MASTER THESIS



# SOCIAL MEDIA A COMMUNICATION TOOL FOR EMPLOYER ATTRACTIVENESS CRITERIA IN THE EMPLOYER BRANDING CONCEPT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Anniek van Buren s1029304

FACULTY OF MANAGENENT AND GOVERNANCE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT

## EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

Dr. K. Zalewska-Kurek Dr. A.C. Bos-Nehles

## **UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.**

16/10/2012

## Social media a communication tool for employer attractiveness criteria in the employer branding concept: An exploratory study

Anniek van Buren, University of Twente, the Netherlands

**Abstract** This study explores what attracts talents to organizations in the employer branding concept. In-depth interviews with master students revealed 88 attractiveness criteria, offering valuable insights into what information is sought by talents and what they perceive as an attractive employer. The instrumental-symbolic framework was used to structure the criteria. Because of the increased and worldwide use of social media, this study also investigates how social media can be used as a communication tool for the employer branding attractiveness criteria. Therefore a conceptual framework was developed and tested. To select the organizations for the testing an extensive selection method was used. First organizations from different Fortune 500 rankings were selected. Next, they were tested on their social media activities and finally they were tested on the strength of their employer branding activities. Results show that social media page(s) were missing attractiveness criteria and that improvements can be made. This study contributes to scientific research by providing new insights into the usages of social media as a communication tool for employer branding. The discussion reveals theoretical and managerial implications as well as future research opportunities.

**Keywords** employer branding; organizational attractiveness; attracting global talent; social media; organizational image

#### Introduction and research objectives

Organizations are operating in global competitive and volatile environments. In order to be successful in these environments, organizations depend highly on their employees. The resource based view (RBV) explains that one of the organizations most important assets are their employees. According to Michaels, Handfield-Jones, and Axelrod (2001) talents are the critical driver of organizational success. However, Ployhart (2006) argue that talent shortages are a problem and organizations are struggling to attract the right talent, with the right skills into the right jobs. Tarique & Schuler (2010) argue that worldwide competition for talent is and remains a critical agenda item. Despite the ongoing crisis in which organizations are downsizing and reducing their workforce, there still does not exist any talents surplus (Farndale, Scullion & Sparrow, 2009). According to Laumer, Eckhardt and Weitzel

(2010) in times of crisis, the same problems will exist, that HR managers need to solve as in regular times, however with smaller budgets. To overcome this struggle, marketing principles of brand management have been introduced to fields of HRM (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Organizations try to create a strong employer brand, in order to differentiate themselves and become an attractive employer. However, empirical researches into employer branding and attracting employees are scarce. Wilden, Gudergan and Lings (2010) argue that there is relatively little research conducted to explore the role that branding plays in attracting employees. Therefore their research focussed on a better understanding of branding in attracting human capital and what influence the perceptions of job seekers. In addition, Lievens (2007) explored the importance of instrumental and symbolic beliefs of employer branding. There are researchers that give

more insight into employer branding and attracting global talent. But in-depth research to what really matters to global talents, and what it is that they care about are limited.

Because of the increase and worldwide use of social media, organizations could use social media in order to attract highly skilled talent globally. Social media can be used as a communication tool to promote organizations employer brand. Walker, Field, Giles, Bernerth and Short (2011) claim that the use of media to communicate organizational information increases the likelihood that job seekers develop preferred image beliefs. Research shows that organizations are already using their corporate website to promote their brand and themselves as a good employer to attract talent (Barber, 2006). Different types of social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, and others) can give the employer brand more familiarity. According to Storbel, Tumasjan and Welpe (2010) it enables potential employees to become more knowledgeable about the organization. Therefore the use of social media might help to attract talent globally. Unfortunately this effect has been neglected within research. In addition, Breaugh (2008) argue that there is little known about what type of information is sought first by people looking for a job on the Internet. So more in-depth research is needed to what makes an employer attractive, what is important in employer branding and what information is sought by potential applicants. Despite the talent challenge organizations face, Breaugh (2008) argue that variables like attracting applicant attention have not received any attention from recruitment researchers.

This research explores what is important in employer branding and what information is sought by potential applicants, in order to become an attractive employer. Next, this information will be used to create a framework, which can be used by organizations to develop their social media page as a communication tool for employer branding. Thereafter the framework will be tested for organizations that use social media to communicate their employer brand. The research consists out of two main parts, also leading to two research questions:

## What are attractiveness criteria in employer branding?

How do companies communicate the attractiveness criteria through social media?

#### Theoretical background

More and more organizations are operating in a global environment. According to Beechler & Woodward (2009) these environments are very demanding, competitive, volatile, complex and dynamic to operate in. As a result organizations are facing a lot of challenges in these environments. Therefore organizations try to attract and retain highly skilled talent who are able to manage and operate in these complex and dynamic environments. In addition, Ployhart (2006) argue that work has become more knowledge based and requires more competent employees. The author mentions that organizations need to cope with cultural differences, demographic changes, and diverse labour agreements. Michaels et al., (2001) argue that the demand for talents is necessary because they are seen as a critical driver of organizational performance, future success, competitive advantage, but also the ability of organizations to attract, retain, and develop talent. This is agreed on by the resource based view (RBV), which argues that human capital brings value to the organization. According to Barney (1991) the RBV argues that there are specific resources which are very important to organizations, in order to create a sustained competitive advantage, resources that are valuable, rare,

imperfectly imitable and not substitutable. One of the resources is people or the human capital pool. Moreover, Barney (1991) argues that human assets are the primary source of value, growth, and sustained competitive advantage. Thus, it seems that organizations operating in a global complex environment need talents with unique abilities or managerial talents in order to create and gain a sustained competitive advantage. But organizations have difficulties with attracting talents and there seems to be a shortage of talents who are able to manage and operate in a global competitive environment (McDonnell, 2011). Because of these struggles the "global workforce" (Tarique & Schuler, 2010) received more attention and one major topic has been around Global Talent Management (GTM). According to Tarique and Schuler (2010) GTM consists out of three main parts; attract, develop, and retain talent and these three activities are the hallmark of the GTM system. The focus within this paper is on attracting talent. As it seems that more and more organizations find it hard to attract the right talent with the right competencies for the right jobs. Schuler, Jackson and Tarique (2011) argue that organizations need to find ways to make them more attractive and differentiate themselves from the competitors.

The attractiveness of an organization is important for several reasons. According to the social identity theory (SIT) (Lievens , Hoye & Anseel, 2007), people like to identify themselves with the organization they (want to) work for and develop a preference for organizations that they can perceive as positive and attractive. Love and Singh (2011) argue that the more positive potential employees become about an organization, the more likely they will be part of the organization. According to Joo and McLean (2006) organizations with a positive reputation will attract more potential applicants and are more likely to retain them. As a consequence, organizations should create an image that attracts potential talents, they can relate to, they would be proud of and identified with. According to, Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) employer attractiveness is; "the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization" (p. 151). Which is agreed on by Highhouse, Lievens and Sinar (2003) who argue that company attractiveness is; "reflected in individuals' affective and attitudinal thoughts about particular companies as potential places for employment" (p. 989). Employer attractiveness is about how potential employees see the organization, imaging how it would be to work there, what their belief and thoughts are, and at the end influence their decision if they want to work there or not.

Organizations need to understand which values attract the targeted talents. Therefore marketing principles of brand management have been introduced to fields of human resource management (HRM) (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). In marketing, branding tries to create a reputation, make people care about brands, so that people become loyal to brands and want to be associated with that brand. According to Aaker (1991) brand awareness makes people feel comfortable with that brand and helps to be selected over an unknown brand. Thus, a brand is a promise of commitment and performance, it assures consumers that they made the right decision and helps increase consumer satisfaction (Berthon, et al., 2005).

Via a brand name, organizations get recognized. According to Aaker (1991) it is important to manage and maintain a brand name. This brand name represents an important intangible asset, namely the equity. In marketing, brand equity creates brand

5

knowledge and this brand knowledge provides important benefits to consumers. According to Wilden et al., (2011) it gives consumers information, reduce risk, and gives them confidence in the brand. So brand equity provides value to the customers as well as to the organization.

#### **Employer Branding**

As discussed, these marketing principles can also be applied to HRM policies and practices, helping to create an employer brand. As a result the consumer brand equity theory of Aaker (1991) has been applied in organizational recruitment, suggesting that if organizations can create a favourable and unique brand image, they will be more successful in their recruitment (e.g., Turban & Cable, 2003; Ployhart, 2006; Walker et al., 2010). Employer branding is about building an image that it is a great and desirable place to work and in addition it helps to differentiate the organization of its competitors. As Barber (1998) argues, it is critical that organizations recruitment activities attract the attention of potential talents.

Barrow, House, Housely, Jenner and Martin (2007) say;

"Employer branding is not a project or a programme. Nor is it a rush to freshen up your recruitment advertising. It's a way of business life. Understanding what engages people and being clear about what an organisation offers and does not, means that you are more likely to recruit and therefore retain the right people." (p. 6)

Employer branding is in essence a three step process (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Lievens, 2007); (1) develop a value proposition of the employer; (2) externally marketing the value proposition and creating an image for outsiders; and (3) internally marketing the employer brand and build an identity among organizational members. In the view of attracting global talent the first two steps are important.

First, the employer value proposition(s) (EVPs) provides information on different organizational aspects, like culture, values, features of current employees, etc. It offers an image of the organization, how it is perceived as an employer and what it can offer to its employees. Wilden et al., (2010) argue that EVPs gives organizations the opportunity to clearly communicate organizational values, employment values and expectations to potential global talent. Additionally the authors mention; "clear brand signals leads to clearer brand images in the potential employee's mind and (...) ultimately increases employer attractiveness" (p. 65). Thus the EVPs actually define what the organizational values are, why it is a great place to work and taking away any fears that exist, by creating an image.

In order to create a successful EVP, Barrow et al. (2007) argue that three things are important; (1) the image, the beliefs of individuals about the organization; (2) identity, how working life in the organization is, the internal truth; and (3) profile, the image the organization tries to portray, including the corporate brand and the CEO messages. Organizations want to be portrayed in a positive light and the profile refers to how the organizations want to be seen by potential talents. Whereas according to Barrow et al., (2007) the image refers to how do (potential) employees perceive the organization. Schuler (2004) mention that the image of the organization is formed through the information that (potential) employees receive. So based on the received information (potential) employees imagine how it would be to be employed and develop certain believes about the organization. Knox and

Freeman (2006) argue that those employer brand images are associations that make an organization unique as an employer. But of course the reflection of the image needs to be consistent with the identity of the organization.

The Instrumental-Symbolic framework (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003) enables organization to categorize their attractiveness criteria. Hoye and Saks (2011) argue that the instrumental-symbolic framework helps understand the criterion of organizational attractiveness. According to Wilden et al., (2010) potential employees search for observable information or benefits, like location and salary, in assessing the attractiveness of a prospective employer. Information that is easy to find. According to Caligiuri, Colakogku, Cerdin, and Kim (2010) important drivers of organizational attractiveness are people and job characteristics. This information is also referred to as instrumental benefits. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) argue that it describes an organization in objective and tangible terms. But potential employees look for more benefits, which are harder to see. Therefore Wilden et al., (2010) argue that potential employees make use of information substitutes, like employer brand signals, in order for potential employees to see characteristics related to experience and trust. These characteristics are referred to as symbolic benefits and according to Lievens and Highhouse (2003) it is intangible and more imaginary. Lievens (2007) divided this benefit into: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. But it is possible to argue that by these terms the benefit remains vague. Therefore the characteristics mentioned by Caliguiri et al., (2010); employer reputation, culture and remuneration & advancement are good examples. The categories of Lievens (2007) can be subdivided into these characteristics.

