continuously makes people share more and more information about themselves on SNSs.

According to Girard et al. (2014, p. 110) recruitment activities via SNSs can be a step in building a relationship with potential job applicants as it gives the opportunity to have a dialogue between the two parties. However, in the empirical data we identified that only Food Producer and HR Consultant’s organizations have been in contact with job applicants via SNSs. The rest said that the applicants contact them either by email or phone and that the recruitment posts on SNSs have gained significantly less attention than corporate brand activities. We believe that this could be due to the lack of strategies for how to promote the employer brand and conduct recruitment processes via SNSs. To this point these activities have mainly been done to promote the corporate brand or as sporadic activities. With the development to be more active on SNSs we think that the dialogs and relationships between employers and potential applicants will increase. This means that it will be important for the organizations to communicate and build their strategies for these activities in order to keep up with the development.

6.5 Communication Channels

Another theme that emerged when analyzing the empirical data was the strategic decision to use different channels to communicate information to external stakeholders. If an organization chooses the wrong communication channel they will not be able to reach their target groups and this choice is therefore a vital aspect to take into consideration for any organization. Allden and Harris (2013, p. 40) stated that different communication channels will attract different target groups and Doherty (2010, p. 13) added that it is therefore important to define clear strategies for different SNSs. One aspect concerning the choice of channels addresses how organizations decide which communication channels to use in order to reach out to different target groups. We consider the phases in a recruitment process when these decisions are particularly salient to be when a job advertisement is being posted and during the screening process.
Another phase is of course when notifying the applicants if they got the job or not. However, all of the organizations claim that they do this in the same way. The person who receives the job offer as well as the applicants that have been to an interview will be notified via phone and the rest is notified through e-mail. Therefore, we do not consider this to be a choice of communication channel that needs to be taken into consideration at this point in time.

Facebook appears to be the most preferred SNS communication channel as all of the interviewees stated that they have made organizational profiles on Facebook. The choice to engage in Facebook seems to depend on the large number of Facebook users and the desire to utilize this to promote the corporate brand. Other benefits that can be gained from the presence on Facebook generally appears to be considered as subordinate to this. All of the organizations that we interviewed agreed that they can reach very diverse target groups with information posted on Facebook. When Facebook is used to post job advertisements, they expressed that it facilitates reaching people belonging to target groups suitable for junior positions. HR Consultant stated that Facebook could become an appropriate tool to reach the younger generations as these are more selective as to which jobs they apply for. Doherty (2010, p. 11) described the possibility to reach younger generations via SNSs as a benefit. Based on this, SNSs provides the possibility to reach them where they are spending a lot of time. Real Estate and Food Distributor expressed an uncertainty as to if this would continue to be the preferred SNS by the younger generation. This is because they are constantly finding new and popular SNSs and because their parents enter Facebook. This could be related to the younger generation’s need for stimulation described by Gayeski (2015, p. 10) in association to the difficulty to retain individuals belonging to generation Y and Z. Even if the specific traits of these generations could have an impact on this behavior, the fact that young people seek out and follow new trends to differentiate themselves from older people is natural. This phenomenon will always apply to young people everywhere. Further, Facebook is predicted to be used more extensively in the future to post job advertisements based on the information gathered from the interviewees. We predict that it will become increasingly important to identify which SNSs younger generations engages in if organizations want to target this segment. This is because of the rapid development of SNSs and the increasing adaptation of SNS technologies at young ages.

