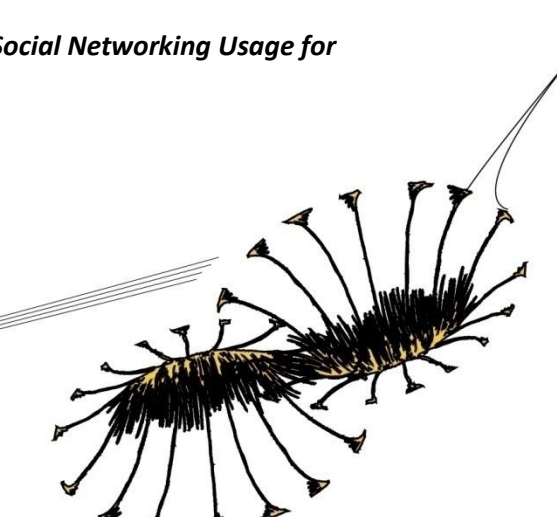




## Employer branding through Social Networking Sites

*"An Explorative Research towards the Benefits and Limitations of Social Networking Usage for Employer Branding Purposes"*



**Subject:** Master thesis


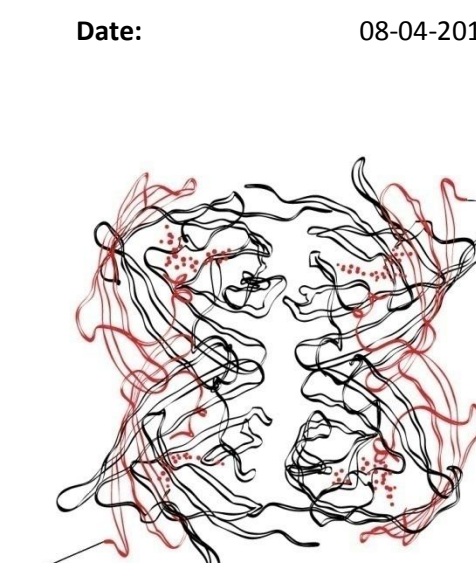
**Study:** Master Business Administration

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## Management summary

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Social networking sites today can be seen as the most utilized services within Web 2.0, in which Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and MySpace have attracted hundreds of millions of users which integrated these sites into their daily practices. Because of the large number of individuals active on SNS, it is also frequently used as a tool for promoting purposes within businesses. So has social networking sites already have proven to be an effective tool for the branding of products and services (Constantinides, 2010). Even more recently SNS is increasingly used as a tool for promoting the employer brand, referring to the image of desirability and uniqueness as an employer.

This study is the first one to expose the experiences of practitioners regarding the usefulness of social networking sites for employer branding. The aim of the research is to help businesses to better understand when, and when not to use social networking sites for their employer branding purposes. Therefore the research question is: *What are the benefits and limitations of the usage of social networking sites for the purpose of employer branding, in the vision of Employer Branding practitioners?*

To shed light on this subject, this study applied the Delphi method with a panel of 13 (employer) branding practitioners through a three-round issue identification and consensus-building process. Moreover, the usefulness of SNS for employer branding purposes are suggested and ranked in four areas: the benefits, limitations, conditions and the usage of SNS for employer branding. The three most important findings for each area are summarized in the table below.

<b>Benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Serves as a strategy for attracting inside and outside talent.</li><li>- Way of presenting as an interesting employer as wide and specific possible.</li><li>- Becoming publisher of stories and therewith validate the brand messages.</li></ul>
<b>Conditions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Need for a clear long term strategy.</li><li>- Need of a personal approach towards people who are interested in the company.</li><li>- Need of EB messages which are easily available and seen.</li></ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The easy way of overlooking an EB message.</li><li>- Easy and anonymously way of complaining regarding a company.</li><li>- (target) audiences that restrictive or not use SNS.</li></ul>
<b>Usage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- EB messages including storytelling for inspiring people.</li><li>- EB content that fits the special interests of the focus group.</li><li>- EB advertisements for reaching new people.</li></ul>

It should be noticed that the answers might be influenced by the variety of sectors and the size of companies the employer branding practitioners work for. Even more, recommendations are given regarding future research.

## Section 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

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In today's world, it is almost unthinkable not to use the internet to broadcast messages to large audiences using status updates and wall posts, while also providing features, such as chat, for messages the user wishes to keep private. Social networking sites (SNS), such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *LinkedIn* have already attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices. The use of social networking sites are still rapidly growing, and many people do not even think of what life would be without it. Although, social networking is relatively new, thinking of that *Facebook* was just founded in 2004 and from there have grown towards more than one billion users. Besides, *Facebook* is responsible for 9 percent of all internet traffic (Kennedy, 2015). Social network usage makes the world more connected than ever and impacts how people interact with each other. Also within companies the impact of SNS is tangible. Marketers for example are concerned with increasing customer empowerment and declining customer loyalty, whereby product reviews and recommendations by consumers on social networking sites are seen as more credible than company communication itself (Constantinides, 2010; Bondarouk and Olivas-Luján, 2013).

Recently, also HR professionals have discovered the impact of social networking sites within the HRM field (Bondarouk and Olivas-Luján, 2013). They understand the power of information sharing and use SNS for recruitment of current and prospective employees. Social networking sites provide greater access to more candidates, through for example *LinkedIn* for searching potential candidates, and through announcements of job openings on *Facebook* or *Twitter* (Bissola and Imperatori, 2013). Likewise, *Facebook* profiles can be used to attract and engage current employees into the company (Parry and Solidoro, 2013). Furthermore, HR professionals also understand that social networking sites can be used regarding their image of desirability and uniqueness of an employer: The employer brand (Bondarouk, et al., 2013). Employer branding through social networking sites enables HR professionals to use new techniques for effective and efficient activities. For example, employees permitting to write a "tweet" on how it is to work in that company could improve the organizational image, and thus could increase the number of applying candidates (Bondarouk, et al., 2013) Even more, evidence shows that social media is the main activity being undertaken by companies to enhance their employer brand. 76% of the companies use social media as main communication channel to promote their employer brand (Minchington, 2014).

Companies' expectations are great, but little research has tackled the issues regarding employer branding through social networking sites. Businesses should become aware of the usefulness of the social networking usage on employer branding, before they decide to use it. Knowing what

reasonably is expected to achieve with the network site makes it more useful for business, and will save time and money. Therefore, the objective of this study is to search for empirical evidence in the business field towards the benefits and limitations of social networking usage for businesses' employer branding.

## 1.2 research question and contribution

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Derived from the introduction, the research question of this study is:

What are the benefits and limitations of the usage of social networking sites for the purpose of employer branding, in the vision of Employer Branding practitioners?

### ***Contribution to the literature***

This study delves further into the findings of several Delphi studies regarding the future developments of the use of new technology in the HRM-area (Heikkilä, 2010; Bondarouk, et al. 2013; Girard et al., 2013). Within these studies is predicted that social media will have crucial impact on several activities within the HRM-field. Recently, Bondarouk et al. (2013) mentioned the importance of using social media for employer branding. They state that “the attractiveness of employer branding, enhanced through the social media is rooted in the great opportunities for HR professionals to get involved in activities beyond their traditional tasks” (p. 25). In the study they investigated the impact social media will have on employer branding in the near future. This study builds further on the previous predictions by investigating the present value of employer branding through social networking sites, on the basis of investigating its benefits and limitations. Therewith this research extends the employer branding literature, whereby new elements that will derive from this particular research can be further used for large-scale research in the future. Even more, this study can be seen as a confirmation of predictions made regarding the impact social media will have on employer branding. Bondarouk et al. (2013) predicted, for example, that social media would heavily influence talent management and the role of HR professionals. However, there is the possibility that not everything that they foresee will actually happen. Therewith the study informs in what extent assumptions made reflects the reality nowadays.

### ***Practical contribution***

Even though companies already use social networks frequently for their employer branding, there is little empirical research done and no fully consensus reached (Bondarouk et al., 2013). Studies mainly focus on the ways companies should use social network platforms in their employer branding (Girard et al., 2013; Laick and Dean, 2011; Love and Singh, 2011; Sivertzen et al., 2013). However, empirical research regarding aspects such as the usefulness and value of social networking sites for employer

branding remains off. Therewith it seem that businesses are already developing strategies for employer branding through SNS, without knowing what it can produce for the organization. Although, Bondarouk & Luján (2013) made a start with summing up the possible benefits of social media for general HRM, such as reaching new audience, searching for candidates, low-cost contacting with customers, etcetera. More specifically, other authors sum up particular advantages and disadvantages regarding the general use of employer branding (Morley, 2009; Heilmann, Saarenketo and Liikkanen, 2013; Gupta, Patti and Marwah, 2014). However, these studies (1) did not empirically test their assumptions and/or (2) did not base their study specifically on SNS.

The current research helps businesses to better understand when, and when not to use social networking sites for their employer branding purposes. Even more, it helps to understand if and in what extent social networking sites for employer branding helps the business to reach a competitive advantage. It supports organizations to make thought-out decisions on the usefulness of social networking for their employer branding, which saves them money and time. Next to that, businesses and researchers can validate to what extent to involve SNS in their long-term strategy for employer branding.

## Section 2: Literature review Social Networking Sites and Employer Branding

### 2.1 Social Networking Sites

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#### 2.1.1 Social networking sites literature research

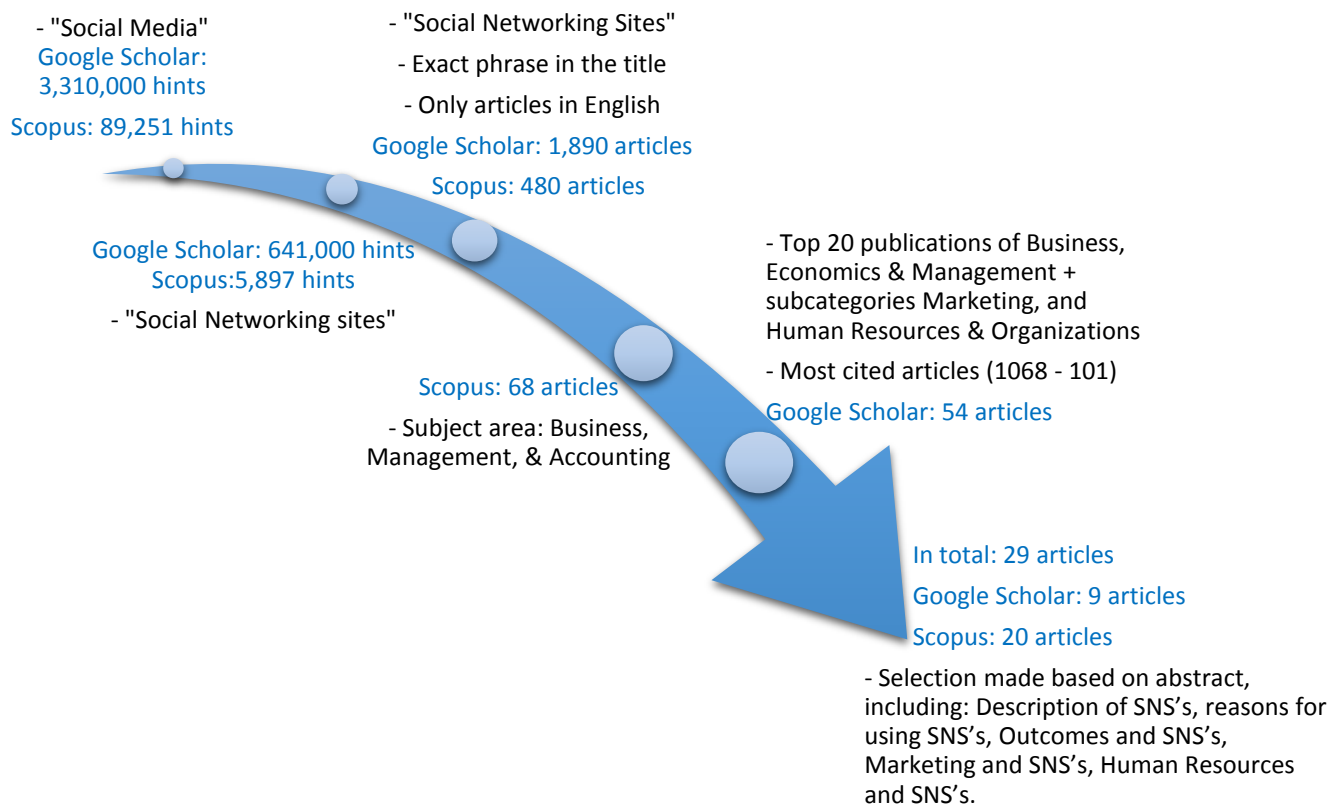
For the purpose of finding the most relevant, accurate, and useful articles for the current research, there is made use of two search engines; Google *Scholar* and *Scopus*.

The narrowing search process for social networking sites started with a search towards “Social Media”, which resulted into 3,310,000 hints on Google Scholar and 89,251 hints on Scopus. Narrowing the search down towards “social networking sites” resulted in 5,897 hints on Scopus and 641,000 hints on Google Scholar. Because of the huge amount of articles found, only articles in English and with “social networking sites” in the title were selected, whereby Google scholar offered 1,890 articles compared to 480 articles for Scopus.

Moreover, considering an overall look of the articles available and the background of the current study, the articles related towards Business, Management, Accounting/Economics were founded to be of most importance for the current research. Firstly, for Google scholar articles were selected that are released in the top 20 publications of Business, Economics and Management, and in the top 20 of subcategories Marketing and Human Resources and Organizations, resulting in 22 articles. Furthermore, also the most cited articles (1068 – 101 cites) were taken into account, resulting in an addition of 32 articles. Secondly, for Scopus, the subject area of Business, Management and Accounting was selected, with an outcome of 68 articles.

The following step included deciding which of the 112 previous articles are most useful towards the current study. Therefore, the abstracts of the articles were taken into account to figure out the main areas of previous research. After consideration, the following areas of interests were selected which should provide the most useful information for the particular study: Description of SNS, reasons for using SNS, Outcomes and SNS, Marketing and SNS, Human Resources and SNS. For Google Scholar this resulted into 9 relevant articles, and for Scopus it resulted in 20 relevant articles for the particular study (See fig. 1).





**Figure 1** Research Process of Social Networking Sites

### 2.1.2 Social networking sites defined

Social networking sites today can be seen as the most utilized services within Web 2.0, whereby Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and MySpace have attracted hundreds of millions of users which integrated these sites into their daily practices (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Lorenzo-Romero, Constantinides, and Alarcón-del-Amo, 2011; Donde, et al. 2012). In this millennium social networking sites are replacing the old way of communication, like phone, letters etcetera. Nowadays, research is still trying to discover the purposes and settings of SNS, and explores the motives for people to use them (Donde et al., 2012). The previous influence the way researchers define SNS, and yet there is no fully consensus reached on the definition of SNS.

Nevertheless, several studies have attempted to give a proper definition of SNS. In the early days of the use of SNS, Boyd & Ellison (2007) defined social networking sites as follows:

*"[...] Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. (p. 211)"*

Furthermore, Boyd & Ellison (2007) mention that network sites have the primary goal to maintain existing offline relationships or consolidate these connections, more often than they are used for meeting strangers. The previous is one of the main aspects that distinguish SNS from other Web 2.0 communication types, such as blogs, discussion groups, forums, etc. (Lorenzo-Romero et al., 2011). Next to that, while SNS are very often widely accessible, many attract homogenous populations, separated by for example nationality, age, educational level, etcetera.

Hence, Kwon & Wen (2010) add that people have various reasons for using SNS. They mention that it also can be used for blogging or sharing content and media. Next to that, they notice that there are several affective and social factors that influence the continuance of using SNS, such as self-image and regret. Regarding the previous, they made a more recent definition for understanding SNS:

*“[...] A web-based service which is based on certain meaningful and valuable relationships including friendship, kinship, interests and activities, etc. Social network services allows individuals to network for a variety of purposes including sharing information, building and exploring the relationship, etc. (p. 255).”*

Nevertheless, several years later Boyd & Ellison (2013) mention even more radical changes within the social and technical landscape of SNS over the past years. They state that several distinguishing features of SNS have faded in importance, while others have been reproduced by other genres of social media. Boyd & Ellison (2013) explain these changes over time by means of their definition in 2007:

- *A public or semi-public profile*; the first SNS profiles could be seen as profile-centric, organized explicitly around a set of profiles that represented individuals within the system. Further, they were based on relatively static portraits, static text, and updates (on their profile) were only done by the profile owner. Nowadays, because SNS profiles increasingly include multiple channels, SNS profiles are often co-constructed by actions of others (such as the comment-section, “wall” of Facebook). Therefore, social network profiles lost their centrality, and rather are seen as a dynamic combination of content provided by the user (e.g. personal updates), content based on user activity (e.g. groups joined), system-provided content (e.g. third-party sites) and/or content provided by others (e.g. tags/comments).
- *The “friends” list*; In the rise of the SNS, individuals could create a private list of contacts, build up a group of contacts shared by others. Hence, SNS today make it possible to personally manage a publicly visible list of contacts. Present, the link between two “friends” do not have to be reciprocal anymore, as Facebook and Twitter began to allow people to “follow” others.