Sincerity, referring to warmth and acceptance can be part of culture. *Excitement*, referring to trendy can also be part of culture. *Competence*, referring to secure and success can be part of remuneration & advancement. *Sophistication*, referring to upper class and prestigious can be part of employer reputation. *Ruggedness*, masculine and though can also be part of employer reputation.

These characteristics and benefits give potential employees the opportunity to become familiar with the organization as an employer and in addition the organization can show that it is a desirable place to work. It can help organizations to differentiate themselves from competitors. According to Wilden et al., (2010) these employer brand signals provide potential employees orientation during the selection process; it functions as a quality indicator and can give organizations an image of "employer of choice." As argued before, according to the social identity theory (SIT) (Lievens et al., 2007), people like to identify themselves with the organization they (want to) work for. People would love to work for an organization that is perceived as a positive and attractive employer.

The second step in the employer branding process is externally marketing the value proposition. By marketing the value proposition, the targeted applicants can get familiar with the organizations employer brand, indicate what makes the organization distinctive and a desirable place to work. In addition targeted applicants might create a preferred image. By externally marketing the value proposition, organizations try to create awareness around the organization and their values. Different sources can be used to externally marketing the value proposition, for example; advertising, free publicity, professional and academic publications, public relations activities and "best employer"

surveys, like the Fortune's 100 best companies to work for (Love and Singh, 2011). But it also can be achieved by the means of social media. In accordance to Bondarouk, Ruël and Weekhout (2012) the usages of social media as a communication tool for employer branding has not been investigated.

#### Social media

Almost everyone uses Internet and according to Kim, Jeong and Lee (2010) hundreds of millions people all over the world are using thousands of social networking sites and social media sites, in order to stay connected with friends, discover new friends and share contents. Social website can be defined as "Web sites that make it possible for *people* to form online communities, and share usercreated contents (UCCs)" (Kim et al., 2010, p. 216). Now social media websites reach 82% of the world's online population that is 1.2 billion users around the world (comScore, 2011). It has become a new way for people to communicate and is known as an online gathering place (Kim et al., 2010).

Social media are becoming more and more popular. Times spent on social media increases tremendously and it seems that some people are even addicted to this form of communication. According to comScore (2011), 1 in every 5 minutes online is spent on social media websites. The growth in times spent on social media are not limited to teenagers, because, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) also "generation X<sup>1</sup>" populate the rank of joiners, spectators, and critics. Social media appears to be a good medium to reach a large number of people all around the world. The popularity of social media did not keep unnoticed by organizations. Social media are seen as a powerful tool and is used to market products and services, manage customer relationship, and post product release announcements (Kim et al., 2010). Social media sites seem to be a good medium to reach a large number of people and According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) it is seen as an attractive contact channel for many organizations. But social media can also be used to communicate organizational information. Trying to create awareness about the organization and get people familiar with the organization. As a result talents worldwide might create a preferred image. According to the SIT the more the global talents identify and relate themselves with the organization, the more realistic it is that a potential employee will work for that particular organization. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that creating this preferred image or positive reputation via social media, can help attracting talent worldwide.

There are two main "types" of social media, namely social networking sites and social media sites. Social networking sites were first developed. The most widely used social networking sites are MySpace, Facebook, Windows Live Spaces, Habbo, Viadeo (Aurélie & Fallery, n.d.; Kim et al., 2010). The main objective of social networking is connecting with other people and therefore people create a personal profile. The key purpose of social media sites is sharing of media content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) or sharing UCCs. But this difference is fast disappearing, or for some it already disappeared. Therefore within this paper the term social media will be used to refer to both social networking sites as well as social media sites.

There are more "types" of social media besides the two just mentioned. For example blogs and according to Kaplan and Haenlein

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Generation X are the generation born after that of the baby boomers, roughly from the early 1960s to mid-1970s (Oxford Dictionaries, retrieved from <u>http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/Generation+X</u>)

(2010) blogs are the earliest form of social media. A blog can be used to write stories, but also articles can be posted and videos, it can be used to share a lot of different information. In addition, there are also microblogging sites, like Twitter. Microblogging makes it possible to communicate through really short messages. Worldwide Twitter reaches 1 in 10 Internet users (comScore, 2011). Twitter is not only used to communicate with friends, comScore (2011) argues that it is a platform that is used as a central means of communicating during worldwide or regional events. Besides social media sites that are commonly used for fun, there are social media website which focuses mainly on business people, such as LinkedIn, Visible Path, and Xing (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Some facts about social media are important for organizations to consider. Social media, like the Internet is fast moving. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) it is possible that what might be up-to-date today could be gone from the Internet tomorrow. Although social media can be seen as a cheap medium, it is important that organizations invest in their social media. Organizational social media pages need to be up-to-date, track the information that is posted about the organization, and respond to questions. In order for organizations to stay as up-to-date as possible, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) developed 10 guidelines;

(1) *Choose carefully*; there are hundreds of social media websites and according to Boyd and Ellison (2008) these website have different cultures, some support pre-existing social networks, while others provide strangers to connect. Different social media websites attract different people. So it is important for organizations to choose wisely and think about what they need and who they want to reach. According to Maurer and Cook (2011) using the Internet to attract employees

demands a target market of qualified people, as HR managers do not want to be overwhelmed by poorly qualified applicants for specific job opportunities. Goal of these activities are to attract the right people, with the right skills and to get them into the right jobs. In addition Tüzüner and Yüksel (2009) argue; "there should be a match between values, work styles and objectives of both employees and companies in order to select and retain them" (p. 57). Moreover, according to the authors, the appropriate match between the applicant and the organization is critical to secure the relationship and the productivity of the applicant and the organization.

(2) *Pick the application, or make your own;* choose to join an existing social media platform or develop your own.

(3) *Ensure activity alignment*; ensure that the social media activities are aligned with each other, create consistency.

(4) Media plan integration; ensure alignment between social media and traditional media, think about the corporate image.

(5) *Access for all*; do not block social media for every employee, some need access to maintain the social media page(s).

(6) *Be active*; according to Kaplan and Heanlein (2010) social media are about sharing and interaction, organizations need to ensure that their content is fresh and that the organization participate in discussions.

(7) *Be interesting*; so people will talk about you.

(8) *Be humble*; Kaplan and Heanlein (2010) argue that it is important to take time to discover the social media site and to learn about its history and basic rules

(9) *Be unprofessional*; do not be afraid to make mistakes.

(10) *Be honest*; respecting the rules of the game.

These guidelines are important to consider for organizations when they want to attract talent

by the means of social media. It shows that social media are not something to just jump into, organizations need to think about it before implementing it. According to Picard (2012) building an employer brand via social media is a long term investment, which needs to be maintained.

As said, organizations should give people a reason to talk (HireRabbit, 2012). For example, build social websites that are liked by people, catch people's attention and avoid being boring. A few aspects are important in building and externally market the employer brand, that are;

First, Facebook – First of all it is important to design a Facebook career page and avoid any disorder (Picard, 2012). Via the means of a career page an organization can give people an impression of the organization's culture and it helps to reach people. Share fresh and interesting content, post pictures and videos and post employee experiences, why current employees enjoy their job and what it is like to work there. According to Muller (2012) a good example is Sodexo who highlight the human side, identify the people behind the jobs and let them tell their story. In addition Picard (2012) argues that it is important to interact with the audience, be responsive and listen, write posts and asks candidates what matters most to them in their job search. According to Picard (2012) these interactions can help the employer brand to stand out.

Next, **LinkedIn – Via** LinkedIn a company page can be created. This company page has many of the same features as Facebook - in fact, Picard (2012) mentions that the company page posts can be liked, commented on and shared by followers. Picard (2012) mentions that organizations can pay to post jobs and/or add a Premium Career Tab that include additional employer branding opportunities, like giving an introduction to the organization, their values, show what the organization is like, job opening, introduce the recruitment team and much more.

Then, Twitter – Also via Twitter a brand page can be developed. Through this brand page organizations are able to share more information and increase engagement. By means of the brand page organizations can start conversations (Picard, 2012). Picard (2012) mentions that the Twitter brand page enables organizations to pin a Tweet to the top of their page. It is the first thing that people will see when they enter the Twitter account. This can help to interact with people, ask questions to the followers, promote the employer brand, promote a job application and promote an article about the organization or employer blog. According to Picard (2012), Twitter is an ideal medium for inserting a brief burst of information, career opportunities and employer brand to the followers. Muller (2012) argues it is a good medium to drive traffic to the website or other social media. Finally, **Blogs** – Picard (2012) mentions that the employer blog can be a great platform to showcase the employer brand. The employer blog can contain articles why people want to work for that particular organization, why current employees like their job, videos about the company and employees, the bio and role in the organization of the "owner" of the blog, share business success, write about competition, why do you differ, share projects the organization is working on etc. According to Muller (2012) Sodexo uses their career blog to engage with people and give insightful tips for job seekers.

These aspects give a good insight into how to use social media, how to stay up to date and what is important. But it does not give guidelines about the information that is sought by potential global talents. Bondarouk et al., (2012) developed an employer branding protocol to measure the extent to which organizations use different employer branding tactics. It enables to measure the strength of the employer brand and it gives some insight into information that should be posted/ communicated. Based on articles read for the theoretical background the protocol was adapted (table 1). A short version of the employer branding protocol is given (table 2) for the extended version see appendix C.

Source	What's added	category
Robbins & Stylianou (2002)	Corporate info; history, message CEO, organizational structure	Organizational operations
Robbins & Stylianou (2002)	Financial highlights, annual report, social issues	Employer reputation
Robbins & Stylianou (2002)	Communicate job openenings	Job characteristics
Robbins & Stylianou (2002)	Communicate to people and inform people	Communication
Huizingh (2000)	Video's, photo's, sounds, animation	Entertainment
Muller (2012)	Daily life of employees, work experiences	People & culture

Table 1 Added elements of employer branding protocol

Overall, social media offers an opportunity to reach millions of people worldwide. Letting talents worldwide get familiar with the organization as an employer, differentiate themselves from competitors, what is important to the organizations, show the values the organization stands for etc. Even though research shows that it is important for organizations to differentiate themselves, and to become an attractive employer, Walker et al. (2011) argue that there is not a clear understanding of how organizations can manage the instrumental and symbolic traits to attract talents. Organizations need to understand what it is that these talents are looking for and which organizational values attract the targeted talents.