When talking more specifically about SNSs and recruitment, many organizations mentioned that they use LinkedIn. However, we realized that the tendency to consider using or actively use LinkedIn depends on the type of competences the organization is requesting. Service, Real Estate and HR Consultant agree that the target group on LinkedIn consists of people with a higher education and people with more experience suited for more senior positions. We think that this is because LinkedIn is specifically targeted towards career development. That focus contributes to attracting a specific set of followers that identifies with that image as Allden and Harris (2013, p. 40) argued above. The subject of traditional communication channels such as newspapers and the employment office were also discussed during the interviews. Food Producer, Health, Energy and Food Distributor seemed to agree that daily newspapers are decreasing in popularity and that the organization’s website is increasing in importance. We think that this development is a result of the technological development that has made people demand fast access to information. This has also made people prone to seek out information rather than waiting patiently to receive it from traditional media. Many of the interviewees also mentioned that they do not think that their target groups read the
daily newspaper. It is therefore considered to be an expensive and unnecessary communication channel for posting job advertisements. Using the employment office to post job advertisements also appears to decrease in popularity. However, the employment office will remain in the future unlike daily newspapers that we believe will be digitalized.

The strategies for using SNSs to post job advertisements appear to be under development for a lot of the organizations we interviewed while some have established policies and are actively using SNSs to post job advertisements. This could partly depend on the type of organizations we have interviewed. They are large organizations with positive reputations that has contributed to the perception of them as attractive employers and a constant flow of spontaneous applications. However, we believe that the current division of target groups between Facebook and LinkedIn will remain in the future. This is because of the specific profiles and image of these sites that attract different target groups depending on what image they identify with. The implication for posting job advertisements in the future is that it is more likely to find suitable applicants for specific and senior positions on LinkedIn compared to Facebook. We also predict that it will become more challenging to find suitable SNSs to attract younger generations. As mentioned above, they are more selective when they apply for jobs and we think that the development of new SNSs will make it harder for organizations to keep up with their activities. This makes it important for organizations to constantly develop strategies for emerging SNSs to keep up with the younger generations. The traditional communication channels will probably decrease even more and we do not see a future for posting job advertisements in paper editions of daily newspapers. Job advertisements in trade magazines may have a few years left as these have the ability to be more specifically targeted. Eventually, the digital technology will probably monopolize the information flow that is currently being shared with traditional media.

Research claims that SNSs are commonly used in the screening process (Melanthiou et al., 2015, p. 43; Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 493; Vicknair et al., 2010 p. 7; Clark & Roberts, 2010, p. 509; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 8). However, as previously discussed, this did not appear to be true for the organizations that we talked to. The organizations we have interviewed do not appear to have pronounced policies of using SNSs for this purpose. This seems to be closely connected to privacy issues as Smith & Kidder (2010, p. 495) talked about in their study. Many of the interviewees claimed that they take no or little consideration to the information on applicant’s SNS profiles in the recruitment process. They explained that this is because they perceive this information as private, lacking trustworthiness and relevance. This is in line with the arguments made in the research made by Melanthiou et al., (2015, p. 42) and El Ouirdi et al. (2016, pp. 246-247) regarding the perception of a lack of reliable information on SNSs as well as Thomas et al. (2015, pp. 313-314) who presented arguments about SNS screening being too intrusive. However, in the cases SNSs have been used to contribute to gain a brief overview of an applicant, Google or Facebook appears to be the most common channels. We believe that this is because these are the online searches that are most common, the most easily performed and can generate the most information about a person. Despite the reluctance of using SNSs to screen applicants we believe that it will increase in the future as mentioned in the theme “Barriers” above.

A lot of organizations mentioned that the low cost of posting and promoting entertaining content, important information and job advertisements is one of the reasons they choose to utilize SNSs as a communication channel instead of the traditional
channels. However, as Perry and Tyson (2008, p. 269) stated, it appears that it is not enough to rely on the presence on SNSs to take advantage of the potential benefits that could be raised from such a presence. When discussing the different communication channels that are used in a recruitment process, the aspect of what messages to post on these channels arose. The different organizations we have talked to appear to be aware of this and have different strategies to raise awareness and engage their followers in their SNS presences. Despite this, they do not seem to be fully aware of what will make their followers engage in a message posted on SNSs. As observers we could see some connections between what type of posts the organizations’ claim they have received positive feedback on and to what Carrillat et al. (2013, p. 489) stated in their research. Their theory is that SNS posts that contain a cognitive challenge, a brand focus and is entertaining will be most likely to generate a response with the followers (Carrillat et al. 2013, p. 489). Based on this we can interpret that these specific types of posts generate the positive feedback they experience.