Also when the friendship is reciprocal, there are features to “hide” updates or to limit the ability of some friends to see updates, which carries on sided disclosure of information. Facebook and Twitter also allow people to create different types of lists to organize their connections privately, so content can be limited to people on those lists. Next to these flexible arrangements, people contacts lists became much more diverse as “friends” representing a range of social contexts (family, professional contacts, neighborhood, etc.). Lastly, due to open application programming interfaces (APIs) and other platforms these social networks became valuable outside the context of particular SNS. Engineers and entrepreneurs saw value within this “social graph”, which refers towards the global network of linkages between all individuals within a system. Marketers started to recognize the economic potential of using this “social graph” for advertising purposes, while media companies realized that they could influence the social graph to shape the flow of information. Moreover, companies increasingly use the “social graph” for complex algorithmic work, such as suggest relevant content, offer recommended contacts, and provide targeted advertisements.

- *View and traverse connections*; The ability to see and traverse one’s own contact list and that of others was a crucial component of SNS. It served as a way for finding and connecting with friends, and easily finding shared connections of others. After that SNS have become mainstream, the traversability of connections is not the sole component of participation anymore. Nowadays, the content on SNS is embedded with divers other pieces of content. Features like “hashtags” (topics) on Twitter; whereby people can click on them to show other posts with that particular topic, and clickable profiles on Facebook allows people to traverse numerous content.

Based on the previous evolvement of the technical and social landscape of social networking sites, Boyd & Ellison (2013) define SNS today as:

*“A social network site is a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site (p.158).”*

Boyd & Ellison (2013) add that social network sites are primary used to communicate and share content, supported by a diverse set of communication-oriented features. This way of communication reshape the kind of networks people build and support, and weak tie relationships on SNS would fade away if it was not that easy to communicate, share, and maintain simple connections. Moreover, their

definition will be built upon in present study, as it clearly explains the present features of SNS, and therewith sheds light on the activities and goals that can be reached with SNS nowadays.

### 2.1.3 Social networking sites in context of Web 2.0

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) state that Web 2.0 is the platform for the evolution of social networking sites, as it builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. Moreover, also other internet-based applications (social media) are evaluated by Web 2.0, such as blogs, wiki's, virtual game shops, etcetera. The Web 2.0 can be seen as a new way of using the Word Wide Web by software developers and end-users. So, for understanding the significance of SNSs and their related practices, it is crucial to contextualize them against the setting of Web 2.0 (Boyd and Ellison, 2013).

Web 2.0 can be seen as a platform whereby content and applications traverse each other, which is established by modifications of all users in a participative and collaborative way. The concept was born as an industry-phenomenon, and hyped by the news media and by business analysts alike. Web 2.0 replaces the way of content sharing compared to Web 1.0, with applications such as blogs, wiki's, content communities, etc. (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Although the evolution towards Web 2.0 did not include a technical update in the World Wide Web, socio-technical dynamics are unfolded as millions of people embraced the technology for collaborating, sharing information and socializing (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Boyd and Ellison, 2013).

On the technical side, Web 2.0 shifted from server-driven back-end websites towards front-end centric one's (Boyd and Ellison, 2013). The shift was driven by different web development programs, such as "Adobe Flash (a popular method for adding animation, interactivity, and audio/video streams to web pages), RSS (Really Simple Syndication, a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content, such as blog entries or news headlines, in a standardized format), and AJAX (Asynchronous Java Script, a technique to retrieve data from web servers asynchronously, allowing the update of web content without interfering with the display and behavior of the whole page)" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; p. 61).

On the social side, Web 2.0 also came with a cultural shift (Boyd and Ellison, 2013). Although online communities also existed within Web 1.0, nowadays it is the mainstream of the internet. Before Web. 2.0, online communities weren't the central focus of most internet users, as it was considered to be geeky. People used the internet for browsing websites, engaging with e-mail, instant messaging, and casual gaming. Social networking sites reformed the engagement of people into online communities, because they shifted the interest-driven communities towards friendship-driven spaces. Rather than meeting strangers with a particular topic or hobby, people turned towards a SNS for publicly engaging with people they already knew (Boyd and Ellison, 2013).

Moreover, SNS emerged out of the Web 2.0, but also features of older computer-mediated communication (CMC) are incorporated in the modern SNS (Boyd and Ellison, 2013). They state that older CMC's such as the possibility of categorizing users by interest, describe oneself textually, one-to-one communication (e.g. email) and one-to-many communication (e.g. topic forums) are key aspects of SNS today. Thus, social networking sites can be seen as a mix of already existing online social communities and new technologies infused by the ideals of the tech-industry.

#### 2.1.4 Main players of social networking sites

There are a number of major players in the field of social networking sites (Sinclair and Vogus, 2011). Although, three social networking sites stand out due to their global appeal, promoting-activities and large user numbers: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. These social networks are in the top 20 of leading social networking sites worldwide (Statista, 2015). Moreover, the sites serve different purposes and target groups, and are freely accessible for internet users.

##### *Facebook*

The company Facebook is the largest social networking site nowadays (founded by Mark Zuckerberg to keep in touch with his classmates of the Harvard University), with more than 1,4 billion users (Statista, 2015). Facebook attracts users of all ages who use real names to create their own (standardized) profile pages (Sinclair and Vogus, 2011). It describes itself as a “social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family and coworkers” (Sinclair and Vogus, 2011; p. 295). Moreover, Facebook is commonly used to connect with close friends instead to meet new people. Next to that, the site is also used for finding out more information about peripheral others, such as casual relatives or newly met people in real life. Moreover, the new technology helps companies to connect information with people through their relationships. Technologies like “Facebook connect” allows companies to suggest unique content based on a person’s Facebook Friends list (Boyd and Ellison, 2013).

##### *LinkedIn*

LinkedIn, founded in 2003, is a social network with over 97 million users today (Statista, 2015). LinkedIn is career-oriented, whereby professionals seek connections with other professionals. Therefore the site provides personal accounts as well as fee-based business-user accounts (e.g. for career centers), with functionalities such as email, search options, and expanded profile views (Sinclair and Vogus, 2011). In the beginning it was used to boost professional prospects and for small companies to promote products and services, nowadays it has evolved to provide group features and the “following”

of company profiles. Next to that, also sponsored links can be found for targeting job seekers and hiring managers alike (Sinclair and Vogus, 2011).

### *Twitter*

Twitter has grown popular, with over more than 316 million users today (Statista, 2015), and therewith also the concept of uni-directional relationships. The uni-directional relationships are shaped in a way that people can follow others, which they generally don't know personally, and who do not reciprocate (Boyd and Ellison, 2013). Within their twitter-account people update their status and publish short messages (fewer than 140 characters), which can be seen as a way of micro-blogging. Next to that they can befriend and monitor each other's messages and updates. Although Twitter started out as a platform for people to create, discover and share ideas with others, companies were quick to discover how to use it for promotion and marketing purposes (Sinclair and Vogus, 2011).

### 2.1.5 Literature review of social networking sites

Research related towards SNS is offered in divers fields, wide-ranging from the impact of cyberbullying on SNS (Cao and Lin, 2015), the influence of SNS on the engagement of political processes (Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer and Bichard, 2010), the relationship between personality traits and the use of SNS (Krämer and Winter, 2008), until the influence of electronic word-of-mouth on SNS compared with traditional marketing (Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels, 2009). The divers series of activities and goals related towards SNS makes the context of social networking sites relevant for almost every discipline, and therewith for billions of people.

Social networking sites nowadays are used by people of all ages, which join and use an array of different SNS for various reasons. Although enjoyment is an crucial motivator for connecting on SNS, also user satisfaction and sense of belonging are important factors for continuance of using social networks (Lin, Fan and Chau, 2014). Moreover, SNS changes the patterns of people's social life, cleared up by several advantages and disadvantages regarding the use of SNS (Donde et al., 2012):

### *Advantages*

- 
- Social networking sites are found to be the most cost effective way to stay in touch with people.
  - SNS enable high interactivity between individuals by sending and receiving messages, and uploading and sharing of videos and photos.
  - Despite cultural inequality, a person gets the chance to meet and know people with similar areas of interest.

- People have the possibility to expand their contacts, interact with large pools of people, and extend their thoughts and interests.
- It facilitates a cost effective and rapidly way of collecting information.
- Because of the large number of people active on SNS, it can also be used as a tool for promoting business, services, products, or websites.

#### *Disadvantages*

- 
- Personal information of users can be misused for fraud/online crimes.
  - Hard to identify persons; fake profiles can be made and used for cheating on unsuspected users.
  - SNS are very poorly regulated, which lead to online harassment and nuisance.

Moreover, social networking sites, especially Facebook and Twitter, serves more purposes than the original one of connecting with other people. Also businesses have established themselves on social networking sites, because SNS changes the way consumers behave. Businesses therefore are coming up with new procedures, roles and responsibilities, metrics and strategies, and at the same they need to answer challenges and legal issues that may arise regarding SNS (Constantinides, 2010).

#### *Marketing and SNS*

Individual users do not only approach social networking sites, it can also serve as a tool for marketing (Chu and Kim, 2009; Lorenzo-Romero, et al., 2011; Constantinides, 2010). Numerous marketers are advertising on SNS, not just because an large public can be reached, but also because SNS allow marketers to customize their advertisements towards selected individuals. Marketers are able to put in specified characteristics (e.g. demographics and interests) into the system, and because the SNS has this information of all users, the marketer's advertisement will only be visible for SNS users within those criteria (Gironda and Korgaonkar, 2014). Next to that, marketers nowadays are trying to engage consumers into their brand, by setting up brand profile pages and engaging consumers to make friends with the brand (Chu and Kim, 2009). SNS namely generate word-of-mouth, where consumers have the chance to freely share their experience and opinions on SNS, and rapidly spread information and opinions regarding products and services in their social networks.

In addition, Lorenzo-Romero et al. (2011) mention three other roles SNS can play within the marketing strategy. Firstly, SNS can serve as a tool for gathering customer information, including personality and lifestyle of customers, as well as information of customers on trust in the internet, perceived usability, attitudes on SNS, etcetera. Secondly, businesses can use SNS as source of customer

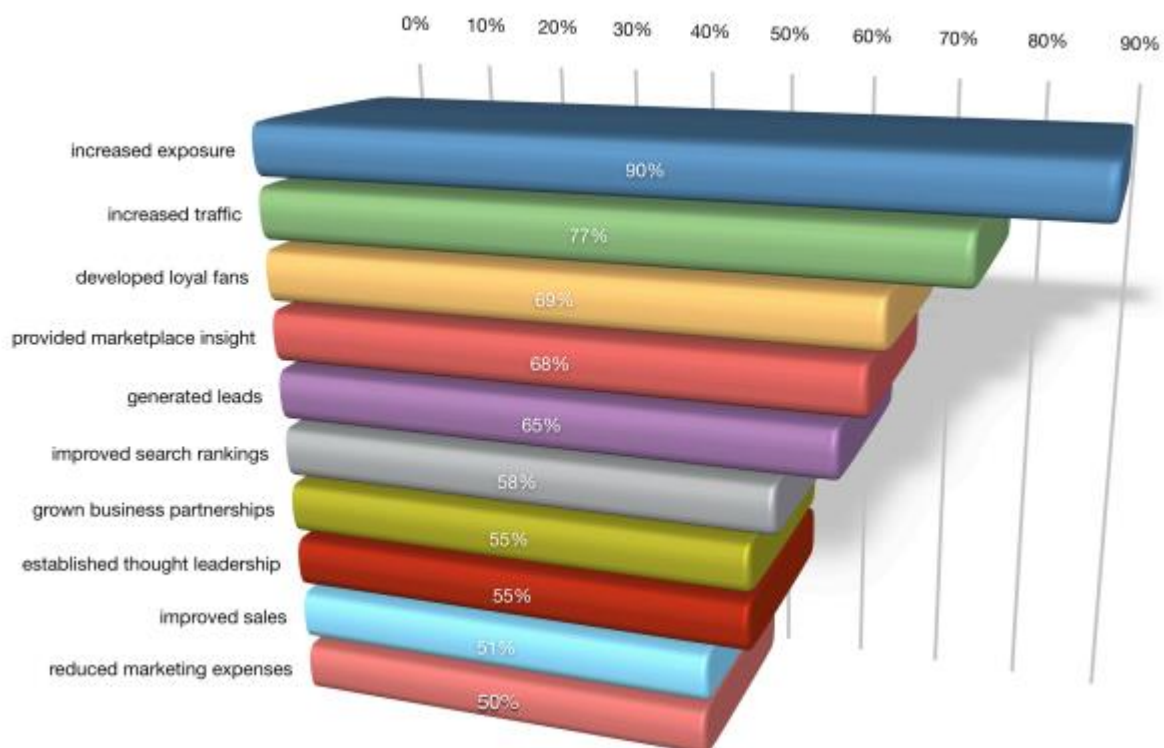


voice, with the intention of developing and testing new products or services. Last but not least, SNS can be used as customer service channels, whereby customers are informed on personalized level.

The wide usability of SNS as marketing tool makes it an interesting strategic option for variety of businesses. Constantinides (2010) mention several tangible advantages for using SNS, among other internet-based applications, as marketing tool:

- Cost advantages; reduced communication costs, R&D costs and advertising costs;
- Enhanced customer loyalty;
- Efficient innovation and reduced risk of new product development; leading towards new forms of collaborative value creation.

The benefit of this type of marketing is also becoming clear for the business itself. Stelnzer (2015) conducted a survey in the field, where 90% of the marketers indicated that that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for their businesses. The second major benefit of social media marketing was increasing traffic, with 77% reporting positive results. Other major benefits related towards marketing use on social media are described in figure 2. The top platforms used by marketers for branding purposes are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Pinterest and Instagram, whereby 57% see Facebook as the most important platform for their branding activities.



**Figure 2** Perceived benefits of social media use for marketing (Stelnzer, 2015)



HRM practitioners nowadays are also making use of SNS related towards their HRM activities (Nikolaou, 2014; Osborn and Lofrisco, 2012; Clark and Roberts, 2010). The majority of HRM professionals and job seekers are extensively using SNS for job search and employee recruitment. The main reason why people join and use SNS, in particular professional-oriented SNS, is because of job search. SNS offer job seekers to widen their job search tools beyond traditional tools, such as the press, career days, company Web sites, job boards etcetera (Nikolaou, 2014). Next to that, HRM professionals typically use SNS for attracting, recruiting, and background checking on candidates. On top, HRM professionals could also use the tool for identifying employees who are harming the company's mission and reputation (Davison, Maraist and Bing, 2011).

Moreover, Davison et al. (2011) have researched in-depth the current and potential uses of social networking sites into HR, including the current state of empirical research, see the table below.

**Table 1** Current and potential uses of social networking websites in HR decision-making (Davison et al., 2011).

	Recruiting	Screening and Selection	Disciplinary action and terminations
Current uses	<p>Applicants research organizations by searching their Facebook pages and "Tweets", etc.</p> <p>Applicants locate job postings by organizations on social networking sites.</p>	<p>HR professionals search social networking sites to gather information about applicants, screen out individuals, or develop targeted interview questions.</p>	<p>Organizations mandate employees can only provide certain information about the company on their social networking sites and if they do not follow the agreement, be subject to discipline</p> <p>Organizations terminate employees who provide negative, confidential, or embarrassing information in posts on their social networking sites.</p>
Potential uses	<p>Organizations engage in targeted marketing to reach the desired applicant pool.</p>	<p>HR professionals systematically code job-relevant information from social networking sites to assess and measure personality or other characteristics.</p> <p>Correlate measures of these job relevant traits with measures of job performance to determine their ability to predict future job success.</p>	<p>Organizations access all employees' social networking sites and regularly monitor them for what the organization considers inappropriate postings.</p>
Current state of research	<p>Almost no empirical research on this area.</p> <p>DeKay (2009) found that only a small percentage of LinkedIn members were passive job seekers.</p>	<p>Limited empirical research in this area.</p> <p>Some evidence that personality can be measured reliably and validly from web pages (e.g., Marcus et al. 2006; Vazire and Gosling 2004). Image presented and inappropriate-ness of content on the social networking profile was associated with students' comfort with family, friends, and employers viewing the profiles (Peluchette and Karl 2009).</p>	<p>Almost no empirical research in this area; some court cases provide guidance.</p> <p>Students were neutral about employers' reviewing their social networking websites (Baglione et al. 2009).</p> <p>Courts have upheld firing of employees for inappropriate postings on the Internet (e.g., Spanierman v. Hughes 2008)</p>