Employer branding elements	1. Weak employer branding	2. Moderate employer branding	3. Average employer branding	4. Above average employer branding	5. Strong employer branding
Organizational characteristics A description of: The organizations history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered.	The organization provides no information about their history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered.	The organization provides limited information about their history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered.	The organization provides information of their history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered.	The organization provides clear information of their history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered.	The organization provides a detailed description of their history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered.
Organizational operations A description of: Organizational processes, including vision, mission, future goals and organizational values.	Organizational processes are not described, nor the vision, mission, future goals and values.	Some attention has been paid to its vision, mission, future goals, organizational structure, operations, and values but is rather scares.	Attention is paid to its vision, mission, and future goals.	Most of the organizational processes are described, mainly focussing on its vision, mission, and future goals.	The organization provides a detailed description of the organizational processes, including its vision, mission, and future goals.
People and Culture A description of: The kind of people employed and what is expected from them.	The organization provides no information about the kind of people who are working for the organization	The organization provides limited information about the kind of people who are working for the organization.	The organization provides some information about the kind of people who are working for the organization.	The organization provides information about the kind of people who are working for the organization and in most cases what is expected from them	The organization provides detailed information about the kind of people who are working for the organization
Remuneration and advancement A description of: Advancement opportunities and career programs.	The organization gives no information on possible advancement opportunities	The organization provides information about advancement opportunities in the organization.	The organization provides information about the advancement opportunities in the organization, but no details are revealed.	The organization provides information about the advancement opportunities for employees inside the organization.	The organization provides a detailed list of advancement opportunities for employees, once inside the organization.
Job characteristics A description of: Job opportunities and job learning opportunities.	The organization does not describe any job-related information.	The organization describes some opportunities available with a job. Hardly any key functions are described	The organization describes different opportunities available with a job. Some key functions are defined	The organization describes opportunities that are available with the job.	The organization describes in detail the job opportunities that are available with the job.
Employer reputation A description of: Achievements so far, annual reports, financial highlights etc	The organization provides no information of previous achievements.	The organization provides some information of most important achievements, but they are rather scarce.	The organization provides some information of most important achievements.	The organization provides information of achievements so far, and annual reports and financial highlights are available.	The organization has a detailed and updated list with all achievements so far,
Communication A description of: Current events. Hyperlink to corporate website and career website.	The organization does not provides a list of events. There is no link to the corporate website or to the career website.	The organization provides a list of events, but it is not up to date. There is no link to the corporate website or to the career website	The organization provides a list of events it organizes or takes part of, but it is not up to date.	The organization provides a list of current events it organizes or takes part of. A direct link to the corporate website and career site is given.	The organization provides a detailed list of current events it organizes or takes part of.
Entertainment/ presentation Availability of: Video's, photo's, organizational logo, and employer log	The organization does not provides video's and/or photos of the organization. Videos of employees	The organization provides a video and some photos of the organization. The video is a short standard movie,	The organization provides a video and photos of the organization. The video and photo's give some insights into the organization.	The organization provides a video and photos of the organization. The video and photo's give insight into the organization	The organization provides video's and photos of the organization, which give a detailed insight
Contact A description of recruitment team.	The organization provides no information about the recruitment team	The organization provides no information about the recruitment team.	The organization provides information about the recruitment team.	The organization provides information about the recruitment team.	The organization provides detailed information about the recruitment team.

Table 2 Short version of adapted employer branding protocol

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

#### Method

This research consists of two main stages. The first stage develops a framework for using social media as a communication tool for employer branding. The second stage tests the framework, to explore to what extent organizations communicate their attractiveness criteria.

#### First stage: developing a framework

The research objective is to investigate what it is that talents are looking for in an employer, what attracts them to an employer. This information was used to create a framework. Therefore two research techniques were used; in-depth interviews and triangulation.

#### Sample

This research considers talents as; high potentials, highly educated (at least a masters degree), willing to learn, competent, extremely motivated and ready to start their career. Therefore this study regards master students as prime candidates for attracting talents through employer branding activities. Master students of two different schools of the University of Twente were approached, a social science study versus a technical study.

A non-probability sampling technique was used to select the students. For students of the school of Management and Governance self-selection sampling technique (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009) was used. An email was send to 30 Business Administration students. The email informed the students about the interview and asked them to participate. Each student could identify his or her desire to take part in the research. To select students from Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science, first a snowball sampling technique (Saunders et al., 2009) was used, since there was no direct contact with the students. Once the first contact was set, the respondents were asked to identify other students. As it did not result

in enough respondents, the self-selection sampling technique was applied. Technical students were personally asked to participate.

According to Saunders et al., (2009) there is not a set of rules concerning the sample size when it is chosen for a non-probability sampling technique. Therefore the authors argue that the researcher should continue conducting interviews until data saturation is reached. In accordance, interviews were conducted until no new criteria were mentioned or new insights were given by respondents.

Overall, 18 interviews were conducted with Dutch students. 10 students of the school of Management and Government (55,56%) and 8 students of the school of Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science (44,44%). The interviews were conducted from 31<sup>st</sup> of May until 28<sup>th</sup> of June. Three respondents are completing their bachelor's degree, but already started with master courses (16,67%) and three respondents just graduated (16,67%). The majority of the respondents were male (88,89%), the average age of the respondents was 24. Characteristics are defined in table 3.

Frequency

Dorcont

	Frequency	Percent
Business Administration	10	55,56%
Computer Security	1	5,56%
Comupter Science	2	11,11%
Electrical Engineering	1	5,56%
Embedded Systems	1	5,56%
Human Media Interaction	1	5,56%
Philosophy of Science Technology	1	5,56%
Software Engineering	1	5,56%
Software Engineering Expected graduation	1 Frequency	5,56% Percent
0 0	_	,
Expected graduation	Frequency	Percent
Expected graduation Master	Frequency	Percent 66,67%
Expected graduation Master Finishing bachelor, started master	Frequency 12 3	Percent 66,67% 16,67%
Expected graduation Master Finishing bachelor, started master Already graduated	Frequency 12 3 3	Percent 66,67% 16,67% 16,67%

**Table 3 Characteristics of respondents** 

Master/Bachelor

#### In-depth interviews

The information gained via the in-depth interviews was the basis for the conceptual framework. According to Wilden et al., (2010) in-depth interviews offer detailed insights into the nature and role of each concept, and contribute to developing a framework. The indepth interviews considered four core topic; (1) Attraction criteria; example questions; "what attracts you to an employer?" or "what made you decide to work for a particular organization?" (2) Dream job; example questions; "describe your dream job?" or "describe your perfect workday?" (3) Organizational information; example questions; "what is the first thing you look for in an employer?" or " what information would you be looking for?" (4) Social media; example questions; "which social media platforms would you use, when you are looking for a job?" or " which information would you like to find on social media pages?"

#### Analysis of in-depth interviews

Every interview was tape-recorded and later transcribed. After transcribing the interviews, each interview was analysed by the means of step by step approach. According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) the first step is to read the set of data. Next the data was broken into smaller meaningful parts and important parts or phrases were underlined. To structure it, the smaller parts were divided in bullet points under 17 different categories (table 4). For both faculties it resulted in a 7-page document with attractiveness criteria.

1.	Image	10. Workday
2.	Culture	11. Question you will ask
3.	Business	during your job interview
4.	Location	12. Employer branding
5.	Important facts	13. Social media
6.	Information	14. Facebook
7.	Function	15. LinkedIn
8.	How to find information	16. Twitter
9.	Decisive factors	17. Negative facts

Table 4 Categories in-depth interviews

To categorize the criteria the instrumentalsymbolic framework (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003) explained in the theoretical background was used (table 5).

Instrumental attributes	Symbolic attributes
<ul> <li>People</li> <li>Job characteristics</li> <li>Organizational characteristics</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Employer reputation</li> <li>Remuneration &amp; advancement</li> <li>Culture</li> </ul>

Table 5 Instrumental and symbolic attributes

Each meaningful part is labelled with one of the descriptive titles/codes described in table 5. A table was developed for the two schools and these were compared with each other's. The tables of social science study and technical study revealed 108 criteria. Only 21 criteria differ. Since this difference was so small, it was decided to combine the tables.

After combining the two tables, the codes were grouped by similarity. This resulted in 96 attractiveness criteria. Theory was used to name the criteria properly. Berthon et al., (2005) operationalizes and indentified 25 employer attractiveness items, some of these items were used to formulate the attractiveness criteria (i.e. gaining careerenhancing experience, recognition/ appreciation from management). Several key attributes of employer image (Knox & Freeman, 2005) were also used to formulate attractiveness criteria (i.e. dynamic, forward looking approach to their business, friendly and informal culture).

#### Triangulation

The 96 attractiveness criteria were checked by the interviewees, by means of triangulation. According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) descriptive triangulation strengthens and increases the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings. Every interviewee was asked to rank the criteria, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The triangulation was developed via the Internet program NetQ<sup>2</sup> and were sent by email on July the 9<sup>th</sup> and a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> NetQ see; <u>http://www.netq-enquete.nl/</u>

14

reminder on July the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Eventually 16 of the 18 interviewees took part in the triangulation process.

#### Analysis of triangulation

The total score of each criterion was analysed. Criteria were deleted if the scores of 1 (strongly disagree) and 2 (disagree) were higher than the scores of 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree). In total 8 criteria were deleted. Based on the triangulation, 88 criteria remained and ranked from most important to least important.

Overall, by means of in-depth interviews, first 108 attractiveness criteria were revealed. But by combining, grouping the criteria by similarity and the triangulation process, 88 criteria remained. These criteria are the basis of the conceptual framework.

#### Second stage: testing the framework

In order to test the framework, it was analysed whether the framework matches to organizational social media pages and the extent to which companies communicate their employer brand through social media. The sampling is an extensive process, consisting of different rankings specified to social media and various Fortune rankings.

#### Social media platforms

According to Kim et al. (2010), there are differences in popular social media pages by continent, region and country. For example in the Netherlands the medium Hyves is very popular, in the UK Friends Reunited and in Sweden LunarStrom are more common. It seems that Facebook is used all over the world, with more than 955 million monthly active users (Facebook, 2012). As this research considers a global aspect, it is important that the social media websites are equally used throughout the world. Therefore the social media websites were chosen based on worldwide rankings. There are a lot of different rankings, (see for rankings, sipeople, XarJ blog & podcast, eBiz/MBA, Wikipedia, comScore, Alexa, etc) these rankings differ from each other, but the top 3 for 2011 were the same; (1) Facebook, (2) Twitter and (3) LinkedIn. Therefore these social media websites were used to collect the data. All viewable elements of these websites were investigated, including text, videos and photos.

#### Ranking the organizations

It was expected that large and successful organizations have developed their social media website the most. Therefore Fortune 500 rankings were used to derive the sample. To ensure that organizations from each part of the world were included, Fortune ranking from different geographical areas was used. The following Fortune 500 rankings were used; Global, Europe, Asia, and the U.S. From each list the top 10 was selected (table 6).

Global	Europe	Asia	U.S.	Social Times
<ol> <li>Walmart</li> <li>Shell</li> <li>Exxon Mobil</li> <li>BP</li> <li>Sinopec Group</li> <li>China Nat. Petroleum</li> <li>State Grid</li> <li>Toyota</li> <li>Japan Post Holdings</li> <li>Chev-ron</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Shell</li> <li>BP</li> <li>Total</li> <li>Volks-wagen</li> <li>AXA</li> <li>ING</li> <li>Glencore Int.</li> <li>ENI</li> <li>Daimler</li> <li>BNP Pari-</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Sinopec Group</li> <li>China Nat. Petroleum</li> <li>State Grid</li> <li>Toyota</li> <li>Japan Post Holdings</li> <li>Samsung</li> <li>Nippon Telegraph &amp; Telephone</li> <li>Hitachi</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>WalMart</li> <li>Exxon</li> <li>Chevron</li> <li>Conoco- Phillips</li> <li>Fannie Mae</li> <li>General Electrics</li> <li>Berkshire</li> <li>General Motors</li> <li>Bank of America</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Google</li> <li>Disney</li> <li>Apple</li> <li>Star-bucks</li> <li>Black- Berry</li> <li>Coca-Cola</li> <li>Amazon</li> <li>Nokia</li> <li>Pepsi</li> <li>FedEx</li> </ol>
	bas	9. Honda 10. Nissan	10. Ford	

Table 6 Fortune rankings and Social Times ranking

Furthermore, Social Times ranked the best and most well-known brands on social media. They developed the Top 50 Report ranks brands (Glenn, 2012). Also from this list the top 10 was used (table 6). In addition the top 5 organizations on Facebook (HireRabbit, 2012), Twitter (Becker, 2012) and LinkedIn (Fell, 2011) were selected (table 7). Sodexo was also added to the organizations, because Muller (2012) argued that they are a pioneer in social recruiting. In total 52 organizations were selected (Appendix A).

Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn
1. Starbucks	1. Twitter	1. IBM
2. Red Bull	2. Google	2. HP
3. PlayStation	3. Facebook	3. Accenture
4. McDonalds	4. Apple	4. Microsoft
5. Levi's	5. McDonalds	5. Oracle

Table 7 Ranking Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn

#### Analysis of rankings

Facebook

The analysis of the ranking is conducted in two phases. After each phase organizations were eliminated.

The first ranking was specified to the usages of social media for employer branding activities. There was chosen for a non-probability technique, as organizations needed to meet certain criteria to the purpose of the study. These criteria were based on Picard (2012)

#### and Muller (2012) (table 8).

The content of the social media websites of the organizations was tested on the presence of the criteria. Each criterion was ranked, using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (very weak) to 5 (very strong). For each organization the Likert scale scores were added up. Per social media platform the organizations ended up with a total score. Based on these total scores a ranking was made for Facebook, one for Twitter and one for LinkedIn. Ranging from 1 (highest total score) until 52 (lowest total score) (appendix B). The top 10 from Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn was used. In total 20 organizations were selected (see appendix B).

Career page	Values	Social
<ul> <li>Does the organization have a career page</li> <li>Is the page used to share information</li> <li>Does the page drive traffic to the website</li> <li>Is information of people who are working, worked and will work for the organization available</li> <li>Is the page up to date, does it contain fresh and interesting information</li> <li>Correct use of language</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Are the company values visible</li> <li>Does the page give an reflection of the organizations culture</li> <li>Does the page reflect the brand's image</li> <li>Does the organization try to build a community around the brand and its employment values</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Is there a social aspect, can people give their opinion and share information</li> <li>Is there direct communication between the organization and followers/visitors of page</li> <li>Is the organization responsive, does it listen</li> <li>Interaction between followers/visitors of the page</li> <li>Are there articles, pictures and videos to spread ideas, introduce staff, introduce the organization, share business success and why they differentiate from competitors</li> <li>Does it organize or sponsor events</li> <li>Social media platforms integrated? (e.g. can Twitte and LinkedIn be found on Facebook</li> </ul>
Career page	Values	Social
<ul> <li>Does the organization have a company Twitter account</li> <li>Does the organization have a Twitter career account</li> <li>Is the page used to share information</li> <li>Does the page drive traffic to the website</li> <li>Tweets of people who are working, worked and will work for the organization available</li> <li>Correct use of language</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Are the company values visible</li> <li>Does the page reflect the brand's image</li> <li>Does the organization try to build a community around the brand and its employment values</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Do people Tweet about the organization</li> <li>Do people re-tweet about the organization</li> <li>communication between the organization and followers/visitors of page</li> <li>Is the organization responsive, does it listen</li> <li>Interaction between followers/visitors of the page</li> <li>Tweet consist links to articles, pictures and videos to spread ideas, introduce staff, introduce the organization, share business success and why they differentiate from competitors</li> <li>Does it organize or sponsor events</li> <li>Are social media platforms integrated? (e.g. can LinkedIn and Facebook be found on Twitter</li> </ul>
Career page	Values	Social
<ul> <li>Does the organization have a company page</li> <li>Does the career tab introduction give an overview of how the organization is as an employer</li> <li>Is the page used to share information</li> <li>Is the page used to drive traffic to the website</li> <li>Information of people who are working, worked and will work for the organization available</li> <li>Is the page up to date, does it contain fresh and interesting information</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Are the company values visible</li> <li>Does the page give an impression of the organizations culture</li> <li>Does the page reflect the brand's image</li> <li>Does the organization try to build a community around the brand and its employment values</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Does the page give the possibility to contact employees directly</li> <li>Are there articles, pictures and videos to spread ideas, introduce staff, introduce the organization, share business success and why they differentiate from competitors</li> <li>Does it organize or sponsor events</li> <li>Are social media platforms integrated? (e.g. can Twitter and Facebook be found on LinkedIn)</li> </ul>

The second ranking was specified to the strength of the employer branding activities. Therefore the adapted employer branding protocol defined in the theoretical background was used. The content of the social media pages were assessed on the usability; is it easily to navigate (Cober, Brown, Levy, Cober, & Keeping, 2003), the usefulness; the variety of the information, is it current, timely, and relevant, the vividness of the pages; use of audio and animation (Williamson, King, Lepak & Sarma, 2010), the use of *aesthetic* or *stylistic features*; try to get the attention of web surfers via styling and design (Cober et al., 2003), the richness; is feedback given, tailoring messages, and variety on how to give information, and the credibility; the believability and truthfulness of the social media page(s) (Cable & Yu, 2006).

The previous ranking process revealed that Twitter is used as an "advertising" tool. It can be a useful method to promote the employer branding activities. But it is not useful to test the strength of the employer branding activities by means of the protocol. Most of the information that is tested by the means of the protocol is not available or hard to find on Twitter. Each organization will score weak and it will be too time consuming to analyse every tweet of the 20 companies and knowing that the score will be weak. Therefore the protocol was only used to test Facebook and LinkedIn pages of the 20 organizations.

The content of the social media pages were tested on the employer branding elements. These elements were also ranked by means of a 5-point Likert scale. These scores were added up and the organization ended up with a total score for Facebook and for LinkedIn. But after measuring the strength of the employer brand, the interviews revealed that according to the respondents, Facebook is not the right medium for organizations to use. Therefore the top 10 organizations with the strongest employer brand on LinkedIn were selected. So the framework was tested on the following 10 organizations (table 9);

LinkedIn	Total score	Ranking
Walmart	29	1
Accenture	27	2
GE	27	2
НР	27	2
Microsof	27	2
Oracle	27	2
Shell	27	2
Chevron	26	8
Fannie Mae	25	9
Google	23	10

Table 9 Top 10 strongest employer brands at LinkedIn

An extensive method is used to select the organizations. At the end of the selection process, ten organizations remained to test the framework. But during the selection and interviews it appeared that Twitter is a better medium for advertising and promoting the employer brand. In addition, according to the respondents Facebook is not the right medium for organizations to use. Therefore the framework only tested LinkedIn.

#### Results

The goal of the first research question was to gain more knowledge about what are attractiveness criteria in employer branding. In-depth interviews revealed 88 criteria that attract the respondents to particular organizations. These criteria will be revealed based on the instrumental-symbolic framework (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

First the *instrumental attributes*, subdivided into people, job characteristics and organizational characteristics (table 10).

#### Instrumental attributes

People	Job characteristics	Organizational characteristics
<ul> <li>Work with supportive and encouraging colleagues</li> <li>Work with inspiring colleagues</li> <li>Employee experiences</li> <li>People with whom you feel you will have things in common</li> <li>Who are employed, insight in future colleagues</li> <li>Diversity and varying mix of colleagues</li> <li>Highly educated people</li> <li>Which department/ BU are these employees employed</li> <li>Pictures of employees</li> <li>Pictures of the recruitment team</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Job description, what is expected from you</li> <li>Challenging work</li> <li>Personal growth &amp; development</li> <li>Job variety</li> <li>Salary</li> <li>Training and development</li> <li>Education</li> <li>Primary benefits</li> <li>Secondary benefits</li> <li>Work on own initiative</li> <li>Application process</li> <li>Intensive collaboration</li> <li>Balance between private life and carrier</li> <li>Job openings</li> <li>You are involved in the whole organizational process</li> <li>Flexible working hours</li> <li>In the early years, the opportunity to move around the organization and work in different roles</li> <li>Meet and visit clients</li> <li>International travel</li> <li>Traineeship</li> <li>Project based work</li> <li>An introduction program</li> <li>Work and live abroad</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Kind of products/services the organization offers</li> <li>Location</li> <li>High-quality products/services</li> <li>Clarity of internal communication</li> <li>Vision</li> <li>Clarity of goals, mission and objectives</li> <li>The industry the organization operates</li> <li>The business the organization operates</li> <li>Current projects</li> <li>Innovative products/services</li> <li>Mission</li> <li>What differentiates them</li> <li>Organizational chart</li> <li>History</li> <li>Number of employees employed</li> <li>Financial highlights</li> </ul>

Table 10 Employer branding attractiveness criteria, the instrumental attributes

Referring to *people*, the interviews revealed that the respondents consider their future colleagues as important and they pay attention to the people they will work with. The respondents want to have things in common with their colleagues. One of the respondents mentioned: "you spend a huge part of your day with your colleagues, therefore it would be nice that you can get along, otherwise it are going to be long days."

Emphasis was put on the fact that the respondents want to work with supportive colleagues, who encourage each other. In addition, inspiring colleagues are also important. This might be due to the fact that the respondents want to learn from their colleagues.

The second instrumental attribute is *job characteristics*. What appeared a very important criterion during the interviews was job description. The respondents indicated that it is very important to know what is expected of them. The respondents generally agreed that the job description is actually what makes them decide to apply or not, as the majority suggested;

"First I try to find out if the job description matches my competencies, if not, I won't apply."

Job description is one of the first things the respondents would look at. Moreover, the respondents identified that they are looking for a challenging job and job variety. They do not want to do the same thing day after day. Respondents are afraid they will get bored. As one of the interviewees stated;

"once we graduate we got a masters degree, and I think that we need to be challenged, I want to learn and keep developing myself. If the job isn't challenging I will get bored."

In addition, the respondents want to develop themselves. Therefore they would like information about, the training and development opportunities. Further, they want to know whether extra education is supported, mainly mentioned by the respondents from the technical study. One of the respondents mentioned;

> "within our profession it is necessary to keep up to date and to develop yourself. Since, it is a fast moving industry, extra education is required to perform our jobs."

The last instrumental attribute is organizational characteristics. Within this attribute, criteria like the kind of products/services the organization offers were considered as important, respondents mention;

> "the product needs to be something that I can be proud of."

Moreover, the technical interviewees were consistent in their opinions that;

"the product needs to be cool, it should have style and it should be revolutionary."

This is probably closely related to the fact that the respondents desire a company with highquality products or services. In addition essential criteria are the location, the vision, clarity of internal communication and goals, mission and objectives.

Second are the symbolic attributes; these are subdivided into employer reputation, remuneration & advancement, and culture (table 11).

First *employer reputation*, a good reputation is important to the respondents. They want to feel good about themselves and proud as a result of working for a particular organization. In addition, it seems important, because the respondents believe that an organization with a good reputation can be helpful for their future career.

Symbolic attributes		
Employer reputation	Remuneration & advancement	Culture
<ul> <li>Feel good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization</li> <li>Honest</li> <li>Feel more self confident as a result of working for a particular organization</li> <li>Pride in working for a particular organization</li> <li>A good reputation</li> <li>The added value of the organization</li> <li>A good reference for your future career</li> <li>More than just a good reputation and highly thought of</li> <li>Invest time, people and resources in the graduate and undergraduate educational process</li> <li>Co-op or intern employment opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Gaining career- enhancing experience</li> <li>Both values and make use of your creativity and competences</li> <li>Guidance &amp; feedback</li> <li>Good promotion opportunities</li> <li>Job security</li> <li>Uses your degree skills</li> <li>Organization future plans</li> <li>Bonuses for excellent achievements</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Feel accepted and belonged</li> <li>Everyone feels respected</li> <li>Receive recognition/ appreciation from colleagues</li> <li>Match between the organizations desires and needs and your competencies</li> <li>Acceptance of suggestions, ideas and criticisms</li> <li>Have a good relationship with you colleagues</li> <li>Fun working environment</li> <li>Open culture</li> <li>Friendly and informal culture</li> <li>Ask anyone for advice</li> <li>Receive recognition/ appreciation from management</li> <li>Have a good relationship with your supervisors</li> <li>A dynamic, forward looking approach to their business</li> <li>Organizational norms and values</li> <li>Innovative</li> <li>Not just do everything by the book</li> <li>Few hours overtime</li> <li>Employee autonomy</li> <li>Pioneer</li> <li>Casual Friday</li> <li>European culture</li> </ul>

Table 11 Employer branding attractiveness criteria, the symbolic attributes

Next the *remuneration & advancement*, during the interviews it appeared that the respondents want to keep developing themselves. Therefore career-enhancing experiences are important. Besides the respondents want to gain more knowledge, to become better at what they do. One of the respondents mentioned:

> "I want to get to opportunity to grow and get better at the things I do. I want to learn continuously and gain a better understanding of my profession (...) Become the best I can be."