The current posts containing these aspects are generally not related to job advertisement or the employer brand but rather focused around promoting products, services or the corporate brand. We assume that a contributing factor to this is that the job advertisements posted are being designed in the same way as when they are posted on, for example the organization's website. It is obviously important that a job advertisement is designed in such a way that it expresses the specifications of the job correctly and professionally. However, we believe that this has to be adapted to SNSs in order to make a significant impact and stand out from the constant flow of information. If the advertisement on SNSs successfully captures the interest of a potential applicant, they will not settle with the information in that post but will probably seek out more information on the organization’s website. This is because the website is commonly considered to be a starting point regarding information about the organization. The job advertisement on Facebook should perhaps not be seen as the sole source of information and should therefore be designed differently than the traditional job advertisements. As the target group is different on LinkedIn, we found that job advertisements on this site can be allowed to be more similar to the traditional design. This is because people on this site are often actively looking for a job and will therefore be more open to detailed information. We believe that the organizations will become better at designing SNS messages in the future as they get more experienced. The management will hopefully be more supportive and encourage the development and increase of the organizational SNS competence. Especially since we predict that the communication via these channels will become important in the future. Health explained that they make sure to post important information on Facebook as their customers do not visit their website long enough to notice the same information. We see this as an indication of how SNSs can facilitate the communication between organizations and their stakeholders now and in the future.

6.6 Implementation

State Agency and Energy raised the matter of collaboration between different business units, or lack thereof, in association to the discussion about implementing SNSs in recruitment processes. In many organizations the HR-department is in charge of designing the job advertisements and the contact with applicants while the communication department is in charge of the communication channels. We realized when analyzing the data that organizations that have the ability to initiate collaborative projects across business units seems to be more successful when it comes to developing and integrating SNSs in recruitment processes. This collaboration might be more
difficult to integrate into the operations of organizations with distinct subdivisions and bureaucratic traits. It is crucial that the management supports these activities and makes them a priority to promote the development of SNSs integration strategies. In support of Girard et al. (2014, p.117) that claimed that a success factor is a supportive management, the organizations that see the integration of SNSs as a given do appear to be more inclined to have a supportive management. These organizations have come further in the development of SNS strategies overall. Furthermore, organizations that have recently experienced a greater interest in the matter by the management are stating that they are experiencing an accelerated development.

Lewis et al. (2015, p. 18) suggested that a clearly defined SNS recruitment strategy is important to avoid unqualified applicants applying for the job. In addition, Doherty (2010, p. 13) stated that the development of strategies to decide which SNSs to use is vital. Henderson and Bowley’s (2010, p. 249) research showed that the presence on SNSs can be very time consuming. The previous research clearly focuses on the importance of developing strategies to implement SNSs in the recruitment successfully. However, State Agency said that they feel that they have a limited ability to implement recruitment through SNSs. We identified that the main factor that contributed to the feeling of restricted abilities to implement SNSs as a part of the recruitment process is the lack of time. State Agency also mentioned that they would need more time or additional staff in order to be able to focus on developing and maintaining a strategy to successfully incorporate SNSs into the daily operations. This supports the findings made by Melanthiou et al. (2015, p. 42) as well as Allden and Harris (2013, p. 40) even though they also found that lack of funding and conflicts with the organizational culture to be two additional important factors. Service stated that they experienced some internal resistance that could be a cause of the organizational culture. However, the interviewees overall attitudes was to strive towards integrating SNSs as best they can with the resources they already got by finding short moments in their workdays or by collaborating with different business units. This implies that there is a desire to use SNSs as a tool in the recruitment process. We make this assumption based on the fact that the interviewees that work for organizations that have not yet integrated SNSs are willing to spend time in between other tasks to discover the possibilities associated with its use. As mentioned, as SNSs become even more integrated in the everyday lives of people everywhere, the importance of them as communication channels will be realized. We believe that this will motivate the management of organizations to become more supportive to the integration of SNSs. Girard et al. (2014, pp. 108-109) stated that it is important to develop strategies to facilitate the use of SNSs in recruitment processes to promote the employer brand as these activities are interlinked. As a result of this, it would be beneficial for the HR- and communication departments to collaborate. This will in turn make it easier to develop strong, clear strategies regarding the use of SNSs in recruitment processes.