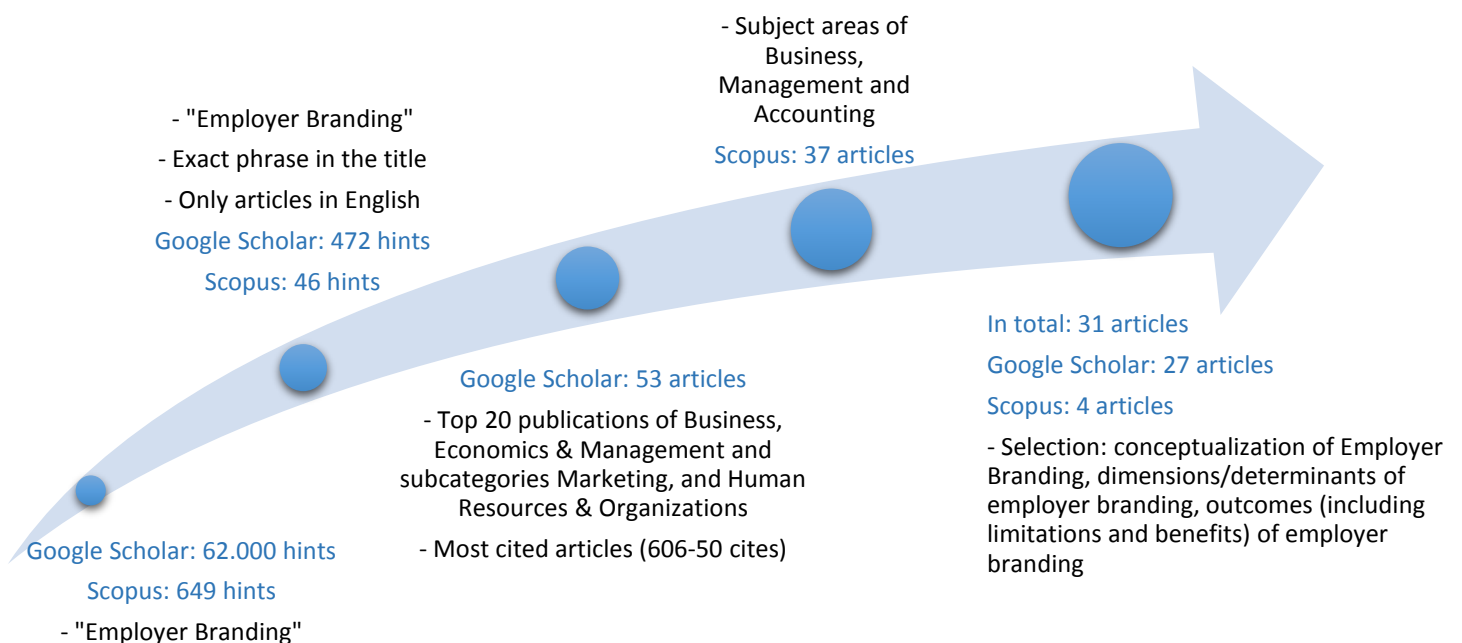
Several advantages are represented in the literature regarding SNS use for recruitment-related processes. Brown & Vaughn (2011) mention that SNS serve as a low cost tool for searching in a large pool of candidates, which reduces the recruitment cycle time. Because the tool is widely available for the public, it also allows small business to engage in such practices (Nikolaou, 2014). Next to that, SNS can serve as evidence regarding information presented on an applicant's résumé. In addition, they can make inferences about the characteristics of the applicant, which may increase or decrease the probability that the candidate is considered in further process. In contrast, Brown & Vaughn (2011) state that there are also several risks involved towards recruitment. Firstly, the tool has to deal with lack of a theoretical basis used in screening processes, and the absence of data to support that the information used in screening is job relevant. Besides, there exists variability in the type and amount of information that is publicly available regarding applicants. This firstly prevents standardized collection of information across all applicants, and social desirability or high levels of self-monitoring might distort the shared information of applications. Finally, Nikolaou (2014) mention that misuse of SNS might raise concerns about job candidates' privacy and unfair discrimination. In most countries there is lack towards specific guidelines for the use and abuse of SNS in staffing, and in recruitment and selection issues, such as racial/gender discrimination.

## 2.2 Employer branding

### 2.2.1 Employer branding literature research

In order to find articles related towards employer branding, the word “Employer Branding” was the start of the research process, resulting in 62.600 hints on Google Scholar and 649 hints on Scopus. Narrowing the research down towards articles only in English and “Employer Branding” in the title resulted in 472 hints on Google Scholar, and 46 hints on Scopus. Moreover, regarding the background of the current research, the next subject areas were taken into account; Business, Economics, Accounting, and Management.

Moreover, for Google scholar articles are selected that where released in the top 20 publications of Business, Economics and Management, resulting in 44 articles. Furthermore, also the most cited articles (606 – 50 cites), and the top 20 of the subcategories of Human Resources and Organizations, and Marketing were taken into account, resulting In 9 more articles. For Scopus, articles were selected into the subject areas of Business, Management and Accounting, resulting in 37 articles. The 90 articles are reviewed based on their abstract, which should consider the followings; conceptualization of Employer Branding – dimensions/determinants of employer branding - outcomes (including limitations and benefits) of employer branding, resulting into 27 useful articles for google scholar and 4 articles for Scopus.



**Figure 3** Research process of Employer Branding

### 2.2.2 Employer branding defined

The concept of employer branding (EB) is known for a number of years now. The term was first presented in the early 1990s for a management audience, and since today widely used in global management community. The CIPD (2007) mention four main reasons for the focus of branding towards HRM: (1) The power of branding, (2) the increasing focus on employee engagement, (3) the war for talent, and (4) the impact of HR practices on business (Biswas and Suar, 2014). Employer branding can be characterized by principles of marketing, where brands are the most valuable assets of many firms (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Employer branding has the same working principle as corporate brands: creating of a noticeable, relevant and unique brand, which distinct them from their competitors. While corporate branding deals with positive and negative linking of stakeholders with the business, EB deals with existing and potential employees. According to the Conference Board (as cited in Backhaus and Tikoo, 2014) organizations have found that effective employer branding leads to a competitive advantage, be of use for employees to internalize company values and supports in employee retention.

Biswas & Suar (2014) mention that although the concept of branding is well developed within the marketing literature, the concept of employer branding is still evolving, as practitioners' focus on employees attractiveness to an employer, and literature on EB remain conceptual and result-oriented. Due to the evolvement of employer branding, there is no consensus reached of the definition of EB. Nevertheless, several authors refer towards Ambler & Barrow (1996), who made an first attempt for defining EB (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Biswas and Suar, 2014; Gupta, et al. 2014). They define employer branding as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company" (as cited in Gupta, et al., 2014, p.3). In a similar way CIPD (as cited in Sokro, 2012, p. 165) describe employer branding as "a set of attributes and qualities – often intangible – that makes an organization distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience, and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform to their best in its culture". The previous definitions indicate that EB includes promoting, both outside and inside the firm, regarding what makes the firm different and desirable as an employer (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Next to that, Ambler & Barrow (as cited in Berthon, Ewin, and Hah, 2005) compare employer branding towards traditional branding, and argue that the employer brand is about personality and positioning. EB contains the building of an image in the minds of the potential labour market that the company, above all others, is a 'great place to work'. In addition, Sullivan (2004) states that employment branding can be seen as "a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm". The strategy can be tailored towards recruitment, retention, and productivity management efforts. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) rather define employer branding as "a process of building an

identifiable and unique employer identity, and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors". Thus, several authors are trying to describe the characteristics of EB. In the current study, therefore is sought to combine these characteristics into one definition for EB:

*- Employer Branding can be seen as a process or long-term strategy of a company, focused on building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and managing the awareness and perceptions of employees and potential employees, for gaining a competitive advantage.*

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) state that employer branding can be seen as a threefold process, including;

- *Value proposition:* Developing a concept of what particular value their company offers employees. It should include a fair representation of what the company can offer to its employees, regarding organization's culture, management style, qualities of the current employees, current employees' image, etcetera.
- *External marketing:* marketing the value proposition to its targeted potential employees, recruiting companies, placement counselor, to reach and attract the target group. It is noticed that it is important that the employer brand is consistent with other branding efforts of the company.
- *Internal marketing:* The integration of the brand 'promise' made towards recruits into the organization, as a part of the organizational culture. The goal is to create an unique culture and workforce, which is difficult to imitate.

Theoretically, effective employer branding is well grounded on the assumption that human capital brings and retains value towards the firm, resulting in enhanced performance. The previous assumption can be supported by the resource-based view of Barney (1991) who states that characteristics of a firm's resources can contribute towards sustainable competitive advantage. The possession of resources should be rare, valuable, non-substitutable and difficult to imitate, which allows the firm to move ahead of its competitors. Next to important resources such as plant, equipment, and capital also human capital has been shown to operate as an important resource for creating competitive advantage (Priem and Butler, 2001). Regarding the process of employer branding as mentioned by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), external marketing establish the firm as an employer of choice and therewith makes it possible to attract the best possible workers. Hereby it is assumed that the distinctiveness of the brand allows the firm to obtain distinctive human capital. Subsequently, the recruits develop a set of assumptions about employment related towards the brand. They will carry these assumptions into the future, thence supporting the values of the firm and increasing their commitment. The assumption is that internal marketing brings on an workforce that is hard for other

firms to imitate, by routinely exposing the value proposition of the employer brand towards the workers. This should result in a workplace that is shaped around the corporate goals, enabling the firm to achieve a unique culture focused on doing business the firm's way (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004).

Besides employer branding leads towards a competitive advantage, internal marketing also positively affects employee retention (Ambler and Barrow, as cited in Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). By using the brand as conceptualization of the quality of employment it namely contributing to employee willingness to stay with the organization. EB also influence company profitability, through increased employee satisfaction, employee identification with the firm and employee performance and commitment (Robertson and Khatibi, 2013; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010). Moreover, Biswas & Suar (2014) state that EB also lowers recruitment costs, attract more qualified applicants, and lowers employee turnover.

### 2.2.3. Benefits and limitations of employer branding

When the companies' motives for employer branding are considered, the benefits and objectives need to be discussed. Firstly, benefits of EB mentioned by several authors are summed up, followed by several limitations regarding EB. The potential benefits of employer branding are:

- Reduced recruitment costs: the recruitment process is shorter and more flexible. This is due that more people wants to work for the firm, and therefore it is easier to attract applicants (Heilmann et al., 2013; Kalyankar, Mathur, and Bakshi, 2014a).
- A strong employer brand acts as a "crisis shield" when problems occur. A employer brand with a good reputation will be given the benefit of the doubt, a privilege not usually provided to anonymous or poorly regarded brands (Kalyankar, Mathur, and Baski, 2014b).
- A good employer brand supports the right workforce to apply. Therefore the firm can avoid those candidates whose objectives or goal doesn't fit with the organization (Heilmann et al., 2013; Gupta et al., 2014).
- A strong employer brand helps to retain employees in the firm. Employer branding increases employee satisfaction, which also improves the employer image. When employees are proud of working in the firm, they are an advertisement to the outside world (Heilmann et al., 2013; Gupta et al., 2014).
- "Organization success attracts successful people". Thus, best employees are looking for the best employer, and therefore employer branding helps to attract the best employees of the industry. It also helps for the organization to grow (Gupta et al, 2014).
- Strong employer brand creates value: A well-defined employer brand should be consistent with the business strategy, and discuss the shared responsibilities for achieving success.

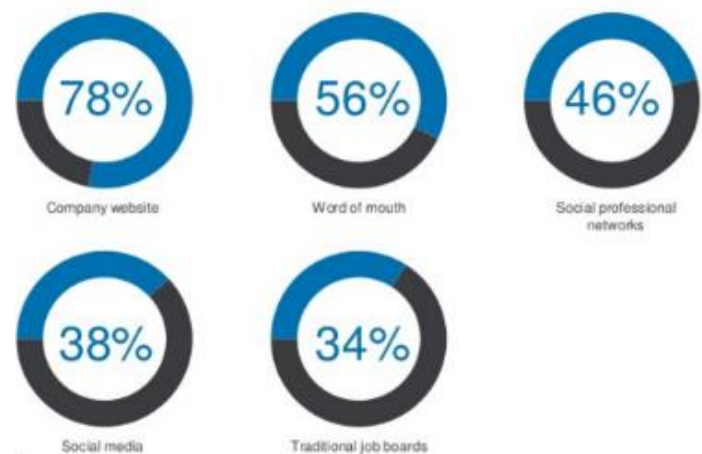
Therefore, employee satisfaction drives customer satisfaction/ loyalty and revenue growth (Kalyankar et al., 2014a).

The potential limitations of employer branding are:

- Setting up an employer brand can be expensive: For creating an employer brand an organization have to spend money, and also a small workforce should looking after the employer brand (Gupta, et al., 2014).
- When employer branding is not implemented clearly, it can lead towards misrepresentation regarding employees, and it will not work into the right direction (Gupta, et al., 2014).
- The tradition and culture of the employer brand can work against the creation of completely new brands, as it needs independence to succeed (Kalyankar et al., 2014b).
- Management may expect from employees to 'live the brand'. However, if employer-branding initiatives are not perceived as ethical or desirable, management will encounter resistance of employees (Kalyankar et al., 2014a).
- Organizations who operate in a complex and dynamic organizational framework can find problems regarding sustaining a brand. The diverse workforce settings, geographies, cultures, outsourcing, etcetera can provide difficulties in maintaining an employer brand (Kalyankar et al., 2014a).

#### 2.2.4. Employer branding and social networking sites

Web 2.0, including social networking sites, have changed the way information is delivered to the people, shifting from traditional one-to-one towards one-to-many communication. Traditional advertising and recruitment techniques are not applicable to the social network platforms, resulting in companies experimenting with many different approaches. According to an international survey of Universum (2014) social professional networks and other networks belong towards the most important tools for establishing the employer brand.



**Figure 4** Most used promoting tools for Employer Branding (Universum, 2014).

Moreover, web 2.0 creates an environment that is open to all people and whereby freedom rules. Within this freedom citizens, consumers and other stakeholders can speak freely with each other and

businesses have limited control over the information available about them online (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). This brings as well opportunities as threats for the business. Social networks firstly allow the public and their stakeholders to co-create the brand image and reputation. Thereby companies should try to engage stakeholders in online conversations on social networks, to help companies to build and maintain presence, reputation and brand image (Jones, et al., 2010). Nevertheless, “it is a risky environment and corporations need to be creative as well as transparent and honest in order to captivate and communicate effectively with their various publics” (Jones, et al., 2010, p. 390). Next to that, not all business are comfortable with the freedom web 2.0 gives towards people. For example, negative comments can be made and shared on social platforms regarding the integrity of a company (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Moreover, the open environment and other specific characteristics mentioned of social networking sites might be beneficial or harmful for the business’ employer brand. For example, the huge amount of SNS users and the high interactivity between them makes it possible to reach a large audience. This makes it a cost-effective tool for communicating, co-creating and advertising the employer brand. Next to that, the technological features of social networking sites provide the possibility of reaching focus groups based on demographics and interests. Although, the downside mentioned of social networking sites could serve as threats for the employer brand. For example, social networking sites are poorly regulated, which eases to show the company in bad daylight, which might harm its reputation as an employer. Another limitation is the misuse of social networking sites by companies, which could raise concerns about the trustworthiness as an employer. Even more, Jones et al. (2010) state that companies should rethink their branding strategy with the arrival of social networks, and gain new understanding of online stakeholders. Companies should accurately consider how they plan, develop and communicate their online (employer) branding practices.

Overall, the previous indicates that the freedom and other characteristics of social networking sites might bring specific possibilities and threats for businesses. Even more, this study approaches SNS as a way of promoting the employer brand, which means it is not necessarily a goal for improving the outcomes of EB. Therefore general benefits and limitations of EB is expected to differ from the value added by SNS. Therewith qualitative research is found to be most appropriate to investigate the current research question.



## Section 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research design: The Delphi Method

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The Delphi method was developed by researchers at the Rand Corporation in the early 1950s, and is based on the idea of “two heads are better than one, when the issue is on where exact knowledge is not available” (Dalkey, 1969; p.5). The Rand Corporation conducted studies regarding the Delphi method, which is built on the simplistic version of formulating group judgments, until how it is used today. To demonstrate the validity of the method, they conducted an experiment at the University of California. The subjects were upper-class and graduate students, which were asked general, but difficult questions. They could not know the questions, but their background knowledge allowed them to make an educated guess. Some of the students were given additional feedback related their answers to the group’s answers, as the Delphi method suggest. The results showed that participants with additional feedback of other group members got progressively more consensus in their responses, and their answers became more accurate (Dalkey, 1969).

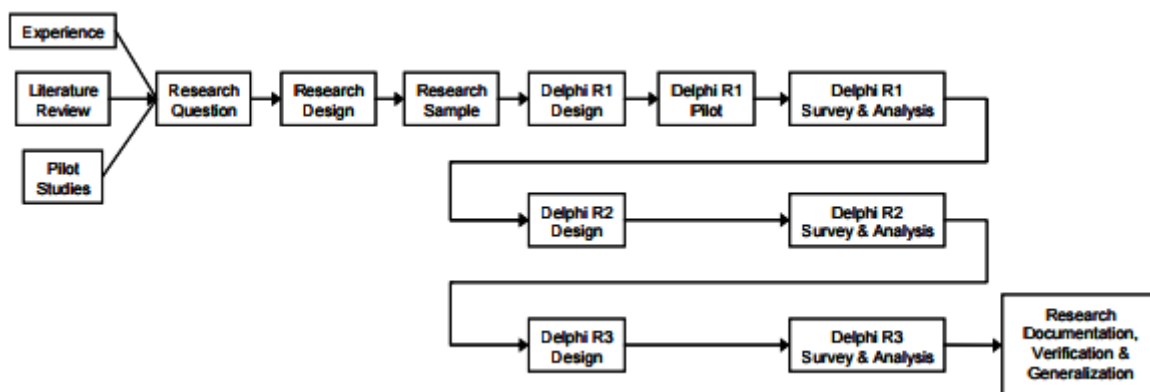
Dalkey & Helmer (1963) state that the goal of the Delphi was “to obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts. It attempts to achieve this by a series of intensive questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback” (p. 458). Although, Landeta (2006) mention that later applications of the method has neglected the obligatory search for consensus. He therefore defines the Delphi as a “social research technique whose aim is to obtain a reliable group opinion using a group of experts” (p. 468). According to Landeta (2006) the main characteristics of the Delphi method are:

- Repetitiveness – participants should be questioned at least twice on the same items;
- Anonymity – answers are kept anonymous and considered as part of the entire group;
- Controlled feedback – the communication between experts is externally controlled;
- Group statistical response – all the answers can be found in the final answers.