Guidance is also considered as important and promotion opportunities. The last subdivision is *culture*. During the interviews a lot of emphasis was put on culture. Respondents argued that an open culture is considered as important. The culture should be informal and friendly. Respondents mentioned that they are looking for an amicable atmosphere, where they feel good, work together towards solutions and where there is even time for a joke. One respondent mentioned:

"An informal atmosphere is very important; first of all it is essential to feel welcome (...) make a good start. In addition, I think it is crucial to collaborate with each other and to ask anyone for advice (...) two know more than one. Collaboration is key in solving problems, but also to develop yourself, since you can learn and grow from each other. Moreover working in a team is valuable and striving for a joint goal."

Respondents agreed on the fact that culture is probably the hardest thing for an organization to reveal. They suggested that the way to get a feeling for it, might be by talking to people who work for the organization and to hear about their experiences, or looking at the organizations web page, and see how the organization represent themselves, and their linguistic usages etc.

The interviews also revealed that receiving recognition from colleagues is important, one of the respondents mentioned;

"I had a bad experience with my internship. I was the only woman, staff was lower educated and I had the feeling that they did not appreciate my work. They only made jokes about me, did not take me seriously and did not appreciate my work. I want to work somewhere where my colleagues trust me, respect me and trust my work."

It is important for the respondents that colleagues appreciate good work and that there is mutual respect. Furthermore respondents desire an organization with a dynamic and forward looking approach, an innovative organization that keeps developing and remain competitive. A respondent mentioned:

"As an organization you need to keep on developing yourself. It is never just okay, there is always something that changes (...). An organization too needs to adapt themselves, a product, a process etc. Otherwise it won't be long before the organization is bankrupt."

Next, the respondents were asked which social media is a good platform for organizations to use. The majority of the respondents argued that Facebook is not the right platform for organizations. On the contrary, the respondents would develop a negative image of organizations that are active at Facebook. Respondents find that;

> "Facebook is something private, statements that I post on Facebook are not professional."

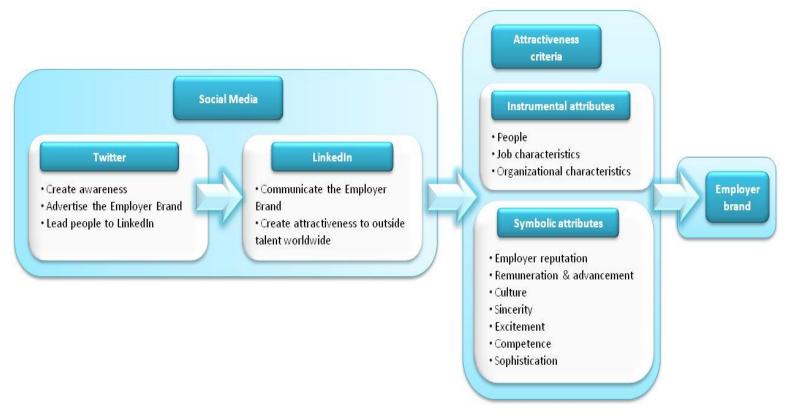
"organizations don't belong on Facebook, that is private and another part of my life."

On the contrary LinkedIn is seen as a perfect platform to communicate the employer brand. As respondents mention;

> "it is a professional platform and the purpose of LinkedIn is to link people and businesses."

Twitter is seen as a great advertising tool by the respondents. Write tweets about the employer brand, let people get familiar with the employer brand and try to lead them to the LinkedIn page of the organization.





#### Framework 1 Communication tool for employer branding attractiveness criteria

Based on the interviews a framework was developed (framework 1). This framework provides insight into how social media can be used as a communication tool. Besides it indicates the attractiveness criteria organizations should consider, in order to become an attractive employer. This framework can help organizations to develop their social media pages(s). First, social media, because the respondents mention that Facebook is not the right medium for organizations to use, it is not added to the framework. Second the attractiveness criteria, are divided into the instrumental attributes and symbolic attributes. The *instrumental* attributes describe; People mainly refer to who are working for the organization; Job characteristics describe what is expected from employees; Organizational characteristics give insight into the organization, what kind of organization it is. Next the symbolic attributes describe; Employer reputation portrays the added value, the status of the organization;

Remuneration & advancement explains promotion opportunities, benefits, the intelligence of the organization, organizational successes; *Culture* refers to how employees are treated, the ethics within the organization, the honesty and friendliness of the organization. Of course the employer branding attractiveness criteria, defined in table 10 and 11 are part of the framework.

Overall, 88 attractiveness criteria were indicated by the respondents. These are defined in table 10 and 11, divided into instrumental and symbolic attributes. During the interviews it became evident that culture is perceived as one of the most important aspect. In addition, job characteristics also received a lot of attention, especially job description. Job description is an important criterion as it bases the respondents' decision to apply or not. The triangulation made it possible to rank the criteria from most important to least important. Based on the research and the in-depth interviews a conceptual framework for communicating the employer brand via social media was developed.

#### Testing the framework

The goal of the second research question was to test how organizations communicate their attractiveness criteria by the means of social media. The analysis is based on framework 1. The framework indicated that social media can be used to communicate the attractiveness criteria. It influences the awareness of talents about the attractiveness of the organization and the employer brand. Besides it tries to lead them to the LinkedIn page.

*Twitter* can be used to create awareness around the employer brand. Organizations can pin a tweet to the top of their page, this would be the first thing that people see entering the Twitter account. This can be beneficial to create awareness about the employer brand and the organization LinkedIn page. Every organization did pin a tweet on top of their page, but there were small differences. First, seven organizations (Accenture, Fannie Mae, Google, HP, Microsoft, Shell and Walmart) developed a Twitter career account. Overall the message of these tweets was; that people could stay up to date with the latest career opportunities by following the Twitter account and it provided a link to the career website. The message of the other three organizations (Chevron, GE and Oracle) was; follow us to stay up to date with the organizations activities and it provided a link to their corporate website. Microsoft and Walmart extended their Twitter career account the most. They provide, besides job openings, also information about a career at their organization, how to apply, tips & tricks, experiences of employees, refer to blogs, and at the left side of the page they present their mission. The other five

organizations (also with a career account) only tweet about job openings. The three organizations with an overall twitter account tweet merely about their business, products and offers. Only Accenture had a link to their LinkedIn account.

Secondly, the framework describes the attractiveness criteria the organizations should communicate by the means of LinkedIn in order to create an attractive employer brand. First referring to the instrumental attributes, via LinkedIn it is possible to find out who works for that particular organization. So every organization gives insight into the people that are employed. Further considering the people criteria five (Accenture, Fannie Mae, Oracle, Shell and Walmart) out of the ten organizations posted testimonials of employees. This gives some insight into their experiences. In addition, six organizations (Accenture, Fannie Mae, HP, Microsoft, Oracle and Shell) provide direct contact information of the recruitment team. But organizations do try with a global story to showcase who works for the organization and who they are looking for.

Considering *job characteristics*, every organization posted a link with a small description of job openings. These links go to another page which specifies the job. Another common fact is that the organizations show their benefits, nine out of the ten organizations (Shell does not list them). Six organizations (Chevron, GE, HP, Microsoft, Oracle, Shell and Walmart) mention that they offer training and development opportunities. It is interesting to see that the other attractiveness criteria of job characteristics are hardly mentioned. Referring to organizational characteristics, location is a standard part of LinkedIn, but it only indicates where the head office is located. Another part is the number of employees, but for every organization it state 10,001+ employees. Only

Accenture, Oracle and Shell specified their number of employees. Each organization mentions the business they are in and the kind of products/services they offer. Half of the organizations mention their mission (Google, HP, Microsoft, Oracle and Walmart) and only Chevron expresses its vision. Shell is the only organization that mentions some financial highlights. The other criteria are not revealed.

Second considering the symbolic attributes, referring to employer reputation Oracle say that their customers see them as a highly recommended employer, Shell states that they are world's second largest company and one of the world's best known brands and Walmart states that they are a top retailer in Fortunes Magazine's "Most Admired Companies". Besides saying that they are one of the best known brands and that they care about their employees, other criteria about employer reputation is not found on LinkedIn. Regarding remuneration & advancement, only Oracle mentions promotion opportunities. Most organizations point out that they provide bonuses (not mentioned by GE and Walmart). Eight organizations value and make use of their employees' creativity and competence. They also use the degree skills of their employees and therefore trust on the knowledge of their employees. Other criteria are not indicated. Referring to culture, organizations do try to give an indication about the culture. Accenture, Oracle and Shell give indications that everyone is accepted. Walmart declares that everyone is respected. Chevron, Google, HP, Microsoft, Oracle and Shell mention that their business success is based on their people and therefore they need ideas, suggestions and criticisms of their employees. Six organizations (Accenture, Google, HP, GE, Microsoft and Shell) indicate that their organizations are dynamic and diverse. In addition, Accenture, Chevron, Google, HP and Oracle state that they are constantly working on innovative products

that make a difference in people's lives. But other criteria to gain insights into the culture are barely mentioned.

Testing the framework revealed that organizations could make better use of Twitter. It could be used more as an advertising tool to create awareness and to drive traffic to their social media page(s). By means of LinkedIn still a lot of criteria can be communicated. It is not possible to argue which organizations have developed their LinkedIn page the most, as it seems always another company that provides a specific criterion and misses another one.

#### Discussion

This study explored in-depth what attracts talents to organizations and examines how organizations communicate attractiveness criteria via social media. The instrumentalsymbolic framework (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003) was used to categorize the attractiveness criteria of the in-depth interviews. Lievens (2007) concluded that organizations should use both instrumental as symbolic attributes to create an attractive image. By indicating 49 instrumental attractiveness criteria and 39 symbolic attractiveness criteria, this study agrees with the fact that both instrumental as well as symbolic attributes should be included to create a preferable and attractive employer brand. The instrumental attributes were subdivided into people, job characteristics and organizational characteristics. According to Maurer and Cook (2011), the interest of a potential employee first needs to be engaged to the job and organization. The tangible criteria that are revealed by the respondents all contribute to this fact. It provides potential employees additional information about the organization. Referring to people, it was found that the respondents want to work with

supportive, encouraging and inspiring people. Colleagues were considered as important because a huge part of their days will be spent with their colleagues. Next, job characteristics, it was found that job description was one of the first criteria the respondents would look at and made them decide to apply or not. Furthermore the respondents are looking for a challenging job, job variety and the opportunity to develop themselves. Then organizational characteristics, it became apparent that the respondent found it important to know what kind of products/services the organization offers. They preferred high-quality products/services. Furthermore criteria like location, vision, clarity of goals were considered important.