Another aspect to keep in mind when planning to implement SNSs in an organizational context is the interplay of the corporate and employer brand. The organizations that we met either claimed that they experience a strong connection between their corporate- and employer brand or expressed opinions that indicated that this was the case. This is because a lot of the organizations started talking about their reputation and corporate brand when we asked them questions about their employer brands. This suggests that the corporate and employer brand are interlinked. Sivertzen et al. (2013, p. 474) came to the conclusion that the employer brand consists of activities to strengthen the organization’s reputation. By doing so, we argue that you also strengthen the corporate
brand. The activities to strengthen the corporate and employer brand are partly interlinked because they are both based on the organizational values. This is because when performing activities to strengthen the corporate brand, besides pure product advertisements, the communication consists of an aspect of establishing a positive reputation about the brand. Consequently, this communication becomes a part of the overall image of the organization. As Arachchige and Robertson (2011, p. 29) argues that applicants that identifies with the communicated image will be attracted to the organization, this also becomes a part of the collected image of the employer brand.

We believe that the organizations we interviewed, due to the Swedish culture and norms, are aware that the way they treat their employees can have an impact on consumers’ perceptions of the organization. This perception, in turn, has the tendency to influence the general Swedish consumer’s buying decision. Just as the Swedish consumer wants to know that the products they are buying are of good quality, they want to know that the people who made it have a fair working environment. Energy made us realize how easy technology makes it to evaluate your employer anonymously and publicly. As technology further develops, this can have severe impacts on the reputation of organizations as employers but also on the consumers’ perceptions of the organization. Because of this, we believe that it is important for organizations to not only focus on marketing campaigns of their products and services, but also consider the care of their employees as a step in marketing themselves. The organizations we talked to have well-developed strategies for such internal employer branding activities. It will be important that they continuously make efforts to improve these strategies in order to keep this current advantage. Sivertzen et al. (2013, p. 473) suggest that a strong employer brand is helpful to attract potential applicants. The interviewees talked about internal activities to increase the staff welfare and these will therefore be important in order to ensure that the organizations will remain to be considered attractive employers in the future. Research also states that if the organization successfully defines their brand image, the perceived risk of being employed by the organization is decreased (Wilden et al., 2010, p. 65; Sivertzen et al., 2013, p. 479; Cable & Turban, 2003, p. 2259). Refining the corporate and employer brand is therefore another area of improvement to take into consideration. As mentioned, many of the interviewed organizations are popular employers, and organizations in general. An indication of this is the large amount of spontaneous applications that some of the organizations receive. However, we believe that it is important to be aware of these aspects and to make constant improvements in order to maintain the positive reputation.

Energy described that the corporate and employer brand should work to strengthen each other. The collected image of the organization can clearly be a powerful tool to market the organization both as employers and to promote the products or services they provide. The majority of the organizations that we interviewed expressed that they do not have strategies for how to use SNSs to promote the employer brand. Instead they claimed that they use SNSs to market their products or services and to promote the corporate brand. Sivertzen et al.’s (2013, p. 479) research found that SNSs can facilitate the development of a positive reputation. We therefore believe that these opportunities should be explored and developed for employer branding purposes. A well-developed and clearly defined strategy could contribute to benefits in the future. This is because of the “war for talent” due to increased globalization described by Chambers et al. (1998, p. 47) and the difficulties retaining workforce belonging to generation Y and Z as
discussed by Gayeski (2015, p. 10). We believe that they have the ability to get a head start if they were to engage in the development of such strategies now.