The Delphi method was originally purposed as a forecasting technique, although the method is used over the years for several events, and primarily in cases where judgmental information is indispensable (Okoli and Pawlowski, 2004). In addition, The Delphi method is an attractive method for graduate students of masters and PhD level research, as it is a flexible technique for exploring new concepts (Skulmoski, Hartman and Krahn, 2007). The following theses mentioned by Skulmoski et al. (2007) reveal the variety of research questions that can be asked and subsequently answered using the Delphi method:

- Examine and explain how recruitment message specificity influences job seeker attraction to organizations (Roberson, Collins, and Oreg, 2005);
- Identifying the critical success factors for ERP implementation projects (Carson, 2005);
- Developing a model of how technologies are developing and how they may fit with an organizational strategy (Gerdts, 2005);
- Identifying the criteria for measuring knowledge management efforts (Anantatmula, 2004).

They conclude that there is no “typical” Delphi, but rather the method is adapted in a way that it fits the circumstances and research question. In line, Linstone & Turoff (1975) state that “it is not, however, the explicit nature of the application which determines the appropriateness of utilizing Delphi; rather, it is the particular circumstances surrounding the necessarily associated group communication process”. Although, to give a better understanding of how a Delphi can be designed, Skulmoski et al. (2007) give an brief overview of how the Delphi is processed within their graduated studies:



**Figure 5** Three round Delphi process used by Skulmoski et al. (2007)

Independent from its reason of choice, the method offers reliability and generalizability of outcomes. The previous is provided by the repetition of rounds for data collection and analysis, which are led by the principles of democratic participation and anonymity (Bobeva, 2002). Moreover, the Delphi method enables to gather experiences and information in both a qualitative and quantitative way, which makes it more complex than the survey. Next to that, the method offers several advantages compared to face-to-face discussion. Face-to-face discussions can be biased in several ways, for example by dominant influencers, noise, and/or group pressure for conformity (Dalkey, 1969). Okoli and Pawlowski (2004, p. 16) add that the method “avoids direct confrontation of the experts”, which enhances the independency and originality of the answers. Moreover, the Delphi method is also usable on the moment that judgments of experts are needed, but time, distance, and other factors make it unlikely or impossible to work together in the same physical location (Yousuf, 2007).

Until today there is no specific scientific evidence towards the value social networking sites have for employer branding purposes. Even more, the concept of social networking sites serving as a tool for employer branding purposes is relatively new. Therefore the current study makes use of the Delphi method, as it is applicable for exploring new concepts. In detail, the data gathered with the Delphi study is qualitative and quantitative analyzed. The qualitative research is shaped by open-ended questions, to determine the meaning of the value participants place on social networking sites for employer branding. In this case the researcher is flexible and sensitive to the social context, in order to better understand rich, contextual and detailed data (Skulmoski, et al., 2007). Furthermore, the controlled feedback and ranking method provide the narrowing of the most important ideas practitioners mention regarding the value of the concept, which acquires reliable and general information.

Although other methods are available to gather input for the current study, there is judged that the Delphi method is the most appropriate for the following reasons:

- The current study investigates the value regarding social networking sites for employer branding purposes. This issue requires knowledge from people that already have experience with the use of the tool for their employer branding, as they understand the pros and cons of the concept. Therefore judgmental information of experts in the field, provided by the Delphi study, will be appropriate for answering the research question.
- The Delphi study makes it possible to gather quantitative and qualitative data, wherefore it is very suitable for answering many research questions, including the present one. In detail, the current research has the dual purpose of gathering opinions from experts and having them ranked according to their importance. This flexibility very well matches the capabilities of the graduate student (Skulmoski et al., 2007).
- The Delphi study will provide valuable information in a shorter time of period, and with less financial resources compared with surveys or interviews (Skulmoski et al., 2007).
- The Delphi method makes it possible for expert not to meet physically, which makes it more practical for international experts to participate in the study.

The researchers should take into account the 'apparent simplicity', as it contrasts the work and difficulties involved in its execution. In detail, the Delphi has received criticism in connection with its deficient application, "such as the not very rigorous selection of experts, the lack of explanation concerning its evolution and dropout, questions and problems that are badly formulated, insufficiently analyzed results, etc." (Landeta, 2006; p. 469). Consequently, each stage of the Delphi is clearly explained and justified, so that the study can be executed as accurate possible. The building up of the research and the steps undertaken are discussed in the corresponding chapters.

## 3.2 Data collection and analysis

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### 3.2.1 Selection and recruitment of experts

In total a group of 18 experts gave permission to participate in the study: including practitioners around the Netherlands and further. In selecting the participants the following main criteria was used:

- One or more qualifications in higher education;
- Multiple years of experiences in the field of (Employer) Branding;
- Experiences with promotions activities on social media.

The selected experts are seen as a homogenous group, based on their similar requirements. Therewith a sample size between ten to fifteen practitioners is sufficient (Skulmoski et al., 2007). However, with respect towards the participating experts, the researcher can face issues with the (initial) gathering of answers of participants. Landeta (2006) explains: “these problems increase in the area of Social Sciences, particularly in the professional applications on experts and directors of companies and institutions, always with problems of time and with whom there is no “emotional” or professional link to connect their participation in this kind of study” (p. 470). Therefore the researcher found it necessary to acquire several more participants for the study, in the case multiple participants drop-out during the process.

Moreover, the acquiring of the experts has been a divers process of several months. The first attempt of acquiring experts started in July 2015, whereby an acquisition message on Linked-in was send towards current connections of the researcher. Thereby the connections were briefly explained the purpose of the study and asked if they are or knew people that suited the requirements and would like to participate in the study. Five connections responded with the willingness to participate in the study. After background checking of these connections, all of them were judged as qualified for participating in the study. The recruiting continued by approaching practitioners outside the researchers’ network. In the period of August until begin October 2015 the search engine of LinkedIn served as a tool for finding qualified practitioners. In detail, qualified practitioners were made aware of the study by sending them a ‘connection invitation’ with a short explanation of the study and if they were willing to participate. As a result, eight more practitioners confirmed to be willing to participate in the study. In November 2015 the researcher took new steps for acquiring participants. Firstly by an open call on the page of the LinkedIn group ‘Employer Branding’ in November 2015, resulting in three new participants. And lastly by personal e-mailing several employer branding practitioners with a short acquiring message. Therewith two more participants were willing to participate into the study. Therewith 18 practitioners gave permission to participate, which should be sufficient for the current study. Details of the background and recruitment of the participants is found in table 2.

**Table 2** Recruitment and details regarding participants

Participant	Function	Sector - Country	Approached by:	First round send:
1	Employer Branding Specialist	Business Services - Holland	Personal mail LinkedIn	28 October 2015
2	HR Manager	Industry - Holland	Personal mail LinkedIn	28 October 2015
3	(E-)HRM Advisor	Transport - Holland	Personal mail LinkedIn	28 October 2015
4	(Online) Marketing Advisor	Retail - Holland	Personal mail LinkedIn	28 October 2015
5	Employer Branding Specialist	Business Services - Holland	Personal mail LinkedIn	28 October 2015
6	Employer Branding Specialist*	Business Services - Holland	LinkedIn invitation	28 October 2015
7	Consultant E-HRM/Social Media	Business Services - Holland	LinkedIn invitation	28 October 2015
8	Talent Acquisition Consultant*	Clinical Imaging - England	LinkedIn invitation	28 October 2015
9	Employer Branding Specialist*	Business Services - Holland	LinkedIn invitation	28 October 2015
10	Employer Branding Specialist	Business Services - Sweden	LinkedIn invitation	28 October 2015
11	Employer Branding Specialist	Construction - Holland	LinkedIn invitation	28 October 2015
12	Employer Branding Specialist*	Business Services - England	LinkedIn invitation	28 October 2015
13	Employer Branding Specialist	Business Services - Australia	LinkedIn invitation	9 November 2015
14	Employer Branding Specialist	STEM areas - Canada	Public group "Employer Branding"	18 November 2015
15	Employer Branding Advisor	Business Services - Australia	Public group "Employer Branding"	19 November 2015
16	New Business Developer	Accounting - England	Public group "Employer Branding"	21 November 2015
17	Employer Branding Specialist*	Business Services - Holland	Mail (founded at LinkedIn)	25 November 2015
18	Employer Branding Specialist	Business Services - Holland	Mail (founded at LinkedIn)	25 November 2015

\* Dropped out the study

### 3.2.2 The first round

The first round of the Delphi is characterized as the brainstorming phase, in which participants generate ideas and sum up relevant answers by replying to research questions. After collecting the contact-information of the participants, they were sent an e-mail regarding the invitation of the first round. The reason for using e-mail for the study is that it fastens the turnaround times, and helps to keep enthusiasm alive and participation high (Landeta, 2006). Furthermore, the e-mail contained the Delphi instrument whereby participants were asked to respond towards the following three open-ended questions:

1. What are the benefits of using Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?
2. What are the limitations of using Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?
3. How does your organization use Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?

Landeta (2006; p. 479) mentions that participants should be aware regarding the relevance and seriousness of the study. Therefore the first round e-mail also contained information regarding the

Delphi study itself, the process and current phase of the study, and the importance of the study . The first round e-mail is found in appendix III.

During December 2015, final responses arrived five weeks after invitation and 72% (n=13) of the participants responded to the first questionnaire. The participants received an e-mail containing a word of thanks regarding their initial collaboration and the progress towards the second round. For receiving the response rate of 72% the researcher had to take several actions:

- Shortening of the e-mail of the first round questionnaire (see appendix IV): The attachments enclosed by the e-mail of the first questionnaire were removed, the introduction text was shortened, and the participants had the possibility of answering the questionnaire directly in mail (not in a separate document as before). By shorten the questionnaire it was easily and less time-consuming to fill in the questionnaire.
- Sending of reminders: Reminders were send on a tactic moment of the day, assuming that most people read their mail in the morning before they start with their work and in the end of the working day (late afternoon).
- Use of appealing titles: Most people receive a lot of e-mails on a regular (work)day, which makes it important that the e-mail stands out of other ones. Therefore the researcher used "funny" titles to attract the participants' attention.

The data collected into the first round are analyzed by grouping similar items together, as the participants use several different terms for what appears to be the same issue. The researcher groups these items together into clusters, with the means of providing universal descriptions (Hasson, Keeney, and McKenna, 2000). With the purpose of providing a fair representation of the data, no items during the process are added and wording used by participants, with minor editing, is applied as much as possible in listing the data (Hasson, et al., 2000).

### 3.2.3 The second round

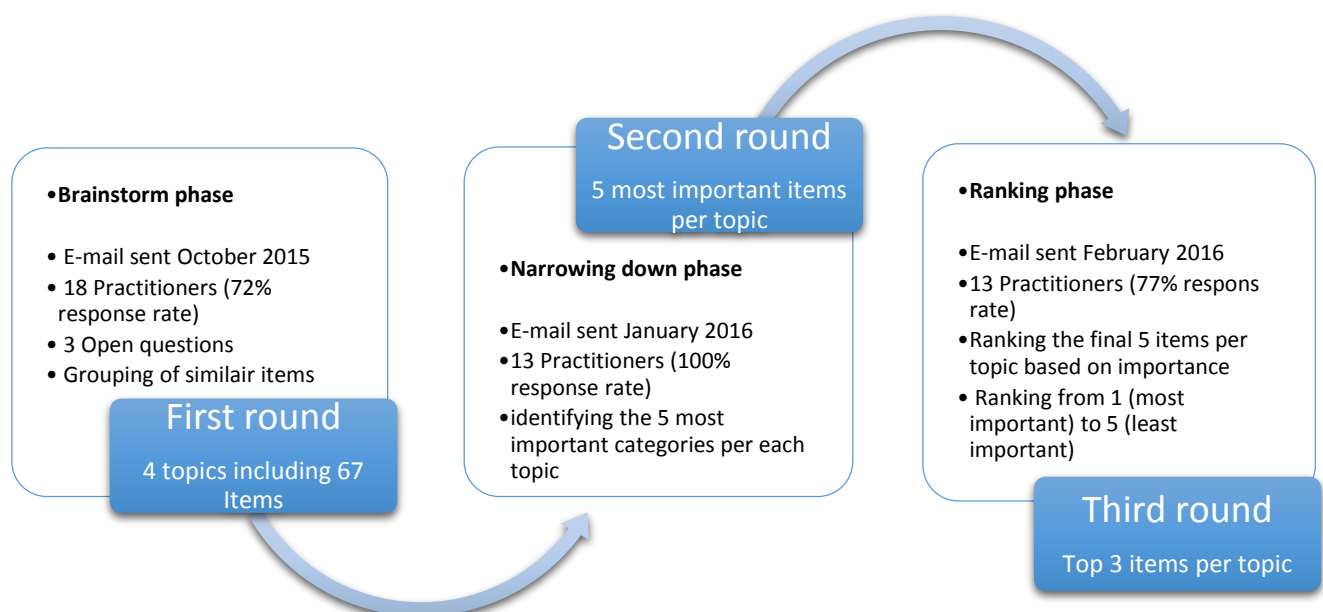
The second round is seen as the narrowing down phase, which was conducted during January 2016. The E-mail sent towards participants regarding the second round involved the items from the first round translated into scale-questions (see appendix VI). Thereby the participants are asked to identify items that they considered to be the most important. The purpose of the second round is to reach common agreement between participants regarding the most important items. The scale-questions are based on the Likert scale. Likert scales are widely used for measuring attitudes, opinions or preferences in areas such as sociology, psychology, quality control or management. Attitudes of participants are defined towards each statements choosing among a number of grades on the Likert scale (Hasson, et al., 2000). For the first two questions there is made use of a 7-point Likert scale for

rating the importance of the benefits and limitations of employer branding, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The third question, regarding the use of SNS for employer branding, there is made use of another type of Likert-scale. This type of Likert scale measures the intensity of the use of SNS for employer branding, rating from frequent until never. In begin February 2016 the final responses arrived, with a response rate of 100% (N=13).

Furthermore, the second round aimed to create a top five of the most important items per each topic. Therefore, with the usage of SPSS Statistics, a three-step process was followed. The first step included calculating the frequency of the “good” answers, which were analyzed based on the distribution charts of all the items. Therewith only items with a high frequency of “good” answers remained for further analyses. The second step was to determine if there were any significant correlations between items, which could be combined into one “new” item. After this determination, the third and last step includes to select the five items with the highest mean and lowest standard deviation.

### 3.2.4 The third round

The third stage of the study is seen as the ranking phase, whereby participants are asked to rank answers in order of importance from responses of the second round. The third round was conducted during February and March 2016 and the e-mail can be found in appendix VII. 10 participants ranked the five most important items from the highest important (1) to the least important (5), and in addition several participants explained their first choice. For analyzing the data SPSS statistics is used.



**Figure 6** Methodological steps executed

## Section 4. Results

### 4.1 Findings: First Round

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The first round open-ended questions forms the basis of the study, as it generates the ideas and allows participants complete freedom in their responses (Hasson, et al., 2000). The qualitative data identified in the first round makes it possible to formulate the second and third round questionnaires.

Below the findings of the first round per question are discussed and displayed within tables. The tables are an overview of the dimensions (unit of answers) and corresponding clusters mentioned by participants, and displays additional quotes of the participants. Afterwards, a reflection regarding the interpretation of participants of the first round are given, following by a brief explanation regarding the second round preparations.

#### *RQ1. What are the benefits of using Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?*

Overall, the findings suggest that participants perceive social networking sites as important tools for communicating the employer brand. Participants mention various reasons wherefore SNS is beneficial for communicating the employer brand, such as *“It enables the business to become a publisher of stories and share ideas”*, *“your message will be duplicated, multiplied, many, many times in such a fast speed that you can’t keep up with it”* and *“flexibility of the channel offers benefits: adaptations of the brand can be realized quickly”*. Furthermore, almost every participant share the opinion that social networking sites are tools for reaching new people, and that it gives the opportunity for reaching focus/target groups. For example, one participant explains; *“With the technology today you can also be very targeting (groups, tags, forums) and very broad (advertising, promotions, events)”*.

Moreover, some participants not necessarily use their own experiences regarding the benefits. They give ‘advice’ on how companies potentially can benefit from using SNS for their employer branding purposes. For example; *“If you would combine LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, Whatsapp and Instagram you have a massive reach”*, *“companies that do Employer Branding well have trained their employees in Social Media best practices and tools. This will strengthen their external branding campaign”*, and *“Social media is one place to connect with your candidates (...) Employers need to go after their candidates”*. The potential advantages are included into the first round findings, as these can be confirmed to be important (or not) by other experts in the following rounds.