Lievens and Highhouse (2003) argued that symbolic trait inferences explained incremental variance over and above instrumental attributes and if organizations only focus on instrumental attributes an important part of developing an attractive employer is ignored. In addition, the authors argue that job seekers often use symbolic attributes to distinguish organizations. This actually indicates the importance of the symbolic attributes when developing an employer brand. This study agrees with the fact that the symbolic attributes provide a good opportunity to distinguish yourself as an organization and that it should not be ignored. Organizations gain the opportunity to demonstrate what makes them unique, why it is a great place to work and what makes it an attractive employer. You could argue that the intangible attributes anticipate more to feeling. The social identity theory (SIT) explains that people like to identify themselves with an organization, an organization they perceive as attractive and people's identity and self-esteem are partly determined by their membership of the organization they work for. People want to feel attracted to an organization, they want to

enjoy their work and some may also want others to be proud of them. This is also agreed on by the respondents. In addition to feeling pride, Lievens et al., (2007) argue that organizational identification is related to the pride someone feels for being a member of the organization. The more pride a potential employees feels about an employer, the more likely they identify themselves with the employer and want to be part the organization. The attractiveness criteria subdivided into the symbolic attributes also anticipate more to feeling and pride. Therefore these criteria could have a considerable influence on the organizational attractiveness. The symbolic attributes of this study are divided into employer reputation, remuneration & advancement and culture. First, employer reputation, reveals criteria like, feeling good about yourself as result of working for an organization, feel more self confident, and feel pride in working for a particular organization. Next, the remuneration & advancement indicated that the respondents are looking for organizations that uses and values their competences and creativity. They want to develop themselves and become better at what they do. Moreover, they are ambitious and promotion opportunities are important. Last, culture, during the interviews a lot emphasis was put on culture. Respondents stressed the importance of an informal and open culture, were they feel accepted and belonged. There also should be a match between the organization desires and needs, and the competencies of the respondents. This in accordance to Tüzüner and Yüksel (2009) who argue; "there should be a match between values, work styles and objective of both employees and companies (...)'' (p. 57), according to the authors, this is critical to secure the relationship and productivity of the applicant and the organization. By choosing for a strategy like employer branding,

#### UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

organizations hope to attract the right people with the right skills into the right jobs. So try to find the match. A challenge many organizations are dealing with. Within this last section a lot of emphasis was put on the symbolic attributes. As said before, both symbolic as instrumental attributes are important in order to create an attractive employer brand. Based on theoretical background and the interviews it became apparent that the respondents gather information in order to create a "picture" about what the organization is like. Therefore talents depend both on observable information as well as intangible information. As an organization you want talents to develop a correct "picture" and therefore you should make sure that the talents have access to accurate information. Because, at the end that "picture" make them decide to apply or not.

Based on the in-depth interviews a conceptual framework was developed. The framework can be used by organizations to design their social media pages(s), in order to use it as a communication tool for employer branding attractiveness criteria. Research into social media has increased, but incorporating employer branding has not been investigated. In Accordance to Bondarouk et al., (2012), who argue that the usage of social media as a communication tool for the employer brand has not been investigated. The interviews revealed that social media is considered as a great platform to communicate the employer brand. It can be used to reach millions of people worldwide and create familiarity about the organization worldwide. An unexpected finding was that Facebook is considered as not suitable for organizations to use. The usage of Facebook is even argued by the majority of the respondents as negative. In the contrary LinkedIn is seen as a perfect platform to communicate the employer brand. LinkedIn is considered as a professional platform and the

purpose of LinkedIn is to link people and businesses. These findings conflict with the findings of Bondarouk et al., (2012), they found a negative effect of LinkedIn as a moderator between employer branding and organizational attractiveness and therefore they argue that Facebook might be a better platform for communicating the employer brand. The respondents consider Twitter as a great advertising tool. Write tweets about the employer brand, let people get familiar with the employer brand and try to lead them to the LinkedIn page of the organization.

The framework was tested on organizations. The selection process was quite extensive, it was based on different Fortune 500, specified to different geographical areas. The organizations were tested based on their social media activities and on the strength of their employer branding. At the end ten organizations were selected. First Twitter, it became evident that Microsoft and Walmart developed their Twitter account the most in terms of communicating and advertising their employer brand. They provide extra information about what it would be like to work for them, how to apply, experiences of employees etc. But more awareness can be created about the employer brand and it can be promoted more. Secondly, LinkedIn was tested as a communication tool for the attractiveness criteria. Testing the criteria belonging to people of the instrumental attributes revealed that organizations provide information about their employees, but it is not extensive and more insight into the criteria can be revealed. Considering job characteristics every organization provided job openings and a link which contained a brief job description. The majority of the organizations mentioned their benefits, but other criteria were hardly revealed. Referring to organizational characteristics, LinkedIn has some standard sections like location and number of employees, so evidently every

#### UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

organization communicates those criteria. Each organization mentioned the business they are in, but other criteria were barely described. Next the *symbolic attributes*. Considering Employer reputation some organizations say that they are the best known brand and that they care about their employees. Other criteria are not mentioned. Referring to remuneration & advancement organizations only described that they value their employees and use their creativity. Finally culture, organizations do try to reveal their culture, they declare that their culture is designed to help their employees (GE), their culture is doing, getting things done (HP), retaining a small company feeling (Google), accept everyone (Shell) and so on. It is possible to gain some insights into the culture, but it is not clear. Overall, it became evident that the LinkedIn pages of the organizations can be developed more, as a lot of criteria were missing.

This research investigated what attracts talents to organizations, it provides insights into how organizations can differentiate themselves. There are previous studies that investigated what attracts talents, but a key difference is that these studies used an existing list with attractiveness criteria and the respondents were asked to rank the criteria (e.g. Tüzüner & Yüksel, 2009; Knox & Freeman, 2006; Williamson et al., 2003). This study investigated in-depth what attracts talents, giving the respondents the opportunity to talk freely and provide their opinion. In addition, to my knowledge this is the first research that investigated social media as a communication tool for employer branding. Therefore it provides new insights in how to use some social media platforms and which information to communicate.

#### Managerial implications

This study explains that attracting talent is very important for an organization, in order to

create a sustained competitive advantage. Therefore, Caliguiri et al., (2010) argue that is has become critical for organizations to gain a better understanding of what attracts talents. In addition, Barber (1998) mention that it is critical that organizations recruitment activities attract the attention of potential applicants. According to Berthon et al., (2005) this can be achieved if the organization understands the criteria that contribute to employer attractiveness. This study explored in-depth what attracts talents to organizations. The respondents of this research indentified different instrumental as well as symbolic attributes. In addition, Wilden et al., (2010) argue that if potential employees has insufficient or inconsistent information about an employer, potential employees might create a negative image about the organization and do not want to join the organization. These criteria are based on the ideas and perceptions of the respondents. It indicates the information the respondents are looking for, what they want to know and moreover what attracts them to an organization. Organizations can use the criteria as a guide to decide what to communicate. Moreover organizations can look at their own values and see which criteria matches to theirs or what are criteria they have strong feelings about. In addition, based on the triangulation it is also possible to judge which information is seen as most important. This also might make it easier for organizations to decide what to communicate, in order to develop a strong employer brand and to become an attractive employer.

Walker et al., (2011) argue that media can increase the likelihood that potential applicants develop a preferred image about the organization. This study developed a framework for communicating the employer brand attractiveness criteria via social media. The framework provides guidance to create a social media page in order to communicate the attractiveness criteria. Organizations can use the framework to differentiate their social media page from competitors. By using social media, organizations gain the opportunity to communicate criteria to talents worldwide and these talents might develop a preferred image. But the framework can also be used to test and judge the social media page(s) of competitors. This gives the opportunity to learn from each other page(s).

Organizations that already apply an employer branding strategy can use this study and especially the framework to see what is good about their practices, what is missing and can be improved. Testing the framework revealed that the organizations still miss criteria.

Overall, this study provides organizations information about what attracts talents and how they can communicate this information. It gives a clear overview of attractiveness criteria, this makes it easy for organizations to see which criteria matches to their values and decide what to communicate. In addition, the framework presents how organizations can use social media to communicate the attractiveness criteria, in order to create a unique and desirable employer brand.

#### Theoretical implications

First this study contributes to providing deeper insight into what attract talents to organization in the aspect of employer branding. It gave the respondents the opportunity to talk freely about the subject and to provide their opinions. Based on indepth interviews 88 attractiveness were criteria revealed. As argued, previous studies used predetermined lists of attractiveness criteria. Another notable fact is that the attractiveness criteria are analysed via the symbolic and instrumental framework (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Walker et al., (2011) argue that there is a lack of understanding how organizations can manage symbolic traits. Since the criteria are

subdivided by the symbolic and instrumental framework, it provides an opportunity and insight into how to manage these traits. Moreover, a remarkable contribution of this research is that it is to the researchers' knowledge the first study to investigate social media as a communication tool for employer branding. Also according to Kim et al. (2009) this topic has not been investigated, they argue that there are only a few academic papers on social media and these papers do not consider employer branding. In addition Bondarouk et al., (2012) argue that the usage of social media as a communication tool for the employer brand has not been investigated. So scientifically, it gives a first insight into using social media as a communication tool for employer branding. It fills a gap in empirical knowledge about social media, employer branding and attracting talent.

#### Limitations and Future research

This study is not without limitations. First, the generalizability of this research is limited for a few reasons. Theory showed that organizations demand different talents and different talent may lead to different attractiveness criteria. The respondents were all students from the University of Twente, although two different schools were approached, it is a quite homogeneous group. Future research can test the generalizability by including more experienced job seekers or students from other universities. In addition, the respondents all have a Dutch nationality, but different nationalities might lead to different criteria. Future research should include different nationalities. Second, this study was broad as it was not specified to a specific industry or sector. The respondents frequently answered; "it depends on the sector I will be working." For an exploratory study it is not wrong, it gives a first indication. But future research might specify it more to a specific industry or sector. A third limitation

was that the triangulation was only sent to the interviewees. As the number of respondents was so small, it was not possible or useful to statistical test the criteria. Therefore the triangulation should be send to more people. Future research could statistical test the criteria. Fourth, the research was conducted by one person. The observations and interpretations are made by one person. This is a limitation to the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings. Although the triangulation was conducted to increase the rigor and trustworthiness, it would be better to analyse the qualitative research with at least a second researcher.

The limitations already revealed some future research areas. But this research points out more. Breaugh (2008) argued that there is little known about the type of information that is sought first by talents when looking for a job on the Internet. This research investigated the importance of the attractiveness criteria and some respondents mentioned that the first thing they will look at is the job description. But they had a hard time to really express what else is important. The scores of the triangulation showcase the importance of the criteria and it is reasonable to argue that the criteria that are most important will probably be sought first. But future research can go further into this subject. A good way will to quantitative test what is most important and first sought by talents.

According to Beechler and Woodward (2009) there is a need for more policy and procedures to attract talent. This research developed a conceptual framework. This can be applied by organization to attract talent by the means of social media. The framework needs further development and investigation. For example, this research found that Facebook is not the right social media platform for organizations to communicate their employer brand, or even to use for any activity. Because of limitations with the generalizability it is not possible to generalize this result. It is important for organizations to find where their target group is active. Future research could investigate which social media platform would be best to use for which specific target group. Which platform supports which cause, so what can be achieved with LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook etc.

This study focussed on the first step of employer branding, attracting talent. Interesting to investigate would be the internal step of employer branding, the internal marketing of the employer brand. What happens when someone starts working for a particular organization? It would be interesting to investigate attributes as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. What happens in the long term? In addition, social media helps organization to reach talents worldwide, but how can an organization maintain an employer brand worldwide? This would also be interesting to investigate in the future.