6.7 SNS Recruitment Strategy and Outcomes Framework

We have developed a framework based on the findings from analyzing the discussed themes in this chapter in line with the purpose of this study. It consists of the most important aspects that we have identified by analyzing and discussing the empirical data to successfully implement SNSs as a recruitment tool. The framework highlights actions the management needs to take into consideration when implementing SNSs for recruitment purposes (see Figure 5).

![Diagram of SNS Recruitment Strategy and Outcomes Framework]

**Managerial decisions (Managerial support)**
- Be aware of the importance
- Develop guidelines
- Encourage collaboration
- Facilitate collaboration

**Internal activities**
- Internal employer branding
- Positive work environment
- Employee satisfaction
- Collaboration between business units
- Overcome internal resistance

**SNS recruitment strategies**
- External employer branding
- Choose SNS channels
- Trustworthy and personal messages
- Communicate organizational values

**Benefts (Outcomes)**
- Time and resource savings
- Target suficient amount of suitable applicants
- Get a head start

Figure 5: SNS Recruitment Strategy and Outcomes

The technological development as well as the societal trend to spend more time online will force organizations to engage in activities to interact with customers and job seekers via SNSs. We have found that the fundamental aspect to successfully implement SNSs into the daily operations of an organization is the managerial decision to support such actions. We argue that the management's awareness of the importance to implement SNSs is a critical success factor. The awareness of this importance contributes to a desire to support actions to engage in SNSs. The management should provide support by making general decisions and develop guidelines regarding communication style and the image that should be portrayed based on the organizational values. These guidelines should extend to communication style used internally, as well as externally. The management should further permit and encourage relevant business units such as the HR- and communication departments to collaborate. By facilitating the collaboration, uncertainties regarding the organizational SNS usage can be eliminated. This is important in the next step of the process, internal activities, where it becomes vital to establish and maintain a positive working environment and high employee satisfaction. Internal employer branding and activities to unite different business units are some examples of how to do this. A strong internal employer brand is a foundation for overcoming internal resistance of implementing SNSs as a recruitment tool. With a
strong internal employer brand it is possible for the organization to extend the focus to external activities. When moving forward in the process to create SNS recruitment strategies, using the employees in the external communication conveys trustworthy and personal messages that job seekers can relate to. The personal aspect in combination with the organizational values should be communicated externally in order to promote and strengthen the external employer brand. A strong and distinguished external employer brand is essential to attract applicants suitable for the organization. In order to communicate the strong external employer brand, the SNS recruitment strategic planning should further include the choice of what SNSs to use in the recruitment process as a means to spread the desired message to potential applicants. When implementing strategies for recruitment activities via SNSs benefits such as time and resource savings and the ability to target a sufficient amount of suitable applicants can be reached. If these strategies are adopted early the organizations can get a head start and the experience needed to gain and maintain a competitive recruitment strategy suitable for the future.
7. Conclusion

We will initiate this chapter with a discussion about the general findings of this study, which will allow us to answer the research questions. This is followed by a more specific insight into what theoretical and practical contributions have been made by this study. Finally, suggestions for future research is presented and discussed.

7.1 General Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to gain a holistic understanding about the role employer branding and SNSs have in recruitment processes from a managerial perspective. To achieve the objective of fulfilling the purpose, three research questions were developed. The first research question concerned how organizations use SNSs to strengthen the employer brand in recruitment processes. Our findings indicated that the majority of the interviewed organizations do not consciously use SNSs with the purpose to strengthen the employer brand or in recruitment processes. However, as observers we could see that the efforts the organizations made to strengthen the corporate brand through SNSs contributed to the employer brand being strengthened. We concluded that this effect could be greater if organizations were to become aware of the concept employer branding and develop strategies to specifically promote it via SNSs. The second research question addressed how organizations use SNSs to attract applicants. We found that the employer brand was one of the aspects that contributed to this. Even though all of the organizations may not have been aware of the specific term employer branding, they talked about their reputation. This indicated that employer branding is mostly related to the SNS recruitment process when it comes to the attraction stage. Another aspect was that attraction activities through SNSs have the ability to reach a large audience and different target groups depending on which SNS is being used. Therefore, the organizations adapt what SNS to use depending on which position is being filled. The third and final research question was how organizations use SNSs to select applicants. The organizations we interviewed stated that they do not actively use SNSs to screen applicants and that they do not take the information gathered from SNSs into consideration in a selection process. We concluded that this might be due to the novelty and uncertainty of using SNSs in an organizational context in combination with the strict rules and regulations regarding discrimination in Sweden as well as the Swedish culture and norms. Due to these factors, we think that it will take longer for screening activities through the use of SNSs to be socially accepted compared to attraction activities.