Even more, some participants not discuss the benefits, but share general ‘stories’ surrounding employer branding and SNS, including; *“Employer branding is a set of attributes and qualities (...) A strong employer brand should connect an organization’s values, people strategy and HR policies, and be linked to the company brand”*, *“Employer branding has become a necessity. Newspapers,*



magazines, they all go digital which means that as an employer you are forced to go digital too”, “So, evidently in the employer branding space social media have become a vital strategy to attract, inform and start dialogue and experience communications with (inside and outside) talent”. Some of these general stories are reversed into potential benefits, which can also be confirmed or denied to be important in the following rounds.

Table 4 indicates the first round content regarding the benefits, comprising 12 clusters, 53 dimensions and example of quotes from participants.

**Table 4** First round content: Benefits

Cluster	Dimensions	Quotes
<b>Way of divers and fast communication of your Employer Brand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possibility of fast messaging (due to duplicating/sharing).</li> <li>▪ Businesses can act faster through SNS (because of targeting).</li> <li>▪ Direct and fast way of communicating for a big group of people (because of targeting).</li> <li>▪ More correct and faster way of communicating the employer brand (because of targeting).</li> <li>▪ Flexible tool: adaptations of the brand can be realized quickly.</li> <li>▪ Makes it possible to present your organization as an interesting employer as wide and specific possible.</li> <li>▪ Really capture what you want prospects to see.</li> <li>▪ Easy way for exposure of the identity of the company.</li> <li>▪ Become publisher of stories.</li> <li>▪ Many possibilities for expression (photographic /video/text).</li> <li>▪ SNS is a tool for informing (inside and outside) talent regarding brand.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“Communicating today has moved from one to many, to many to many”</i></p> <p><i>“Compared to print media and TV it is much easier to target our message. You can act faster thanks to social media sites. You can be more correct with your employer brand”</i></p> <p><i>“On the Social Networking Sites information shared by employers is shared frequently by people that are in each other’s network. This means your message will be duplicated, multiplied, many, many times in such a fast speed that you can’t keep up with it”</i></p> <p><i>“Flexibility of the channel offers benefits: adaptations of the brand can be realized quickly”</i></p> <p><i>“Through Social media, you can really capture what you want prospects to see without the use of spam or cold calling. This consultative way of branding I find to be very successful”</i></p>
<b>Learning from other EB professionals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connecting with other EB professionals.</li> <li>▪ Share ideas.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“it connects you with other professionals so you can broaden your understanding of EB, learn about different tools and approaches, and stay up to date in the field”</i></p>
<b>Way of advertising your Employer Brand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Future for advertising.</li> <li>▪ Possibility to get in touch with people that do not know your</li> </ul>	<p><i>“Employer branding on the digital highway, on the Social Network Sites, seems to be the future for advertising”</i></p>

	business through paid advertisements.	
<b>Way of attracting (building a relationship with) talent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Vital strategy to attract (inside and outside) talent.</li> <li>▪ Building a relationship with talent.</li> </ul>	<i>"Branding today is about building a relationship with talent"</i>
<b>Possibility of Interactivity with (potential) employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possibility of interaction.</li> <li>▪ Opportunity to interact with your target audience.</li> <li>▪ Starting a dialogue and experience communications. with (inside and outside) talent.</li> <li>▪ Facilitates two-way communication: discuss our brands with our audience.</li> </ul>	<i>"It gives you the opportunity to interact with your target audience"</i>  <i>"As employment branding in the past has typically been quite guilty of simply pushing messaging out, now we have an opportunity to discuss our brand with our audience"</i>
<b>Important (reliable) source of sharing brand experiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The next best source of sharing brand experiences, after personal communication.</li> <li>▪ Enables businesses to become publisher of stories.</li> <li>▪ Tell a story and in return validate the brand message we have created.</li> <li>▪ Constantly being graded and reviewed.</li> </ul>	<i>"From the receiver point of view, also authentic experiences from employees, or peers working at companies, have become a significantly more important source of information than 'paid' communications or classic advertising"</i>  <i>"So you can't lie about your employer brand since that will be noticed"</i>
<b>Reaching new people and focus/target groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Easy way to reach many followers and non-followers in a short period of time.</li> <li>▪ Reach a large audience (worldwide).</li> <li>▪ Reaching of many people.</li> <li>▪ Worldwide network of potential candidates.</li> <li>▪ You can reach new people.</li> <li>▪ Easy way of reaching focus groups.</li> <li>▪ Popular medium under the target group.</li> <li>▪ Targeted range.</li> <li>▪ Increase awareness of relevant target groups.</li> <li>▪ Connect with your candidates.</li> <li>▪ You can target people.</li> <li>▪ Reach audience in a specific area (city).</li> <li>▪ Gives the possibility of specifically send messages. towards target groups.</li> <li>▪ Possibility of targeting your message.</li> <li>▪ Reaching a big group of people of different categories.</li> <li>▪ Target specific audiences/groups on one channel.</li> </ul>	<i>"The main benefit is the reach and how many people are currently using the sites'. If you would combine LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, Whatsapp and Instagram you have a massive reach"</i>  <i>"Many companies look for (young) professionals that are not familiar with their company yet. Reaching out for them through targeted social media is easy, effective and cheap"</i>  <i>"Candidates, especially Millennials and Gen Y, live online (in social communities)"</i>  <i>"With the technology today you can also be very targeting (groups, tags, forums) and very broad (advertising, promotions, events)"</i>  <i>"Direct and fast way of communication under a big group of people in different categories; age, gender, educational level, and region"</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reaching younger generations.</li> <li>▪ Reach younger professionals.</li> <li>▪ Search for younger employees get many results.</li> <li>▪ Mapping which audience is on what channel.</li> </ul>	<i>"In particular, vacancies such as internships, BBL-trajects, etc., whereby we search for young employees, get many results"</i>
<b>Cost-effective tool</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Targeted social media is easy, effective and cheap.</li> <li>▪ Almost free of charge.</li> <li>▪ Relatively cheap.</li> </ul>	<i>"A career page at LinkedIn cost a certain amount of money, however advertisements in newspapers and magazines are more expensive"</i>  <i>"You can make it as expensive as you like or at no cost at all"</i>
<b>Possibility of analyzing your target group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Set up remarketinglist/ Possibilities of retargeting.</li> <li>▪ Information gathering of your target audiences for spreading your brand.</li> </ul>	<i>"The more a specific channel is used by people the more information you can gather about your target audiences. This information can be used for spreading your brand"</i>
<b>Approachability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Approachable.</li> </ul>	
<b>Higher response rate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More and better response.</li> </ul>	<i>"Because of targeted reach, you will get more and better response"</i>
<b>Transparency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased transparency for target group.</li> </ul>	

## RQ2. What are the limitations of using Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?

The next question included the limitations participants encounter for the use of social networking sites for their employer branding activities. On the one hand answers were indeed related towards limitations, such as *"Disadvantage or shortcoming mainly lies in the interpretation of messages"*, *"Where something like Facebook is concerned, the limitations are related to the fact that the site is not necessarily designed with recruitment and employment branding in mind. So in reality you're really just bending the tool for your own purpose"*. Although, on the other hand several participants discuss the approach the company decides to take for their employer branding. They are mentioning specific conditions that organizations should satisfy, such as *"You need to be sure to personalize the approach of people who are interested"*, *"It is not just something you do instantly, there must be a clear long term vision"* and *"Employers should spend serious attention towards "ont-spamming" of their messages"*. Therefore, the question regarding limitations is divided into two topics; conditions and limitations. Limitations hereby mean that it restricts the use of SNS for employer branding, while conditions should be satisfied for the use of SNS for employer branding. The limitations and conditions are separately discussed and displayed.

## Conditions

As noticed, the second question contained several conditions regarding the approach a company decides to take for their employer branding. Several participants mentioning conditions regarding the content of employer branding messages, such as *“you should stay on topic / interest of the potential candidate”*, *“content needs to be easily available, to be seen and shared”*, *“messages should be triggering and not look like spam”*. Other participants mentioning conditions which should be satisfied before using employer branding on SNS, such as *“The organization nowadays has to be REALLY interesting, inspiring, and attractive as an employer to generate the distinctive, inspiring ‘stories’ in the social space”*, *“For us the biggest limitation is that we don’t have a clear strategy behind it. It is not just something you do instantly, there must be a clear long term vision”*, and *“This simply means that Employer branding professionals must have social media training in order to use the platforms effectively”*. Furthermore, all the content of the first round regarding the conditions is presented in table 5. The conditions include 8 clusters and 16 dimensions that correspond to them, and several quotes from the participants.

**Table 5** First round content: Conditions

Cluster	Dimensions	Quotes
<b>The company should be real and attractive in itself</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The need of real attractiveness as employer for using SNS as a tool for employer branding.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“The organization nowadays has to be REALLY interesting, inspiring, and attractive as an employer to generate the distinctive, inspiring ‘stories’ in the social space. If organizations are shallow and nondescript, and people not engaged, there will never be anything interesting in social, apart from the paid advertising ‘made up stories’”</i></p> <p><i>“The important adagio of ‘staring internally to win externally’ has become even more true in this social area”</i></p>
<b>Fit between company and interest of (potential) employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In order to share content, people should feel that the content also expresses their personal brand.</li> <li>▪ Only when it fits the personal branding of colleagues, they will share it.</li> <li>▪ Focus on the interest of the potential candidate.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“Rubbish from the company, or boring stuff: I won’t share it because it diminishes my personal brand. And vice versa.. The better fit company and personal culture, the better social will fill with great stories from companies and their people”</i></p> <p><i>“Only when it fits my personal branding, I will share the companies content”</i></p>

		<i>"you should stay on topic / interest of the potential candidate"</i>
<b>Personalize approach towards interested people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalize the approach towards people who are interested in your company.</li> </ul>	<i>"you need to be sure to personalize the approach of people who are interested"</i>
<b>Quality of content</b>	<p><b>Should not look like spam</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Messages should be triggering and not look like spam.</li> <li>Messages should be ont-spammed.</li> <li>If messages are not controlled, repetitive posts from connections from an organization can be a overkill.</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality for the purpose of sharing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content needs to be easily available, to be seen and shared.</li> <li>Content should be of the highest quality to standards of people.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Should not look like spam</b></p> <p><i>"Employers should spend serious attention towards "ont-spamming" of their messages"</i></p> <p><i>"Employer Branding can, if not controlled be an overkill if the potential prospects keep seeing repetitive posts form maybe more than one connection within an organization"</i></p> <p><b>Quality for the purpose of sharing</b></p> <p><i>"Most of the time colleagues don't even know what companies are posting. LinkedIn has developed new tooling to make sharing by colleagues of the corporate messaging more easy"</i></p>
<b>Need for strategy/focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There must be a clear long term vision.</li> <li>Upfront it is necessary to think about who you want to reach and what your specific message is.</li> <li>If you don't focus the network is to wide.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"For us the biggest limitation is that we don't have a clear strategy behind it. It is not just something you do instantly, there must be a clear long term vision"</i></p> <p><i>"If you do not do that thoroughly you might reach the wrong audience, you may frustrate people (..) they then might think negatively about you"</i></p>
<b>Control of activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employees should be aware of what they are posting, liking or commenting on social media, as prospects have sight of your activities.</li> </ul>	<i>"It is imperative that employees are aware of what each other posting. Employees also need to be aware of what they are linking or commenting on social media as everything leaves a digital trail and a prospect that reviews your profile will have sight of your activities."</i>
<b>Ability of communicating differently</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The company should be aware of the 'specific' language on SNS. Therefore social media requires the ability of communicating differently.</li> </ul>	<i>"Socially, people will use slang, abbreviations and emoticons that aren't used in regular communication This limits the user to a specific 'language' or way of communicating with other users. In face to face communication, someone may answer a question in a specific way, but that same question may have to be answered differently on social (or at least it could be, depending on the context and the users(s) that the company is interacting with"</i>

<b>Need for social media training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employer Branding professionals need social media training for effectively using the different social platforms.</li> </ul>	<i>“Not all platforms are the same, so each will have its different set of limitations. This simply means that Employer branding professionals must have social media training in order to use the platforms effectively”</i>
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### Limitations

Next to the specific conditions organizations should satisfy for their employer branding, multiple participants mentioning several limitations that restrict the use of SNS for employer branding purposes. Some participants for example highlighting the technical/functional limitations of several SNS: *“Twitter requires concise communication with 140 characters or less. “LinkedIn promotes the importance of rich content, a well-developed brand and storytelling, but in reality there tool doesn’t actually allow for this. Where something like Facebook is concerned, the limitations are related to the fact that the site is not necessarily designed with recruitment and employment branding in mind”.* Other participants mentioning the limited reach SNS have for their (potential) employees, such as *“for a number of older colleagues it is still very strange to use these channels (...) they don’t make optimal use of it”,* and *“Not all of our target audiences are very active on the social channels we use”.* Furthermore, **Table 6** represents the limitations, including 17 dimensions within 5 clusters, and several quotes of participants.

**Table 6** First round content: Limitations

Cluster	Dimensions	Quotes
<b>Limited reach of (potential) employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not every SNS works for the different groups of people (e.g. Blue or White collar).</li> <li>Not all (young) professionals are active on social media.</li> <li>Not all of the target audiences are very active on SNS.</li> <li>There are people that restrictive use SNS or not at all use SNS.</li> <li>Older people are less reachable at SNS.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“You have to account that not everyone wants or will use social networking sites and that the information needs to be accessible for them as well”</i></p> <p><i>“Another problem for us is that not all of our target audiences are very active on the social channels we use”</i></p> <p><i>“Also for a number of older colleagues it is still very strange to use these channels. They are skeptical about it, and don’t make optimal use of it”</i></p>
<b>Functional/Technical limitations</b>	<p><b>Functional limitations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due to big amounts of messages on social networking sites, the message can be overseen.</li> <li>Problem of choice: Many different Social networking platforms.</li> </ul>	<i>“For example, Twitter requires concise communication with 140 characters or less. Not all platforms are the same, so each will have its different set of limitations.”</i>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The messages you communicate are relatively short or through an image.</li> <li>▪ Facebook: Not necessarily designed with recruitment and employment branding purposes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Technical limitations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As user you can give limited amount of information (it is often necessary to link to another site).</li> <li>▪ Each platform has different set of requirements that limit the user to communicating in specific ways.</li> <li>▪ LinkedIn: cannot use templates, videos, or any other visual asset.</li> <li>▪ Actions and interactions on SNS are not linked towards business systems (such as applicant tracking software), which carries on disconnected data.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“LinkedIn promotes the importance of rich content, a well-developed brand and storytelling, but in reality there tool doesn’t actually allow for this. In the ‘Job’ ad functionally you can’t even use a branded template, change fonts, use video or any other visual asset that you might have developed to promote your brand. The same goes for their company pages etc.”</i></p> <p><i>“Where something like Facebook is concerned, the limitations are related to the fact that the site is not necessarily designed with recruitment and employment branding in mind. So in reality you’re really just bending the tool for your own purpose”</i></p> <p><i>“Another limitation is that you’re recording a lot of actions and interactions outside of your business systems (ATS or CRM for example) so you end up with disconnected data that makes the effectiveness for talent acquisitions hard to measure and in turn manage”</i></p>
<b>Limited control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ People can easily (anonymity) complain.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“A last disadvantage is the anonymity and the ease in which people can complain about the company”</i></p>
<b>High response expectations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ People expect fast response of the company.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“Another limitation is the fast responses people expect to get if they have asked a question or remark on such sites. Sometimes it cost a lot of time to figure something out”</i></p>
<b>Interpretation of messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Messages on social media are often limited towards a specific ‘language’, in combination with slang, abbreviations and emoticons.</li> <li>▪ People differ in the interpretation of the message.</li> </ul>	<p><i>“Disadvantage or shortcoming mainly lies in the interpretation of messages”</i></p>

### RQ3. How does your organization use Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?

Firstly, several participants mentioning that they post content on SNS that fits the special interests of their target groups. Even more, one participant mentioned to use SNS as a tool for engaging their target group towards the employer brand. More generally, participants are mentioning that they post messages of several activities within the company, such as events, innovations, celebrations and history. Even more, two participants state to have no clear vision and usage of employer branding

through SNS. Table 7 shows all the specific activities mentioned by participants, divided into 7 clusters and 21 dimensions, completed with quotes from the participants.