#### Conclusion

This research investigated in-depth what attracts talents to organizations and gave an insight in what type of information is sought. Based on in-depth interviews 88 employer branding attractiveness criteria were revealed. By means of triangulation the employer branding attractiveness criteria were tested on their importance, in order to increase the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings. This gave insight into what information is most important to the respondents, the information definitely sought by the respondents and it gave some insights to the information that is sought first. The role of social media as a communication tool has been investigated and showed that social media can play a role in communicating the employer brand. It helps to reach millions of people worldwide.

Social media can help to create a preferred image about the organization in order to attract talent. However, the respondents argue that Facebook is not the right platform for organizations to use, the usages of Facebook is in this research considered as negative. LinkedIn and Twitter are social media platforms that organizations should use. Based on the findings a conceptual framework was developed. This framework provides a better understanding of how to use social media as a communication tool to attract talents. It can help organizations to design their social media page(s) and to communicate their employer brand through social media. This research is a first step, it has an explorative nature and focussed on the first step of employer branding, attracting talent. Future research is necessary and some interesting future research opportunities were indicated.

#### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Kasia Zalewska-Kurek and Dr. Anna Bos-Nehles for their guidance, engagement, suggestions, commitment and continuous support as supervisors.

#### References

Aaker, D.A. (1991). Managing Brand Equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name. New York: The Free Press.

Aurélie, G. & Fallery, B. (n.d.). E-recruitment: new practice, new issues. An exploratory study. Retrieved January 24, 2012, from www.cregor.net/membres/fallery/travaux/pdfs/C-Documents and Settings-Flo-Mes documents-Bernard-Travaux--2009HRISfinal.pdf

Backhaus, K., & Tikoo, S. (2004).
Conceptualizing and researching employer branding. Career Development International. Retrieved , January 17, 2012, from www.emeraldinsight.com

Barber, A. E., 1998. Recruiting Employees. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage Publications. Barber, L. (2006). E-recruitment Developments. Retrieved January 24, 2012, from <u>http://www.employment-</u> <u>studies.co.uk/pdflibrary/mp63.pdf</u>

Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage. *Journal* of Management, 17 (1), 99-120.

Barrow, S., House, G., Housely, S., Jenner, S., & Martin, G. (2007). Employer branding. The latest fad or the future for HR? *CIPD*. Retrieved January 10, 2012, from <u>http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/56C8</u> <u>377F-256B-4556-8650-</u> 8408B0E07576/0/empbrandlatfad.pdf

Becker, P. (2012). The top 15 brands on Twitter in 2011. Retrieved February 10, 2012, from <u>http://wallblog.co.uk/2012/01/12/the-top-15-brands-on-twitter-in-2011-</u> <u>infographic/#ixzz1qlw3H6Wt</u>

- Beechler, S., & Woodward, I. C. (2009). The global "war for talent". *Journal of International Management, 15,* 273-285.
- Berthon, P., Ewing, M., & Hah, L. L. (2005).
  Captivating company: dimensions of attractiveness in employer branding.
  International Journal of Advertising, 24 (2), 151-172.
- Bondarouk, T., Ruël, H., & Weekhout, W.
  (2012). Employer branding and its effect on organizational attractiveness via the world wide web: results of quantitative and qualitative studies combined. Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> International e-HRM Conference on Innovation, Creativity and e-HRM, Nottingham Trent University (UK), 28-29 March 2012.

Boyd, D.M., & Ellison, N.B. (2008). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 210-230.

Breaugh, J.A. (2008). Employee recruitment: Current knowledge and important areas for future research. *Human Resource Management Review, 18,* 103-118.

- Cable, D.M, & Yu, K.Y.T. (2006). Managing Job Seekers' Organizational Image Beliefs: The Role of Media Richness and Media Credibility. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *91* (4), 828-840.
- Caligiuri, P., Colakogku, S., Cerdin, J-L., & Kim, M.S. (2010). Examining cross-cultural and individual differences in predicting employer reputation as a driver of employer attraction. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 10* (2), 137-151.
- Cober, R.T., Brown, D.J., Levy, P.E., Cober, A.B., & Keeping, L.M. (2003).
  Organizational web sites: Web sites content and style as determinant of organizational attraction. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 11*, 158-169.
- ComScore (2011). Top 10 Need-to-Knows About Social Networking and Where It's Headed. Retrieved January 24, 2012, from <u>http://www.comscore.com/content/search</u> /cse?q=top%2020%20social%20networking %20sites&cx=006838696978854705156:gv zzufutdk8&cof=FORID:9;NB:1&ie=UTF-8
- Facebook (2012). *Key facts*. Retrieved August 29, 2012, from

http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default. aspx?NewsAreaId=22

- Farndale, E., Scullion, H., & Sparrow, P. (2009).
  The role of the corporate HR function in global talent management. *Journal of World Business, 45,* 161-168.
- Fell, J. (2011). The top 10 companies on LinkedIn. Retrieved February 10, 2012, from

http://www.freshnetworks.com/blog/2011 /08/the-top-10-companies-on-linkedin/

Glenn, D. (2012). How social are the world's most valuable brands? Retrieved February 10, 2012, from

http://socialtimes.com/how-social-are-theworlds-most-valuable-brandsinfographic b89977 Highhouse, S., Lievens, F., & Sinar, E. F. (2003).
Measuring attraction to organizations.
Educational and Psychological
Measurement, 63 (6), 986-1001.

HireRabbit (2012). How to Recruit with Facebook. Retrieved February 10, 2012, from http://mashable.com/2012/02/05/faceboo

k-recruiting-infographic/

- Hoye, van, G., & Saks, A. M. (2011). The instrumental-symbolic framework:
  Organisational image and attractiveness of potential applicants and their companions at a job fair. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 60,* 311-335.
- Huizingh, K. R. E. (2000). The content and design of web sites: an empirical study.*Information & Management, 37*, 123-134.
- Joo, B., & McLean, G. N. (2006). Best employer studies: A conceptual model from a literature review and a case study. *Human Resource Development Review*, 5 (2), 228-257.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons, 53*, 59-68.
- Kim, W., Jeong, O., & Lee, S. (2010). On social Web sites. *Information Systems*, 35, 215-236.
- Knox, S., & Freeman, C. (2006). Measuring and Managing Employer brand Image in the Service Industry. *Journal of Marketing Management, 22*, 695-716.
- Laumer, S., Eckhardt, A., & Weitzel, T. (2010). Electronic Human Resource Management in an e-business environment. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research, 11* (4), 240-250.
- Leech, L. N., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). An Array of Qualitative Data Analysis Tools: A Call for Data Analysis Triangulation. *School Psychology Quarterly, 22* (4), 557-584.
- Lievens, F. (2007). Employer branding in the Belgian army: The importance of

instrumental and symbolic beliefs for potential applicants, actual applicants, and military employees. *Human Resource Management, 46,* (1), 51-69.

- Lievens, F., & Highhouse, S. (2003). The relation of instrumental and symbolic attributes to a company's attractiveness as an employer. *Personnel Psychology*, *56*, 75-102.
- Lievens, F., Hoye, van, G., & Anseel, F. (2007). Organizational Identity and Employer Image: Towards a Unifying Framework. British Journal of Management, 18, 45-59.
- Love, L. F., & singh, P. (2011). Workplace branding: Leveraging Human resource management practices for competitive advantage through "Best Employer" surveys. *Journal Business Psychology, 26,* 175-181.
- Maurer, S. D., & Cook, D. P. (2011). Using company web sites to e-recruit qualified applicants: A job marketing based review of theory-based research. *Computer is Human Behavior, 27,* 106-117.
- McDonnell, A. (2011). Still Fighting the "War for Talent"? Bridging the Science Versus Practice Gap. *Journal of Business Psychology, 26,* 169-173.
- Michaels, E., Handfield-Jones, H., & Axelrod, B. (2001). *The War for Talent*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing. Retrieved January 28, 2012, from <u>http://books.google.nl/books?hl=nl&lr=&id</u> =simZCd\_YUC4C&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=war +for+talent+michaels&ots=NjUeGkuSbh&si g=qLQc9f6fkJen9jKWucVZr9uGOb0#v=one page&q=war%20for%20talent%20michaels &f=false
- Muller, M. (2012). How Sodexo does Recruitment and Employer Branding on Social Media. Retrieved February 27, 2012, from <u>http://linkhumans.com/blog/how-</u> <u>sodexo-does-recruitment-and-employer-</u> <u>branding-on-social-media-case-study</u>

Picard, J. (2012). Employer branding through social media. Retrieved February 10, 2012, from

http://employers.identified.com/blog/bid/ 78497/Employer-Branding-through-Social-Media

- Ployhart, R. E. (2006). Staffing in the 21st
  Century: New Challenges and Strategic
  Opportunities. *Journal of Management, 32,* 868-897.
- Robbins, S. S., & Stylianou, A. C. (2002). Global corporate web sites: an empirical investigation of content and design.
  Information & Management, 40, 205–212.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Schuler, M. (2004). Management of the
   Organizational Image: A Method for
   Organizational Image Configuration.
   Corporate Reputation Review, 7 (1), 37-63.
- Schuler, R.S, Jackson, S.E., & Tarique, I. (2011). Global talent management and global talent challenges: Strategic opportunities for IHRM. *Journal of World Business, 46,* 506-516.
- Strobel, M., Tumasjan, A., & Welpe, I. (2010).
  Do business ethics pay off? The influence of ethical leadership on organizational attractiveness. *Journal of Psychology, 218* (4), 213-224.
- Tarique, I., & Schuler, R. S. (2010). Global talent management: Literature review, integrative framework, and suggestions for further research. *Journal of World Business*, 45, 122-133.
- Turban, D. B., & Cable, D. M. (2003). The Value of Organizational Reputation in the Recruitment Context: A Brand-Equity Perspective. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 33* (11), 2244-2266.
- Tüzüner, V. L., & Yüksel, C. A. (2009).Segmenting potential employees according to firms' employer attractiveness dimensions in the employer branding

concept. *Journal of Academic Research in Economics, 1* (1), 55-70.

- Walker, H. J., Field, H. S., Giles, W. F., Bernerth, J. B., & Short, J. C. (2011). So what do you think of the organization? A contextual priming explanation for recruitment Web site characteristics as antecedents of job seekers' organizational image perceptions. Organizational Beahvior and Human Decision Processes, 114, 165-178.
- Wilden, R., Gudergan, S., & Lings, I. (2010). Employer branding: strategic implications

for staff recruitment. *Journal of Marketing Management, 26* (1-2), 56-73.

Williamson, I.O., King, J.E., Lepak, D., & Sarma,
A. (2010). Firm reputation, recruitment
web sites, and attracting applicants. *Human Resource Management, 49* (4),
669-687.

### Appendix A

52 organizations for the first selection process.

Organization		
Accenture	Fannie Mae	Nissan Motor
Amazon	FedEx	Nokia
Apple	Ford Motors	Oracle
АХА	General Electric	Pepsi
Bank of America	General Motors	PlayStation
Berkshire Hathaway	Glencore International	Red Bull
BlackBerry	Google	Royal Dutch Shell
BNP Paribas	Hitachi	Samsung Electronics
BP	Honda Motor	Sinopec Group
Chevron	HP	Sodexo
China National Petroleum	IBM	Starbucks
Coca-Cola	ING Group	State Grid
ConocoPhilips	Japan Post Holding	Total
Daimler	Levi's	Toyota Motor
Disney	McDonalds	Twitter
ENI	Microsoft	Volkswagen
Exxon Mobil	Nippon Telegraph & Telephone	WalMart Stores
Facebook		

### Appendix B

First ranking top 10 Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn

Facebook			Twitter			LinkedIn		
Organization	Rank	Total score	Organization	Rank	Score	Organization	Rank	Score
Sodexo	1	62	GE	1	47	HP	1	55
Nokia	2	61	Sodexo	2	46	GE	2	52
GE	3	58	Ford	3	43	Accenture Microsoft	3	50
GM Walmart	4	57	Coca-Cola	4	40	Shell	5	49
НР	6	53	Accenture Shell Samsung	5	39	Disney	6	48
Accenture Daimler	7	50	Bank of America	8	38	Chevron Fannie Mae	7	47
Coca-Cola Oracle	9	44	IBM	9	37	Google Walmart	9	46
			Microsoft Walmart	10	36			

The 20 organizations that were selected based on the first ranking.