We have successfully gained a deeper understanding of how HR-managers use SNSs in recruitment processes and concluded that employer branding is mainly included in the attraction stage. Currently, SNSs main role in the recruitment process of the interviewed organizations is to be a complementary communication channel to promote vacant positions. The attitude towards using SNSs in this way appears to be increasingly accepted or already seen as a given. Reasons for this is the low cost of posting job advertisements on SNSs compared to traditional media and the ability to reach large target groups. Based on the knowledge we gained from answering the research questions, we developed a framework that explains necessary actions to successfully implement SNSs as a recruitment tool from a managerial point of view. The fundamental premise for successfully implementing SNSs as a recruitment tool is the managerial decision to support such actions. This is followed by establishing a strong
internal employer brand before extending the focus towards strengthening the external employer brand to attract suitable applicants.

7.2 Theoretical contributions

The fields of recruitment and employer branding activities via SNSs are scattered and previous research has been without a holistic focus on these activities. There has also been a lack of empirical studies within the field of recruitment processes via SNSs (Davison et al., 2011, p. 154). To the best of our knowledge, there has been no previous research that combines recruitment and employer branding activities within a Swedish context. As the Swedish employers are considered to be cautious in a recruitment process (Behrenz, 2001, p. 275), our results differ from studies made in other cultures. This is valuable as it nuances the previous results and provides an alternative insight to these research fields. The study also provides a more restrictive perspective of the screening part of the recruitment process, which adds to the perspective presented by previous research (Melanthiou et al., 2015, p. 43; Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 493; Vicknair et al., 2010 p. 7; Clark & Roberts, 2010, p. 509; Lewis et al., 2015, p. 8). The conducted study provides a first insight into the interaction and link between employer branding and recruitment activities via SNSs. Previous research has discussed employer branding in relation to the recruitment process through SNSs but not how these are connected. Our study has further elaborated on the connection between these fields and came to the conclusion that this connection is mainly salient in the attraction stage of the recruitment process. Further, El Ouirdi et al. (2016, p. 241) argued that more studies should be conducted from a managerial perspective. This means that our study additionally contributes to these fields as it accentuates the managerial perspective when implementing recruitment strategies that incorporates employer branding and SNSs. The study also provides a framework that further highlights the important aspects of SNS recruitment strategy from a managerial perspective. Finally, this study contributes to the theoretical field as it incorporates organizations that both actively use SNSs for the purpose of employer branding and recruitment activities and organizations that do not use SNSs to the same extent. Melanthiou et al. (2015, p. 45) stated that a comparative study that includes organizations that both do and do not use SNSs for these purposes should be conducted. As our study includes both types of organizations it further displays the differences between these groups, which contributes to a holistic picture of the issues concerning both fields.