**Table 7** First round content: Usage of SNS

Cluster	Dimensions	Quotes
<b>Posting of (divers) business information</b>	<p><b>Posting content</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content that fits the special interests of the focus group.</li> <li>Posting of business info.</li> <li>Blog posts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Posting of images/video</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Videos.</li> <li>Using strong and appealing visuals and videos with a personal message.</li> <li>Share infographics.</li> </ul> <p><b>Posting of events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History.</li> <li>Events.</li> <li>Posting of celebrations on Facebook.</li> <li>Share of new projects we have gained.</li> <li>Share of new innovations.</li> <li>Do storytelling.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Posting content</b></p> <p><i>"we send different messages in different varieties"</i></p> <p><i>"Shameless self-promotion. (...) Specifically, we will share blog posts, infographics, and articles that we find helpful"</i></p> <p><b>Posting of images/video</b></p> <p><i>"We use Employer Branding for ourselves and for our clients in order to represent them in the best possible way"</i></p> <p><b>Posting of events</b></p> <p><i>"My organization is using LinkedIn and Facebook. (...) We post business info and celebrations on Facebook"</i></p> <p><i>"The placement of messages that say something of the organization (history, events etc.), whereby outsiders get a clearer image of the organization".</i></p> <p><i>"We use different channels for our Employer Branding, such as our website, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn."</i></p>
<b>Sharing employer branding posts of other companies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing of big posts that are attractive, funny, interesting, cool, etc.</li> </ul>	
<b>Sharing of employee experiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employee experiences.</li> </ul>	
<b>Advertisement purposes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating advertisements.</li> </ul>	
<b>Expanding network</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connecting and interacting with other EB professionals.</li> <li>Invitations sending for following the business page to people that 'like' messages.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"We want to connect with other EB professionals and ensure that we are playing a role in the conversation surrounding EB online. We schedule daily posts on our networks, follow users that post similar content, and interact with the hopes of learning about what they do and how they do it"</i></p>



		<i>"Increasing followers by inviting persons that 'liked' messages of the company to follow or 'liking' our pages"</i>
<b>Engagement purposes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Matching the personal brand with the employer brand by our engagement platform.</li> <li>▪ We apply a "Find. Attract. Engage." approach and perform sourcing activities.</li> <li>▪ We engage and get to know our colleagues much faster on Facebook.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Actually we developed an engagement platform with our company in order to match the personal brand with the employer brand, based on shared values, drivers and motivators"</i></p> <p><i>We apply a 'Find. Attract. Engage' approach and perform sourcing activities on many social sites. During this sourcing, yes, we use employment branding in our message/copy and this is effective"</i></p>
<b>Results of Employer branding on SNS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We make visible the results of Employer branding actions on SNS.</li> </ul>	

#### *Reflection first round*

Some remarks can be made regarding the interpretations of the first round. Firstly, several participants include their answers with online activities other than intended for the study. For example, one participant mentioning Messenger, Instagram and whatsapp; *"If you would combine LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, Whatsapp and Instagram you have a massive reach. (...) Limitations lay within the people not using social media"*. Moreover, another participant mentioned *"We use Youtube"*, *"we post blog and vlogs"*, *"We developed an engagement platform with our company in order to match the personal brand with the employer brand"*, and *"we do internal presentations on google hangout"*. Although these previous activities all belong to the online area, they do not belong to the category of social networking sites.

Secondly, some people interpreted the concept of employer branding differently than intended for the study. For example some included activities regarding recruitment instead of employer branding. One participant state *"In particular with vacancies we get a lot of results with for example internships, school courses, etc. (...) We embed such channels mainly for recruitment"*, another participant mentioned, *"we use these channels for asking attention towards available vacancies when placing messages"*, and *"we have multiple recruiters seats from LinkedIn to approach interesting candidates directly"*. Furthermore, another participant included its webcare team, stating *"We also have a webcare team who are almost 24/7 active and respond to messages of our social media channels"*. Even more, another participant remarks its own definition regarding employer branding: *"Employer branding offers a set of attributes and qualities, often intangible, that makes an organization distinctive (...) in its culture"*. The previous indicates that, even with a clear explanation

regarding the concepts of the study, participants have different perceptions regarding the meaning and boundaries of employer branding and social networking sites.

### *Second round preparations*

Regarding the second round preparations, because answers are short and sharp, no feedback from other researchers were found to be necessary. Additional, the researcher analyzed the answers (dimensions) by grouping similar items together, as the participants use several different terms for what appears to be the same issue. In this process, answers that are found to be beyond the boundaries of the research are not included. In total a number of 67 items are derived from the dimensions, see table 8. These items are incorporated into the questionnaire of the second round. Details regarding the derived items and an explanation for combining them are found under appendix V.

**Table 8** Derived items from the first round

Dimensions			Derived items	
Benefits	53	→	26	
Conditions	16	→	11	
Limitations	17	→	14	
Usage	21	→	15	

## 4.2 Findings: Second Round

The second round is the narrowing down phase, whereby the qualitative data of the first round is translated into quantitative data. The purpose of this round is to reach common agreement between participants, by aiming to identify the most important items per topic. The data is analyzed based on performing statistics summaries with the program of SPSS Statistics. Below the steps and findings are discussed per topic regarding the delineation of the 5 most important items.

### *RQ1. What are the benefits of using Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?*

The first question regarding the benefits contained 26 items, grouped within 12 clusters. A three-step process conducted the narrowing down of 26 items towards 5 most important items. The first step included a statistical analysis of the distribution charts, which are used to filter the items with a high frequency of good answers. The items selected with a “good” score, which means a high rating of 6 (“Agree”) and 7 (“Strongly agree”), are found in table 9.

**Table 9** Benefits: Items considered as “Good” scores (High score on strongly agree/agree)

Items	Frequency “Strongly Agree”	Frequency “Agree”	(N=13) Total
1. SNS make it possible to present your organization as an interesting employer, both wide and specific.	7	4	11
4. SNS enables the organization to publish stories (stories/anecdotes regarding successes, norms and values) to achieve specific goals.	5	7	12
5. SNS offer a fast way of communicating the EB due to the possibility of duplicating and sharing messages.	6	6	12
6. SNS offers a fast and direct way of communicating the EB due to the possibility of targeting your audience.	6	4	10
8. SNS offer many possibilities for vivid expression, such as photographic, video and text.	5	6	11
9. SNS are tools for informing (inside and outside) talent regarding the EB.	7	5	12
13. SNS serve as a vital strategy for attracting (inside and outside) talent.	4	7	11
14. SNS serve as tools for building better relationships with (inside and outside) talent.	5	6	11
15. SNS give the possibility of interaction/ discussion with the organizations’ (target) audience.	7	4	11
16. SNS enable businesses to tell stories (stories/anecdotes regarding successes, norms and values) and validate the brand messages .	5	5	10
19. With the use of SNS organizations can reach a large network of people in a short period of time.	9	3	12
20. With the use of SNS you can (easily) reach focus/target groups.	7	3	10
21. SNS give the possibility of reaching younger generations.	6	5	11
23. SNS give the opportunity of analyzing organizations’ audiences and therewith to match the interests of individuals with the right messages (retargeting).	7	3	10

Apart from the items without significant importance, it seemed that some remained items are similar in meaning and importance. Firstly, the items 4 and 16 are similar regarding that they both state that SNS enables the organization to become a publisher of stories. Item 16 adds that it is a way of validating the brand messages. It seems that publishing stories have the primary goal of validating the employer brand, as stories regarding successes, norms and values confirm the authenticity of the EB. To confirm this assumption the statistical relationship between the two items were confirmed, with a significant level of 0.004. The significant level indicates that the probability that the correlation between the two items is based on a coincidence is less than 0.004%.

**Table 10** Correlation between item 4 and 16

		Item 4	Item 16
4. SNS enables the organization to become publisher of stories (stories/ anecdotes regarding success, norms and values etcetera)	Pearson Correlation	1	.733**
	Significance (2-tailed)		.004
	N		13
16. SNS enable businesses to tell stories (stories/ anecdotes regarding successes, norms and values) and validate the brand messages.	Pearson Correlation	.733**	1
	Significance (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	13	

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Moreover, also item 9, 13 and 14 are noticeable regarding their equal importance and meaning. All the three items include that SNS is an important tool regarding inside and outside talent. Although the items describe different activities, they seem to connect with each other. Informing and building better relationships namely can be seen as activities with the purpose of attracting inside and outside talent. So, it seem that attracting talent is the overarching activity for informing and building better relationships with talent. The significant correlation between the three items confirms this relationship, displayed in table 11.

**Table 11** Correlation between item 9, 13 and 14

		Item 9	Item 13	Item 14
9. SNS are tools for informing (inside and outside) talent regarding the employer brand.	Pearson Correlation	1	.854**	.790**
	Significance (2-tailed)		.000	.001
	N	13	13	13

13. SNS serve as a vital strategy for attracting (inside and outside) talent.	Pearson Correlation	.854**	1	.862**
	Significance (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	13		13
14. SNS serve as tools for building better relationships with (inside and outside) talent.	Pearson Correlation	.790**	.862**	1
	Significance (2-tailed)	.001	.000	
	N	13	13	

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Lastly, item 15 and 20 correlate significant, as showed in table 12. In detail, item 20 includes that SNS is an important tool for reaching the focus group. Because SNS gives the possibility to reach them (easily), it also means that item 15, including interacting with them, becomes possible. So, SNS gives the possibility of reaching the focus group and therewith the possibility of interacting with them.

**Table 12** Correlation between item 15 and 20

		Item 15	Item 20
15. SNS gives the possibility of interaction/discussion with the organizations' (target) audience.	Pearson Correlation	1	.793**
	Significance (2-tailed)		.001
	N		13
20. With the use of SNS you can (easily) reach focus/target groups.	Pearson Correlation	.793**	1
	Significance (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	13	

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Furthermore, due to the previous step 10 items remained. The last step of the procedure includes selecting the five items with the highest mean and lowest standard deviation, see table 13.

**Table 13** The five most important benefits of SNS for employer branding

Benefits of SNS for employer branding	Mean	St. dev.
1. SNS gives the possibility of reaching younger generations	6.23	0.725
2. SNS make it possible to present your organization as an interesting employer as wide and specific possible	6.25	0.622
3. SNS serve as a vital strategy for attracting inside and outside talent (by informing/building relationships with them on SNS)	6.26	0.852
4. SNS enables the organization to become publisher of stories (stories/anecdotes regarding success, norms and values etcetera) and therewith validate the brand messages.	6.27	0.753
5. SNS offer a fast way of communicating the employer brand due to the possibility of duplicating and sharing messages.	6.38	0.650

## RQ2. What are the limitations of using Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?

The second question regarding the limitations is divided into two topics; conditions and limitations. The narrowing down of these to topics were also conducted by a three-step process. They are separately discussed below.

### Conditions

The items regarding the conditions contained 11 items, grouped within 8 clusters. Firstly, the items with a high rating of 6 ("Agree") and 7 ("Strongly agree") were selected. These "good" items can be found in table 14.

**Table 14** Conditions: Items considered as "Good" scores (High score on strongly agree/agree)

Items	Frequency "Strongly Agree"	Frequency "Agree"	(N=13) Total
27. Generating stories (anecdotes regarding successes, norms and values etc.) on SNS requires that the company is real and attractive in itself.	5	4	9
28. The organizational culture should match the personal interests of people, only then they will share positive content of that particular company.	4	5	9
30. Companies should personalize the approach (personal answering/interacting) towards people who are interested in their company.	6	5	11
31. Companies are required to control their EB messages, so that messages not look and are not perceived like spam.	5	5	10
32. Companies are required to make messages of EB easily available and seen, for the purpose of sharing the content.	2	9	11
34. Social networking for EB requires a clear long term strategy, whereby you necessary think about who you want to reach and what your specific message is.	6	3	9
37. For effectively usage of the different social networking platforms it is required that EB professionals receive social media training.	5	4	9

Because no correlations were found the last step included to select the five items with the highest mean and the lowest standard deviation. The five most important conditions are found in table 15.

**Table 15** The five most important conditions of SNS for employer branding

Conditions of SNS for employer branding	Mean	St. dev.
1. Social networking for EB requires a clear long term strategy, whereby you necessary think about who you want to reach and what your specific message is.	5.77	1.922
2. Companies should personalize the approach (personal answering/interacting) towards people who are interested in their company.	5.77	1.922
3. Companies are required to make messages of EB easily available and seen, for the purpose of sharing the content.	5.54	1.808
4. Companies are required to control their EB messages, so that messages not look and are not perceived like spam.	5.54	2.066
5. For effectively usage of the different social networking platforms it is required that EB professionals receive social media training.	5.46	2.066

### Limitations

The items regarding the limitations contained 14 items, grouped within 5 clusters. The first step includes selecting the “good” items, which have frequent rates of 6 (“Agree”) and 7 (“Strongly agree”). These “good” items can be found in table 16.

**Table 16** Limitations: Items considered as “Good” scores (High score on strongly agree/agree)

Items	Frequency “Strongly Agree”	Frequency “Agree”	(N=13) Total
39. Companies should take into account that there are (target) audiences that restrictive or not use SNS.	1	6	7
41. Due to the big amounts of messages on social networking sites, one message is easily overseen.	1	7	8
44. The messages on SNS comes with limited communication possibilities, as messages are relatively short or relied only on an image.	4	4	8
45. As user you can give limited amount of information on one SNS, as it is often necessary to link to another site.	2	6	8
48. SNS enables people to easily and anonymously complain regarding the company.	2	8	10
49. The fast way of communication within SNS creates expectations for fast responses from the company, while this is not always possible.	0	7	7

Also for the limitations no correlations were found regarding the 6 remaining items. Therefore the last step was to select the five items with the highest mean and the lowest standard deviation. The five most important limitations are found in table 17.

**Table 17** The five most important limitations of SNS for employer branding

Limitations of SNS for employer branding	Mean	St. dev.
1. SNS enables people to easily and anonymously complain regarding the company.	5.85	0.801
2. As user you can give limited amount of information on one SNS, as it is often necessary to link to another site.	5.54	1.050
3. Companies should take into account that there are (target) audiences that restrictive or not use SNS.	5.46	0.967
4. The fast way of communication within SNS creates expectations for fast responses from the company, while this is not always possible.	5.31	0.947
5. Due to the big amounts of messages on social networking sites, one message is easily overseen.	5.31	1.377

### RQ3. How does your organization use Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?

The third question contained 16 items, grouped within 7 clusters. A three-step process conducted the narrowing down of the 16 items towards 5 most important items once more. The first step included selecting the items with a “good” score, which means in this case a high rating of 4 (“Moderate”) and 5 (“Frequent”).

**Table 18** Usage of SNS: Items considered as “Good” scores (High score on Frequent/Moderate)

Items	Frequency “Frequent”	Frequency “Moderate”	(N=13) Total
52. Our company posts employer branding content that fits the special interests of the focus group.	7	2	9
53. Our company makes use of visuals/ videos in the EB messages.	6	3	9
57. Our company posts all new projects to promote EB.	5	5	10
58. Our company posts all innovations within the company to promote EB.	6	6	12
59. Our company performs storytelling on SNS for inspiring people towards the EB (sharing stories regarding successes, failures, rituals and values).	6	4	10
60. Our company shares EB posts of other companies that we perceive as interesting.	4	4	8
62. Our company posts advertisements for reaching new people.	6	3	9
63. Our company use SNS for connecting and interacting with EB professionals from other companies.	5	2	7
64. Our company sends invitations towards interested people for following the business page(s) on SNS.	4	5	9
66. Our company uses SNS for the purpose of meeting and engaging with colleagues.	3	5	8

Furthermore, no correlations were found regarding the 10 remaining items. Therefore the last step was to select the five items with the highest mean and the lowest standard deviation, found in table 19.

**Table 19** The five most important usages of SNS for employer branding

Usage of SNS for employer branding	Mean	St. dev.
1. Our company posts all innovations within the company to promote EB.	4.23	1.092
2. Our company posts employer branding content that fits the special interests of the focus group.	4.15	1.068
3. Our company performs storytelling on SNS for inspiring people towards the EB (sharing stories regarding successes, failures, rituals and values).	4.08	1.188
4. Our company posts all new projects to promote EB.	4.08	0.954
5. Our company posts advertisements for reaching new people.	4.00	1.155

In total a number of 20 items remained after the narrowing down process. The purpose of this delineation is to reach consensus (common agreement) between the participants regarding the most important benefits and limitations of SNS for employer branding. For even further reaching consensus, the 20 items are ranked towards importance in the next round.

### Reflection

The process of narrowing the answers was for the most part easy to complete, although for the benefits it was more complicated. Practitioners namely seem to have various perspectives on how SNS



is beneficial for employer branding. For example, some practitioners find SNS beneficial for communicating with inside and outside talent, others for reaching and advertising towards their target group, again others for sharing brand experiences, and some for telling stories regarding successes. It seems that not all organizations and professionals are using SNS and their functionalities to a similar extent and for similar employer branding purposes. The use of social networking sites for employer branding might vary by sector and the size of firm. Sectors differ in the intensity of technology usage for businesses purposes, and therewith result in different use of employer branding through SNS. Moreover, research found that the accounting/professional business sector is very active on social networks, while the transport sector is falling behind towards the use of social networks for their business activities (CBS, 2015). Next to that, also the size of the company will have influence in the way practitioners use SNS for EB. Startups and SMEs for example are more focused on EB messages for reaching and advertising towards their target group, while global players such as Phillips and Deloitte are focused on promoting activities for communicating with inside and outside talent.

### 4.3 Findings: Third Round

In the third round the participants were asked to rank the most important items per topic. Firstly, the mean is analyzed to show the distribution of the items (mean). Next to that, also the modus (value that occurs most frequently) and the sum (total score of each item) were indicators for the ranking. The results of the ranking in all four areas are showed below, with addition of explanations given by the practitioners regarding their first choice.

#### *RQ1. What are the benefits of using Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?*

The benefits are ranked towards importance, whereby a mean close to the score of 1 indicates a high importance and a score close to 5 indicates a low(er) importance. Furthermore, there is chosen to analyze the sum of the items, because the modus and median give no clear ranking order here. Also for the sum counts: how lower the sum, how higher in importance. In table 20 the outcomes are showed, ranked towards importance.