Company	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn
Accenture	7	5	3
Bank of America		8	
Chevron			7
Coca-Cola	9	4	
Daimler	7		
Disney			6
Fannie Mae			7
Ford		3	
GE	3	1	2
GM	4		
Google			9
НР	6		1
IBM		9	
Microsoft		10	3
Nokia	2		
Oracle	9		
Samsung		5	
Shell		5	5
Sodexo	1	2	
WalMart	4	10	9

## Appendix C

Employer branding protocol;

<ul> <li>Employer branding elements <ul> <li>(1) At what level does the organization describe these employer branding elements?</li> </ul> </li> <li>(2) What is the level of external communication about these employer branding elements?</li> </ul>	5. Strong employer branding All the information needed is available, the social media page is easy to navigate and information is easy to reach, relevant and current. The content of the information is credible and rich. The information is supported by means of aesthetic and vivid features.	4. Above average employer branding Most of the information is available, the social media page is easy to navigate and information is easy to reach, mostly relevant and current. The content of the information is rather credible and rich. Aesthetic and vivid features support the information	3. Average employer branding Most of the information is available, but the social media page is not always easy to navigate and information is not always easy to reach, relevant and current. The content of the information is rather credible and rich. Aesthetic and vivid features are used to support the information	2. Moderate employer branding Some information is available, but the social media page is not always easy to navigate and information is not always easy to reach, relevant and current. The content of the information is not always credible and rich. Aesthetic and vivid features are used occasionally to support the information	<ol> <li>Weak employer branding Most of the information is not available, and the social media page is not easy to navigate and information is not easy to reach, relevant and current. The content of the information leaves room for doubt.</li> <li>Aesthetic and vivid features are rarely used to support the information</li> </ol>
Organizational characteristics A description of: The organizations history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered. An introduction to the organization is offered. Introduction to organizations CEO(s)	The organization provides a detailed description of their history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered. A clear an broad introduction to the organization is given. This is supported by a detailed message from the CEO.	The organization provides clear information of their history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered. An clear introduction to the organization is provided. Message from the CEO is provided.	The organization provides information of their history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered. An introduction to the organization is given, but it is rather short. Rarely information available about the CEO.	The organization provides limited information about their history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered. A rather scarce introduction to the organization is given. No information available about the CEO.	The organization provides no information about their history, what it is, what it offers and how it is offered. Nor an introduction to the organization is given or to the CEO.
Organizational operations A description of: Organizational processes, including vision, mission, future goals and organizational values. The organizational structure and operations.	The organization provides a detailed description of the organizational processes, including its vision, mission, and future goals. In addition the organizational structure and their operations are clearly described. Organizational values that are important are clearly described and broadly elaborated.	Most of the organizational processes are described, mainly focussing on its vision, mission, and future goals. The organizational structure and their operations are described. The organizational values that are important are described. The information is clear, and provides a clear view.	Attention is paid to its vision, mission, and future goals. Some info is available about the organizational structure and operations. The organizational values are given. But other information is not described.	Some attention has been paid to its vision, mission, future goals, organizational structure, operations, and values but is rather scares. Other information is not described.	Organizational processes are not described, nor the vision, mission, future goals and values. The organization does not describe their organizational structure, nor their operations.
People and Culture A description of: The kind of people employed and what is expected from them. Employment conditions and treatment of employees. Experiences from current employees, daily life. Current culture and ethics in the organization	The organization provides detailed information about the kind of people who are working for the organization and what is expected from them and from potential employees. Employment conditions are clearly defined and how employees are treated. This is supported by experiences of current employees, describing clearly their daily life. In addition, the organization provides detailed information about the culture and ethics within the organization.	The organization provides information about the kind of people who are working for the organization and in most cases what is expected from them and from potential employees. Employment conditions are defined and how employees are treated. This is supported by experiences of current employees, describing their daily life. In addition, the organization provides information about the culture and ethics within the organization.	The organization provides some information about the kind of people who are working for the organization. Employment conditions are not described, nor how employees are treated. Some information is available about experiences of current employees. Information is given about the culture and ethics within the organization, but not in excessive amounts.	The organization provides limited information about the kind of people who are working for the organization. Employment conditions are not described, nor how employees are treated. There is no information available about experiences of current employees. There is rarely information given about the culture and ethics within the organization.	The organization provides no information about the kind of people who are working for the organization, the employment conditions, nor how employees are treated. There is no information available about experiences of current employees, nor is there any information available about the culture and ethics within the organization.
Remuneration and advancement A description of: Advancement opportunities and career programs. Benefits and compensation system.	The organization provides a detailed list of advancement opportunities for employees, once inside the organization. Career programs are clearly defined, as are other opportunities for advancement. The organization describes the benefits and compensation system, preferably per group of employees.	The organization provides information about the advancement opportunities for employees inside the organization. Possibilities for career programs are discussed, but not always clearly defined. Mainly some examples for groups of employees are given. Benefits and compensation system are provided.	The organization provides information about the advancement opportunities in the organization, but no details are revealed. The same applies for possible benefits and compensation systems. Information is given, but not in excessive amounts.	The organization provides information about advancement opportunities in the organization. The same applies for possible benefits and compensation systems. Whenever it is mentioned, the content is not always credible.	The organization gives no information on possible advancement opportunities nor remuneration possibilities within the organization. Career paths or programs are not mentioned, nor are benefits and possible compensation systems.

Job characteristics A description of: Job opportunities and job learning opportunities. Key functions and specific characteristics. Introduction program. Job openings and tips and tricks on how to apply.	The organization describes in detail the job opportunities that are available with the job. Key functions are defined and their specific characteristics. Attention has been paid to the introduction program of new employees and possibilities for 'learning on the job'. Job openings are clearly defined and how to apply is clearly described, including tips and tricks for applying are given.	The organization describes opportunities that are available with the job. Key functions are defined, but not very specifically. Some attention is paid to the introduction program of new employees and possibilities for 'learning on the job'. Information is given about how to apply. Job openings are defined and some tips and tricks for applying are given.	The organization describes different opportunities available with a job. Some key functions are defined, but not extra information is given. No attention is paid to an introduction program of new employees or any other related information. Some job openings are defined, but no further info is given.	The organization describes some opportunities available with a job. Hardly any key functions are described, nor is any related information given. No attention has been paid to an introduction program for new employees. Job openings are not given.	The organization does not describe any job-related information. Job opportunities, openings and possible opportunities for growth remain vague. No key functions are mentioned, nor any function present in the organization. Therefore, no attention has been paid to introduction programs, learning on the job, or tips and tricks on how to apply.
Employer reputation A description of: Achievements so far, annual reports, financial highlights etc. Social activities, sponsorships, social responsibility projects etc. Products and service ratings.	The organization has a detailed and updated list with all achievements so far, annual reports are given and clear introduction to these reports are given. Financial highlights are given and clearly explained. Social activities are clearly described as well as social responsibility projects that the organization organizes or support. Sponsorships are clearly defined. Product and/or service ratings are published, as reviews of clients and consumers.	The organization provides information of achievements so far, and annual reports and financial highlights are available. The most popular social activities are described as well as the most popular social responsibility projects. Sponsorships are defined. Product and/or service ratings of newest products and/or services are published.	The organization provides some information of most important achievements. Annual report is available, but hardly any attention is paid to it. Financial highlights are not given. Some insight are given to social activities and social responsibility projects. Sponsorships are defined. No product and/or service ratings are published.	The organization provides some information of most important achievements, but they are rather scarce. Annual report are not available, the same accounts for financial highlights. One social activity is mentioned, but no further in- depth information is given. Sponsorship are not given. No product and/or service ratings are published.	The organization provides no information of previous achievements. Annual report or financial highlights are not given. No information about social activities or sponsorships. No product and/or service ratings are published.
Communication A description of: Current events. Hyperlink to corporate website and career website. Possibility for people post reactions or ask questions (to an expert). Organization evokes group discussion.	The organization provides a detailed list of current events it organizes or takes part of. A direct link to the corporate website and career site is given and clearly referred to. The organization provides the opportunity to ask questions and post reactions on the page. Detailed answers are given by the organization within at least three days. The organization start multiple discussions by asking questions and opinions of people.	The organization provides a list of current events it organizes or takes part of. A direct link to the corporate website and career site is given. There is a message board to ask questions and post reactions. An answers is given by the organization within a week. The organization also tries to start discussions by asking questions and opinions of people.	The organization provides a list of events it organizes or takes part of, but it is not up to date. A link to the corporate website is given, but it is not easily to find. There is no link to a career website. There is a message board to ask questions and post reactions. Some attention is paid to answers the questions. The organization does not try to start discussions.	The organization provides a list of events, but it is not up to date. There is no link to the corporate website or to the career website. There is a message board to ask questions and post reactions. No answer or response is given by the organization. The organization does not try to start discussions.	The organization does not provides a list of events. There is no link to the corporate website or to the career website. There is not a possibility to ask questions and post reactions. The organization does not try to start discussions.
Entertainment/ presentation Availability of: Video's, photo's, organizational logo, and employer blog	The organization provides video's and photos of the organization, which give a detailed insight into the organization, their values and what is important. A link to YouTube with more video's is given. In addition, multiple videos of employees and their experiences are available. The organizational logo is always visible. An link to the employer blog is given, which provides detailed information about the organization as an employer.	The organization provides a video and photos of the organization. The video and photo's give insight into the organization and what it stands for. Videos of employees experiences are also available. More videos are available on YouTube and the link is given. The organizational logo is visible. An link to the employer blog is given, which provides information about the organization as an employer.	The organization provides a video and photos of the organization. The video and photo's give some insights into the organization. Videos of employees experiences are available, but not in excessive amounts. There is no link to the YouTube channel. The organizational logo is visible. There is no employer blog.	The organization provides a video and some photos of the organization. The video is a short standard movie, that does not provide a lot of information. Videos of employees experiences are not available. There is no link to the YouTube channel. The organizational logo is not visible. There is no employer blog.	The organization does not provides video's and/or photos of the organization. Videos of employees experiences are not available. There is no link to the YouTube channel. The organizational logo is not visible. There is no employer blog.
Contact A description of recruitment team. Direct contact to recruitment team, including pictures. Organizations address, email, phone number and location	The organization provides detailed information about the recruitment team. Names, email address and photos are given, which gives a human touch to the recruitment team. In addition, potential employees are encouraged to contact the recruitment team directly. Furthermore the organizations contact information, like address, email, phone and location are clearly described.	The organization provides information about the recruitment team. Names, email address and photos are given, which gives a human touch to the recruitment team. It is possible for potential employees to contact the recruitment team directly. Furthermore the organizations contact information, like address, email, phone and location are described.	The organization provides information about the recruitment team. Names and email address are available. A photo of the recruitment team is not given. It is possible to directly email the recruitment team. Furthermore the organizations contact information, like address, email, phone are given. No further information about the location is given.	The organization provides no information about the recruitment team. If people want to get in touch with the recruitment team, they can send an email to overall email address. Organizational contact information is given, but it rather scarce, a phone number and an overall email address is given.	The organization provides no information about the recruitment team and in addition no organizational contact information is given.