7.3 Practical contributions

One objective of this study was to enable the management to develop strategies to attract suitable job applicants by using SNSs as a recruitment tool. By providing an insight into different organizations current strategies and attitudes, we hope to inspire the contributing organizations as well as other organizations to engage in SNSs. We have also identified barriers that need to be addressed in order to succeed with the implementation and the benefits that can be gained by doing so. Encouraging collaboration between different business units, especially the HR- and Communication departments, appear to be vital in order to facilitate the implementation and avoid internal conflicts. Internal and external employer branding had been discussed and we concluded that it is important to anchor external activities internally. Research shows that the usage of SNSs in recruitment processes increases (Lewis et al., 2015, p. 18, Doherty, 2010, p. 12) and it will therefore become important to implement strategies regarding how to handle this development. It may also be beneficial for job seekers to
be aware of how organizations use SNSs in their recruitment processes. Partly in order to engage in the SNSs that organizations use to post job advertisements and edit their profiles in order to become more attractive. Taking a broader societal perspective, the organizational implementation of SNSs in recruitment processes might lead to decreased barriers for people in general to apply for a job. This is because the job advertisements are visible in a relaxed and familiar environment. We argue that this might appeal to people who have not yet entered the workforce or have been unemployed for a longer period of time for some reason. For these segments, the barriers to actively contact organizations or contact the employment office can be high.

The interviewed organizations stated that they do not currently use SNSs to select or screen applicants and that the information on SNSs is not taken into consideration in a screening process. We think that it is important for job seekers to be aware of the current situation but also be aware that this might change in the future. As organizations become more active on SNSs, the risk of them adapting these sites as a screening tool increases. This also entails a greater risk of unethical behavior related to discrimination issues. It is therefore important for the management of organizations that engages in selection or screening activities via SNSs to develop strict guidelines to make sure that no laws are violated.

7.4 Future research

There is a lack of previous empirical research in the SNS recruitment research field (Ollington et al., 2013; El Ouirdi et al., 2016, p. 240). We therefore consider any empirical study conducted in this field to be beneficial. By conducting this study, we got the impression that recruitment processes has been conducted in a similar way for a very long time. The difference is that there has been a development where the digitalization has made it possible to post job vacancies, send in applications and archive these applications digitally. With the addition of SNSs increasing popularity as a recruitment tool, researchers need to study this new phenomenon. The future generations that have grown up with SNSs might have a different approach to using these and to what SNSs they choose to engage in. This will be interesting to understand when they enter the workforce and become hiring managers. We did not take the interviewee’s age into consideration in this study, which might have indicated such a development. A comparative study, exploring the different approaches to the organizational use of SNSs between different generations can therefore be interesting to study in the future.

To the best of our knowledge, no other studies in this research field have been conducted in Sweden. We got some indications that the use of SNSs for recruitment purposes might be different depending on what geographical area of Sweden is studied. However, we focused our study on organizations in the north of Sweden and this thesis therefore lacks such insights. It could therefore be interesting to investigate if such a difference exists and what causes it. We had the opportunity to interview female HR-managers but this study lacks the perspective of male HR-managers. However, we do not expect the result to differ depending on the sex of the manager. Other interesting managers to include in future research could be communication department managers and CEO’s. These perspectives may be beneficial to include in future research. It might also be interesting to explore Swedish job applicants or employees’ perceptions and attitudes regarding the use of SNSs as a recruitment tool. Further, we have not identified any significant differences as to how organizations from different industries use SNSs.
for recruitment purposes. Our study includes organizations from different industries but lacks the insight that could be gained from a larger sample or a large sample of organizations from the same industry. This could therefore be something to address in future research.

We came to the conclusion that employer branding in combination with recruitment via SNSs are highly integrated with each other in the attraction stage of the recruitment process. To confirm this finding, other empirical studies should further investigate this connection in order to elaborate on its significance. An aspect that this study lacks. We could see that employer branding is integrated in recruitment activities via SNSs and confirm some of the benefits but not fully explain the significance of this.
8. Truth Criteria

In this concluding chapter, the truth criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are discussed in relation to our study.