**Table 20** Benefits ranked towards importance: based on their mean and sum

Ranking order: Benefits	Mean	Sum
1. Serving as a strategy for attracting inside and outside talent (by informing/ building relationships with them on SNS).	1.30	13
2. The possibility to present your organization as an interesting employer as wide and specific possible.	2.50	25
3. To become publisher of stories (stories/anecdotes regarding success, norms and values etcetera) and therewith validate the brand messages.	3.00	30
4. The possibility of communicating the employer brand on a fast way due to the possibility of duplicating and sharing messages.	3.10	31
5. The possibility of reaching younger generations.	3.20	32

Table 20 shows that according to the practitioners EB through SNS, benefits the most from a strategy for attracting inside and outside talent. The second most important benefit, with a significantly lower score, contains that it is possible to present the organization as an interesting employer as wide and specific possible. The item of becoming as publisher of stories, near to the score of the number two, is seen as the third most important benefit. In table 21 these three most important items are showed, with explanations given by practitioners regarding their number one choice.

**Table 21** Three most important benefits with explanation of participants

<b>Serves as a strategy for attracting inside and outside talent.</b>	<i>"We spend most of our time on SNS and it is the easiest way to communicate, it is user friendly and the SNS have expertise in engaging people: so leverage that is important."</i>
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	<i>"Especially younger professional talents can be reached by networking sites."</i>
	<i>"Social networking is all about relationships, starting, maintaining, deepening relationships. Easy way to start dialogues, have people talk about your brand etc. building the talent community."</i>
<b>Way of presenting as an interesting employer as wide and specific possible.</b>	<p><i>"Through SNS it is possible to reach a very large public; from young to old. All expressions (style, divers messages etc.) makes it is possible to give an unique image of the organization. The big advantage of SNS is that every time new messages can be placed on the same account, and people can be "tagged" in a message. A follower of the concerned SNS therefore can interpret a clear image of the organization; as long as the organization frequently and consistently provides the placing of relevant content."</i></p> <p><i>"Especially the possibility to offer relevant content towards divers target groups, by targeting, following and retargeting them, gives SNS added value relative to traditional media. Good use of SNS makes communication measurable, which makes it easier to be relevant towards your target groups."</i></p>
<b>Becoming publisher of stories and therewith validate the brand messages.</b>	<i>"Social networking sites thrive on inspirational content that touches the target audience. So, storytelling is a main trait of strong SNS messaging."</i>

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## *RQ2. What are the limitations of using Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?*

As noticed before, the second question is divided into two topics; conditions and limitations. The ranking of these two topics are separately discussed below.

### *Conditions*

For the conditions was considered the mean and the mode of the variables, to show both the distribution of answers (mean) and also the value that occurs most frequently within the answers of each variable (mode). Also here counts: A mean close to the score of 1 indicates a high importance and a score close to 5 indicates a low(er) importance. In table 22 the outcomes are showed, ranked towards importance.

**Table 22** Conditions ranked towards importance: based on their mean and sum

Ranking order: Conditions	Mean	Mode
1. A clear long term strategy, whereby you necessary think about who you want to reach and what your specific message is.	1.50	1
2. A personal approach (personal answering/interacting) towards people who are interested in their company.	1.60	1
3. Messages of EB which are easily available and seen, for the purpose of sharing the content.	2.70	3
4. Controlling of EB messages, so that messages not look and are not perceived like spam.	3.40	4
5. Receiving of social media training, for the effective usage of the different social networking platforms.	3.70	5

As showed in the table, the most important condition is related towards having a clear long-term strategy. With a similar score, the item of a personal approach is seen as second most important. Furthermore, with a significantly lower score, stands the third most important item regarding the messages of EB which should be easily available and seen. In table 23 these three most important items are showed, with explanations given by practitioners regarding their number one choice.

**Table 23** Three most important conditions with explanation of participants

<b>Need for a clear long-term strategy.</b>	<p><i>"If you don't strive towards a goal, you will never know if you satisfy the expectations and needs of the organization. Then you could put in all kinds of tools which sends a message towards the outside, but that will not help to reach a goal. For my part the strategy is the most important part. The rest of the cases are often sideshow".</i></p> <p><i>"A strong employer brand in combination with a smart SNS strategy gives the most potential for commitment and inspiration of talent. Furthermore, SNS do not necessarily replace other channels, but they add value compared to other communication channels for EB."</i></p> <p><i>"Branding is all about long term strategy; the place/messages in heads and hearts of talent that you want to achieve. Evidently social media is part of this overall employer branding strategy."</i></p>
<b>Need of a personal approach towards people who are interested in the company.</b>	<i>"Talk to everyone means talking to no one". You need to personalize and you can do that using SNS."</i>
<b>Need of EB messages, which are easily available and seen.</b>	<i>*No comments were given*</i>

## Limitations

Also for the limitations was considered the mean and the mode of the variables, to show both the distribution of answers (mean) and also the value that occurs most frequently within the answers of each variable (mode). Also here counts: A mean close to the score of 1 indicates a high importance and a score close to 5 indicates a low(er) importance. In table 24 the outcomes are showed, ranked towards importance.

**Table 24** Limitations ranked towards importance: based on their mean and sum

Ranking order: Limitations	Mean	Mode
1. The easy way of overlooking an EB message, due to the big amounts of messages that passes on SNS.	2.20	1/2
2. Easy and anonymously way of complaining regarding a company.	2.80	1
3. The restrictive use or non-use of SNS, which carries on that not all (target) audiences can be reached.	2.80	3
4. Creating of expectations for fast responses from the company, due to the fast way of communicating (while this is not always possible).	2.90	2/3
5. The limit amount of (EB) information that can be given, as it is often necessary to link to another site.	3.70	4

As showed in table 24, the practitioners find the easy way of overlooking an EB message the most important limitation regarding EB through SNS. Furthermore, the number two regarding the easy and anonymously way of complaining and the number three regarding the restrictive or non-users of SNS are found to be almost even important due to their similar scores. Even more, the item of creating of expectations for fast responses just did not make it in the top three. In table 25 the three most important items are showed with explanations given by practitioners regarding their number one choice.

**Table 25** Three most important limitations with explanation of participants

<b>The easy way of overlooking an EB message.</b>	<i>"There was nog outspoken nr 1 answer.. but it's clear that messaging in SNS are competing with an overload on all sorts of information. So, through the clutter is really challenging."</i>
<b>Easy and anonymously way of complaining regarding a company.</b>	<i>"In this list the biggest disadvantage, for me, is the anonymously and easily ease in which people can negatively express themselves regarding the organization. This can cause great damage to organizations. The information is publicly available"</i>

	<i>and the reader can barely judge if this information is realistic and if they must or are able to rely on it.”</i>
	<i>“Especially for service companies with lots of customers social networking sites are easy ways to complain about a company, service or employee.”</i>
<b>(target) audiences that restrictive or not use SNS.</b>	<i>“Reaching audiences is dependent on many factors that need to be managed: message, target audience, existing brand popularity, etc. Social media EB may sound simple, but to have results is also very hard and intelligent (and costly) work!”</i>

*RQ3. How does your organization use Employer Branding through Social Networking Sites?*

Furthermore, also for the usage of SNS was considered the mean and the mode of the variables, to show both the distribution of answers (mean) and also the value that occurs most frequently within the answers of each variable (mode). As noticed: A mean close to the score of 1 indicates a high importance and a score close to 5 indicates a low(er) importance. In table 26 the outcomes are showed, ranked towards importance.

**Table 26** Usage of SNS (for EB) ranked towards importance: based on their mean and sum

<b>Ranking order: Usage</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Mode</b>
1. EB messages including storytelling for inspiring people towards the EB (sharing stories regarding successes, failures, rituals and values).	1.90	1
2. EB content that fits the special interests of the focus group.	2.20	2
3. EB advertisements for reaching new people.	2.70	1
4. EB messages regarding all new projects within the company.	3.00	2/3
5. EB messages regarding innovations within the company.	3.20	4

As showed in the table, the most used activity on SNS for EB is related towards storytelling for the inspiring of people towards the EB. Not far off storytelling comes the second most used activity; content that fits the special interests of focus groups. Furthermore, the true number three of the most used activities is related towards EB advertisements for reaching new people. In table 27 these three most important items are showed, with explanations given by practitioners regarding their number one choice.

**Table 27** Three most used activities with explanation of participants

<b>EB messages including storytelling for inspiring people.</b>	<i>"When you tell stories people will read, understand and engage. And you select what you want to read which means you want high quality content."</i>  <i>"Using image, film etc. through SNS is helpful to bring more inspiration to stories."</i>
<b>EB content that fits the special interests of the focus group.</b>	<i>"In my vision the most important activity contains the writing and sharing of content, which is interesting and adds value towards followers. Within this content you can give an representation of the organization between the lines."</i>
<b>EB advertisements for reaching new people.</b>	<i>"Social networking sites are mostly used to attract new people. They way how to reach them is partly bases on showing new people how my company deals with innovation and new projects."</i>

#### *Reflection third round*

The first aspect to notice is that several participants did not ranked the items according to the assignment. For example, one participant scored all the items with a value of 1 or 2, instead of ranking them from the value 1 to 5. Another participant scored several areas only with a value of 2, suggesting that the participant found the most important item missing into the items to rank. Nevertheless, this did not cause crucial issues for the analyzing of the results. Secondly, regarding the usage, a few participants mention that the different SNS activities for EB are related towards each other. Storytelling for instance is related towards the promotions of new projects and innovations, because EB messages regarding innovations and new projects can be activities of storytelling. For example, the success of a company regarding the implementation of a new improved machine is a part of their success, so this particular innovational move can be promoted on SNS with the goal of inspiring people. Also for reaching new people, the company can inspire them to show how the company deals with innovation and new projects. The previous made it more difficult for some participants to rank the items towards importance, and stated that most activities are even important.

## Section 5. Conclusion & Discussion

### 5.1 Discussion

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Social networking sites today can be seen as the most utilized services within Web 2.0, in which Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and MySpace have attracted hundreds of millions of users which integrated these sites into their daily practices. Because of the large number of individuals active on SNS, it is also frequently used as a tool for promoting purposes within businesses. So have social networking sites already proven to be an effective tool for the branding of products and services (Constantinides, 2010). Even more recently SNS is increasingly used as a tool for promoting the employer brand, referring to the image of desirability and uniqueness as an employer. Empirical research and companies specifically focus on the development of strategies surrounding employer branding through SNS. However, several aspects regarding the usefulness of EB through SNS seem to have escaped widespread attention. Therewith it seems that businesses are already using the tool without knowing the value it can have for their organization. Therefore the current study have tried to find an answer towards the following research question: *What are the benefits and limitations of the usage of social networking sites for the purpose of employer branding, in the vision of Employer Branding practitioners?*

Before diving into the empirical research a literature review is undertaken, which focuses on previous existing theory of employer branding and social networking sites. This literature review explains the characteristics of social networking sites and their value towards other online business activities. Moreover, it also includes the characteristics of employer branding and an exploration towards the potential benefits and limitations of EB. Next to that, the relation between the two concepts is explained. Furthermore, to shed new light on the subject, an empirical research is applied with an international panel of 13 (employer) branding practitioners. The practitioners participated into a Delphi study, which included a three-round issue identification and consensus-building process. Within the first round of the Delphi the participants generated ideas and sum up relevant answers by replying to three open questions. These answers could be classified into four areas: the benefits, limitations, conditions and the usage of SNS for employer branding. Within the second and third round these areas were narrowed, as participants were asked to identify the answers that they considered to be the most important. In the third round the participants were asked to rank the remained answers of the second round in order of the least until the most important. After this process an acceptable degree of consensus was reached in all the areas.

Within this study there is noticed that the majority of the participants have a background in the field of marketing and communication and/or recruitment. In line, as predicted by Bondarouk, et



al. (2013), HR professionals in the near future need to be more specialized in Marketing and Communication Studies, as employer branding requires technical, marketing and communications knowledge. Also recruitment has similar responsibilities as marketing and communication, only the recruitment field focuses on candidates and the marketing field on customers. This study might be an confirmation that indeed marketing knowledge have become important into the employer branding area. Even more, there is a development going on in which marketing and/or recruitment employees becoming fulltime employer branding specialists. There seem to arise a new position within organizations, which indicates the increasing importance and attention employer branding obtains within businesses.

It seem fair that marketing knowledge is becoming more important, because this knowledge gives insights on how to best represent the company online. Moreover, several participants state that representing the company on social networking sites only is effective if the employer brand is already have been 'proven' and seem credible. This means that the company should be real and attractive in itself, else the branding activities on social networking sites will have minimal impact. In line, Jones et al. (2010) states "risky environment and corporations need to be creative as well as transparent and honest in order to captivate and communicate effectively with their various publics". When they are capable of being honest and transparent, Jones et al. (2010) state that the internet is the best tool for improving the reputation and brand image of the company.

The main findings regarding the benefits and limitations of social networking sites for employer branding are discussed below.

### **Benefits: Reaching talents and specific groups and validate the brand messages**

The panel encounters that strategically attracting inside and outside talent is the most crucial benefit of using social networking sites for employer branding. As one participant pointed out, *"Social networking is all about relationships, starting, maintaining, deepening relationships. Easy way to start dialogues, have people talk about your brand etc., and building the talent community"*. Social networking is seen as an easy way to engage in online conversations with high potentials, which helps them to build and maintain presence, reputation and brand image (Jones, et al., 2010). Therewith companies see SNS as an effective tool to appeal and attract inside and outside talent. Even more, findings from a survey of LinkedIn (2012) reveals that concentration on the employer's brand is particularly valuable for acquiring talents from groups including younger candidates and specialists and managers. These groups are largely represented on social networking sites, and therefore seem as the right tool to approach these groups. However, there should be taken into account that attracting these groups on social networks serves as a support system. If the company has bad recruiting principles in general, social networking will not remedy that (Wilska, 2014).

Secondly, not only talents can be attracted with SNS, SNS makes it possible to present the organization as an interesting employer as wide and specific possible. The technological features of social networking sites make this possible. Social networks namely own information of specified characteristics of all users (e.g. demographics and interests), which creates a global network of linkages between all individuals within a system (Boyd and Ellison, 2013). Therewith the organization can select specified characteristics into the system, and online messages will only be visible for SNS users within those criteria (Girona and Korgaonkar, 2014). So, this makes it possible for employer branding specialists to communicate the online branding messages towards a wide or a specific group of users.

A last very important benefit is that SNS makes it possible to become a publisher of stories, and therewith validate the brand messages. Storytelling namely generates positive feelings in customers and is perceived as more convincing than facts, thereby increasing brand trust, raising awareness and making the brand unique (Lundqvist, et al. 2012). In the same mindset stories related towards the employer brand can have positive impact on (potential) employees of the company, and therewith validate the brand messages. Social networking hereby has changed the role of users in storytelling from that of a passive listener to a more active participant. Therewith companies do not tell brand stories alone, but co-create brand performances in collaboration with (potential) employees. They engage in the stories and therewith keep brand story alive in the social network (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012).

#### **Conditions: Strategy, personal approach and EB easily seen**

Next to the benefits, also several conditions should be taken into account before communicating the employer brand on social networking sites. Firstly, the panel state that it is important to have a clear long-term strategy, whereby the company necessary thinks about who they want to reach and what their specific message is. Social networking sites namely create an environment, which is open to all people and whereby, freedom rules. Within this freedom citizens, consumers and other stakeholders can speak freely with each other and businesses have limited control over the information written about them (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). This brings as well opportunities as threats towards companies, which should be anticipated as good as possible within a strategy, plan or direction.

Within this free area it is also required according to the panel that companies personal approach the people who are interested in their company. Social networking sites namely speeded up the process of people to form social communities, and the organization should respond on this by listen to their customers and move to personal dialogues. This personal approach can also improve the trust of the customer towards the brand (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012).

Within the environment of social network sites, messages are also required to be easily available and seen. This is becoming increasingly important, because of the increasingly amount of messages available on social networking sites.

#### **Limitations: easy way of overlooking EB message and way of complaining, and the non-users**

The panel state that overlooking of EB messages is an important limitation. They mention that this is caused by the big amount of messages that passes on SNS. For example, Facebook is a true phenomenon in terms of the messages it generates and shares on behalf of its 1.44 billion monthly active users. Those users send an average of 31.25 million messages every minute (Kapko, 2015).

Next to that, another big limitation in the vision of practitioners is the easy way of complaining regarding a company. This is caused due to that SNS are very poorly regulated, which can lead towards negative comments of the company. Companies in the online world have less control over the information available about them (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Even more, one participant state: *“Especially for service companies with lots of customers social networking sites are easy ways to complain about a company, service or employee.”*

However young individuals and professionals such as managers and specialists are mainly available on SNS, another limitation is that not all (target) audiences are available on SNS. It seem that we still live in a world were society is slightly digitally divided. Although, the users of SNS are still increasing every year (CBS, 2015).

#### **Usage: Storytelling, EB content for focus group and reaching new people**

As already mentioned as one of the most important benefits, it seem that also the most important activity is related towards online storytelling for employer branding. SNS is envisioned as an important tool for storytelling of the EB, as one participant state: *“the usage of image, film etcetera through SNS is helpful to bring more inspiration to stories”*. So, next to that social networking sites makes the user an active listener and co-creator of storytelling, the technological features of SNS also enables creativity within these stories.