When evaluating a study with an interpretivist stance there are a number of criteria to use in order to determine the quality of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 219) presented four criteria to use when evaluating a qualitative study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The credibility is decided depending upon how connected the perception that the respondents have of social constructs and how the researcher interprets the respondents’ perceptions (Mertens, 2005, p. 254). The credibility is an important aspect to take into consideration when there are more than one social construct possible (Bryman, 2011, p. 354). We have made efforts to decrease the risk of misinterpreting the information gathered in the interviews as much as possible. This has mainly been done by writing down specific information regarding the interviews directly after the meeting. The information gathered helped us gain a clearer picture of the HR-managers and decreased the risk of us misinterpreting information from our transcripts. To further decrease the risk of misinterpretation the transcripts were reviewed multiple times separately and then compared to ensure that we reached the same conclusions regarding the collected data. As the interviews were conducted in Swedish, it could further increase the risk of misinterpretation when the data was translated to English. However, this has been decreased, as we are bilingual and therefore have the knowledge to translate the data as close to the original statements as possible. Both of us have gone through the transcripts and reviewed and compared them to the empirical data to ensure that no misinterpretations have occurred when translating the data. However, there are no specific rules as to how a qualitative study can be established as credible (Mertens, 2005, p. 254).

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 297) suggest that the transferability of a study is concerned with the applicability of the study to another setting and if it is generalizable. Since our study is qualitative and with an inductive approach, the aim is to gain deeper understanding within these scattered fields and not to generalize it. As we do not want to generalize the results but instead increase the knowledge within these fields it is difficult to make the results transferable to another setting. However, some results are in line with previous research, which indicate that there are similarities with studies conducted in other countries. The developed framework has to be more closely examined to determine its transferability.

Further, it is important to determine the dependability of a qualitative study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp. 316-317). Assessing the dependability of a study is done by evaluating the research process and how extensively the decisions are documented (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 324). Since our study has an interpretivist stance, has inductive characteristics, is qualitative, and conducted with semi-structured interviews it is difficult to gain the same results from a new study. However, we have tried to present as much details as possible regarding our personal preconceptions, the interviewees, the way the interviews were conducted as well as the process of analyzing the data. To avoid misinterpretation between the researchers of this study, the data was first reviewed separately and then together to ensure that it had been interpreted in a similar
way. In cases of disagreement, we revisited the transcripts and our personal notes to represent the interviewees as fairly to their statements and expressed perceptions as possible.

Finally, the confirmability of the study is evaluated, which examines the presented findings and confirms that it is supported by the collected data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 318). We have presented as much information as possible regarding how the data has been analyzed. Further, we included citations from the transcribed interviews in our empirical data, which allows the reader to see the data from which the interpretations originate. We also included the interviewee names in the analysis to ease the possibility to connect it with the empirical data.
Reference List


Appendix 1 - Interview Guide

• Hur går er rekryteringsprocess till?  
(Describe your recruitment process)

• Hur tänker ni kring användandet av sociala medier inom företaget?  
(What is your philosophy regarding social media within the organization?)

• Har ni några riktlinjer för användandet av sociala medier?  
(Do you have any guidelines related to the use of social media?)

• Vad använder ni sociala medier till?  
(For what purposes do you use social media?)

• Vad använder ni generellt för olika strategier för att nå olika målgrupper?  
(What are your general strategies to reach different target groups?)

• Hur arbetar ni med att visa upp att ni är en attraktiv arbetsgivare?  
(How do you show that you are an attractive employer?)

• Har ni någon uppfattning om ert rykte som arbetsgivare?  
(Do you have a conception of your reputation as an employer?)

• Hur skapar ni kontakt med arbetssökande?  
(How do you establish contacts with job seekers?)

• Upplever ni att arbetssökare har någon inställning till er närvaro på sociala medier?  
(Do you experience that job seekers have an attitude to your presence on social media?)

• Vilka typer av lediga tjänster lägger ni ut på sociala medier?  
(What types of job vacancies do you post on social media?)

• Hur granskas kandidater till lediga tjänster?  
(How are applicants for job vacancies screened?)

• Vad använder ni för olika strategier för att granska olika typer av kandidater?  
(What types of strategies do you use to screen different types of applicants?)

• Vad har ni för riktlinjer när det kommer till granskandet av kandidater?  
(What guidelines do you have concerning the screening process?)

• Har ni någon uppfattning om huruvida kandidater är medvetna om er granskningsprocess?  
(Do you have a conception of the applicants’ awareness of your screening process?)