Furthermore, the activities related towards the special interests of the focus groups, and the reaching of new people are seen as important activities related towards SNS for employer branding. As already mentioned within the benefits, the technology features of SNS enables to reach users as wide and specific possible, which makes the tool very handy for communicating with target groups. Even more, reaching new people on SNS seem an effective activity, because of the big amount of users available on SNS and the high interactivity between them (Donde, et al., 2012).

## 5.2 Conclusion

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The research question of this particular study was: *What are the benefits and limitations of the usage of social networking sites for the purpose of employer branding, in the vision of Employer Branding practitioners?* This study has open the door towards a better understanding of what employer branding through social networking sites can mean for organizations, so they can make better decisions on the usefulness of social networking for their employer branding. SNS hereby add new possibilities compared to other existing communication channels of EB, due to the freedom of its environment and other specific features. Therewith it seem that a strong employer brand in combination with a thoughtful SNS strategy is a promising opportunity for committing and engaging talent and other focus groups towards the organization. Furthermore, the free and interactive features of the particular tool also carries on conditions which should be act on, and limitations which should be kept in mind before using SNS for employer branding purposes.

Moreover, it should be noticed that the answers give strong indications of the sectors and the size of companies the employer branding practitioners work for. Sectors might differ in the intensity of usage of technology for business purposes. Even more, also the size of the company they work in influence the usage of technology and therewith the use of SNS for EB.

Nevertheless, this study found that SNS is an interesting tool for communicating and engaging with talent and focus groups. Following, Jones et al. (2010) state that online stakeholders can help to increase the reputation and brand image of a company. So, interesting would be to investigate further how talent and other focus groups can help to improve the reputation and brand image of an organization. How for example can these stakeholders co-create the value proposition of the employer brand? And in what extent does this increase the reputation and brand image as an employer?

Furthermore, this study found that SNS is a suitable tool for storytelling about the employer brand with the purpose of inspiring and engaging online stakeholders. It seem that the concept of storytelling for employer branding is relatively new towards the literature. Therefore it might be interesting to research the effectiveness of employer branding storytelling through SNS. For example, how do stakeholders respond on telling stories on SNS for employer branding, and are they more attracted toward organizations that use stories to communicate their employer brand? Connecting thereto, it can be useful to study how storytelling for employer branding through SNS can be shaped within organizations.

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## Appendices

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### Appendix I: Social Networking articles

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## Appendix II: Employer Branding articles

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## Appendix III: First round: First E-mail sent towards participants

Dear Mr./ Ms. X,

Recently you have confirmed to be willing to participate in a Delphi study regarding the use of Social Networking Sites for Employer Branding. I firstly want to thank you for your interest into the study. We now begin the data collection process. Attached to this e-mail you will find:

- The sheet with three open questions;
- The description of the research and the Delphi method.

**The goal of this study** is to explore the benefits (advantages or business-profits gained) and limitations (restrictions or failing) regarding Employer Branding towards Social Networking Sites. **“Social Networking Sites”** in this study refer to *“a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site” (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.).* Nowadays, businesses have shown major interest into the power and possibilities (such as reaching a large public) of social networking sites, and increasingly use it as a tool for strengthen their reputation regarding (potential) employees. This so-called **“Employer Branding”** refers in this study to *“a process or long-term strategy of a company, focused on building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and managing the awareness and perceptions of employees and potential employees, for gaining a competitive advantage”*.

The research applies the Delphi method, which is applicable for exploring assumptions or information leading to differing judgments. Delphi relies on systematic interviews with a panel of experts and consists of 2 or 3 rounds of questions. The panel members in this study are a diverse group of practitioners in the field of Employer Branding. In accordance to standard Delphi process protocol, your answers will be treated **anonymously**. In this round you are asked to answer 3 open questions. Answers should express your experiences regarding employer branding through social networking sites, whether it is a positive or negative perspective. Please send your answers to: [L.M.Nijhuis@student.utwente.nl](mailto:L.M.Nijhuis@student.utwente.nl) **in two weeks time**. The next round (Round 2) will take place during November 2015 and are based on a re-evaluation of your answers in round 1.

Thank you for your collaboration and I am looking forward to receiving your answers!

Best regards,  
Lisanne Nijhuis



## The Delphi method

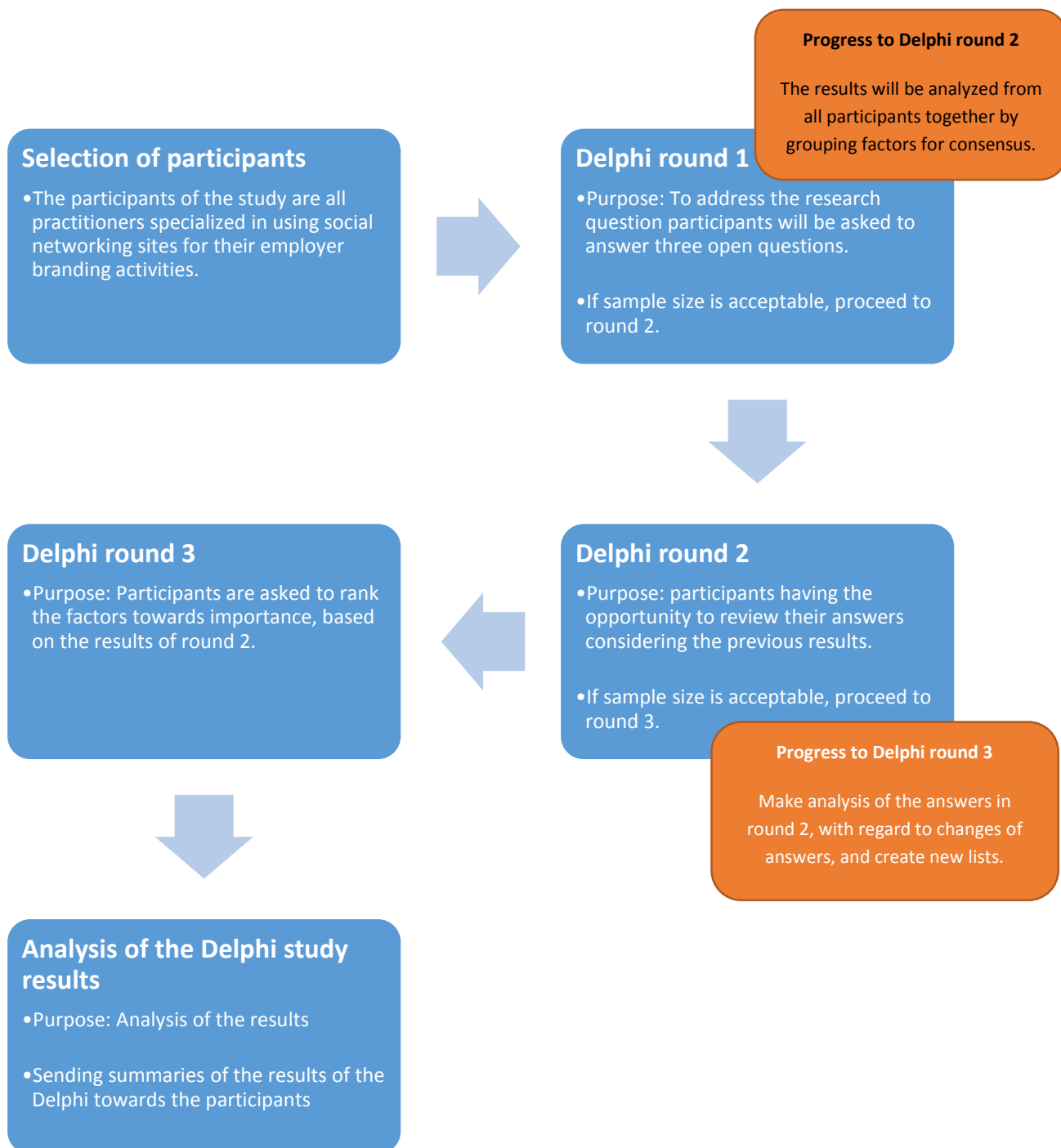
The Delphi technique was developed by researchers at the Rand Corporation in the early 1950s, and is based on the idea of “two heads are better than one” (Dalkey, 1969; p.5). Rand Corporation performed several studies and built the Delphi method from the simplistic version- formulates group judgments- to how it is used nowadays. Moreover, various definitions were given long the time. Linstone and Turoff (1975) define the Delphi method as “a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem” (p.3). Landeta (2006) mentioned, “the Delphi method was conceived as a group technique whose aim was to obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts by means of a series of intensive questionnaires with controlled opinion feedback. (...) It is a method of structuring communication between groups of people who can provide valuable contributions in order to resolve a complex problem.” (Landeta, 2006, p. 468). According to Landeta (2006) the main characteristics of the Delphi method are:

- Repetitiveness – participants should be questioned at least twice on the same items;
- Anonymity – answers are kept anonymous and considered as part of the entire group;
- Controlled feedback – the communication between experts is externally controlled;
- Group statistical response – all the answers can be found in the final answers.

Moreover, Bobeva (2002) suggest that the Delphi method is primarily used for forecasting, planning, issue identification/prioritization, or for framework/strategies development. He further mention that “whatever the perceived reasons for its choice, the method offers reliability and generalizability of outcomes, ensured through iteration of rounds for data collection and analysis, guided by the principles of democratic participation and anonymity” (p.104).

The present research aims to explore the benefits and limitations of employer branding trough social networking sites. The Delphi method enables to gather experiences and information of practitioners in both a qualitative and quantitative way, which result in a consensus regarding the value added of social networking sites for employer branding purposes. Regarding the controlled feedback that the Delphi method offers, the most reliable and general benefits and limitations of the practitioners are obtained. Moreover, the Delphi method has several advantages compared to face-to-face discussion. Face-to-face discussions can be biased in several ways, for example by dominant influencers, noise, and/or group pressure for conformity (Dalkey, 1969). Next to that, regarding that the research is subject to a Master thesis, the method provides valuable information in a shorter period of time and with less financial resources in comparison with questionnaires or interviews.

## Delphi-study process:



### Round 1 – three open questions

Below you will find the first three questions of the research. There is no restriction on how much you wish to write, as long as you consider it to be relevant. We welcome as many information regarding experiences from respondents as possible.

According to your experience:

1. What are the benefits of using **Employer Branding**<sup>1</sup> through **Social Networking Sites**<sup>2</sup>? (please explain)

[Click here to enter your text..](#)

2. What are the limitations of using **Employer Branding**<sup>1</sup> through **Social Networking Sites**<sup>2</sup>? (please explain)

[Click here to enter your text..](#)

3. How does your organization use **Employer Branding**<sup>1</sup> through **Social Networking Sites**<sup>2</sup>? (please explain)

[Click here to enter your text..](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Employer branding is a process or long-term strategy of a company, focused on building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and managing the awareness and perceptions of employees and potential employees, for gaining a competitive advantage.

<sup>2</sup> A social networking site is a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site" (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.).

Comments:

[Feel free to insert comments here..](#)

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After you have completed answering the questions, please save it as a word document and send it to: [L.M.Nijhuis@student.utwente.nl](mailto:L.M.Nijhuis@student.utwente.nl)

Thank you for your collaboration!

## Appendix IV: First round: Second E-mail sent towards participants

Dear Mr./ Ms. X,

I firstly want to thank you for your interest into the study. We now begin the data collection process. The goal of this study is to explore the benefits (advantages or business-profits gained) and limitations (restrictions or failing) regarding Employer Branding towards Social Networking Sites.

Below you will find the first three questions of the research. Answers should express your **experiences** regarding employer branding through social networking sites, whether it is a positive or negative perspective. There is no restriction on how much you wish to write, as long as you consider it to be relevant. We welcome as many information regarding experiences from respondents as possible.

According to your experience:

1. What are the benefits of using **Employer Branding**<sup>1</sup> through **Social Networking Sites**<sup>2</sup>? (please explain)

[Click here to enter your text..](#)

2. What are the limitations of using **Employer Branding**<sup>1</sup> through **Social Networking Sites**<sup>2</sup>? (please explain)

[Click here to enter your text..](#)

3. How does your organization use **Employer Branding**<sup>1</sup> through **Social Networking Sites**<sup>2</sup>? (please explain)

[Click here to enter your text..](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Employer branding is a process or long-term strategy of a company, focused on building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and managing the awareness and perceptions of employees and potential employees, for gaining a competitive advantage.

<sup>2</sup> A social networking site is a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site" (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.).

Comments:

[Feel free to insert comments here..](#)

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***Information regarding the study***

The research applies the Delphi method, which is applicable for exploring assumptions or information leading to differing judgments. Delphi relies on systematic interviews with a panel of experts and consists of 3 rounds of questions. In accordance to standard Delphi process protocol, your answers will be treated **anonymously**. The next round (Round 2) will take place during December 2015 and are based on a re-evaluation of your answers in round 1.

After you have completed answering the questions, please send it to:

[L.M.Nijhuis@student.utwente.nl](mailto:L.M.Nijhuis@student.utwente.nl)

Thank you for your collaboration!

## Appendix V: Items analyzed (for second round)

**Table x** Derived items regarding benefits

Cluster	Items	Explanation of choice
<b>Way of divers and fast communication of your Employer Brand</b>	<b>Way of communicating your EB</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SNS make it possible to present the organization as an interesting employer, both wide and specific.</li> <li>2. SNS really capture what your company wants prospective job applicants to see.</li> <li>3. SNS are easy tools for exposure of the employer identity of your company.</li> <li>4. SNS enables the organization to publish stories (stories/anecdotes regarding successes, norms and values) to achieve specific goals.</li> </ol>	<b>Way of communicating your Employer brand</b> <i>Four general statements are made regarding that SNS can be used as tools for communicating the Employer Brand. However, the statements vary broadly in their defining words, which makes them hard to combine. Therefore there is chosen to separate them into four items. Moreover, to clear up the statement of publisher of stories, there is added an explanation regarding the meaning of it.</i>
	<b>Fast way of communication</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. SNS offer a fast way of communicating the EB due to the possibility of duplicating and sharing messages.</li> <li>6. SNS offer a fast and direct way of communicating the EB due to is possibility of targeting your audience.</li> <li>7. SNS is a flexible tool due to the fact that adaptations of the EB can be realized quickly.</li> </ol>	<b>Fast way of communication</b> <i>Some of the respondents mention that EB through SNS can benefit from fast messaging. Although, the respondents give three different reasons why SNS are fast tools for messaging. This is the reason why this subject is separated into three items.</i>
<b>Learning from EB professionals</b>	<b>Expression options</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. SNS offer many possibilities for vivid expression, such as photographic, video and text.</li> </ol>	<b>Expression options</b> <i>Separately asked towards the respondents, because it specifically mention the communication functionalities.</i>
	<b>Informing talent</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. SNS are tools for informing (inside and outside) talent regarding the EB.</li> </ol>	<b>Informing talent</b> <i>One respondent mention that SNS can be seen as tools for communicating information towards (potential) talent.</i>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. SNS connect the company with EB experts, which gives organizations the ability to learn/improve their knowledge and ideas.</li> </ol>	<i>One respondent mention that SNS can also be used for EB professionals to share their knowledge/ideas towards each other, so they can learn from each other regarding different tools and approaches, and to stay up-to-date in the employer branding field. Moreover, because this information is publicly available, the researcher broaden the item stating that not only EB</i>

		<i>professionals, but ALL businesses have the possibility to learn from EB professionals on SNS.</i>
<b>Way of advertising your Employer Brand</b>	11. SNS is the future for advertising the EB, with the goal of directly putting people into action. 12. Paid advertisements on SNS gives organizations the possibility to get in touch with people that do not know them yet.	<i>The researcher separated this category of advertising from the category communicating, because advertising is a specific way of directly putting people into action, while communicating is about exposure/expressing towards people. Moreover, the category is separated into two items. The first one indicates that advertising the EB will be the future, while the second one states that as a result businesses will get in touch with new people.</i>
<b>Way of attracting (building a relationship with) talent</b>	13. SNS can serve as a vital strategy for attracting (inside and outside) talent. 14. SNS serve as tools for building a relationship with (inside and outside) talent.	<i>One respondent mention that SNS can be a vital strategy for attracting talent, and even more that it is a way of building a relationship with talent. The way of attracting and the way of building an relationship with talent both involves different kind of approaches, and therefore the category is separated by two items:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SNS is relevant for attracting talent;</li> <li>- SNS is relevant for building a relationship with talent.</li> </ul> <i>PS: he also talks about informing them and communicating them but that is relevant by other categories.</i>
<b>Possibility of Interactivity with (potential) employees</b>	15. SNS give the possibility of interaction/discussion with the organizations' (target) audience.	<i>Several respondents mention the interactivity possibilities within SNS. Some of them mention specifically "interactivity with target group" and furthermore one even mention "talent". Therefore the item is added with 'target' in parentheses (also captures talent).</i>
<b>Important (reliable) source of sharing brand experiences</b>	16. SNS enable businesses to tell stories and validate the brand messages. 17. SNS enable businesses to constantly being graded and reviewed, which makes it a reliable source of information. 18. SNS are the most reliable sources (after personal communication) of sharing brand experiences.	<i>First of all, respondents state that SNS enables businesses to share brand experiences. Next to that one respondent state that SNS enables the brand to be constantly being graded and reviewed. On top, two respondents state that it is (the most) validated source of sharing brand experiences. With this in mind, three items are included in this category:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It enables businesses to share stories/experiences;</li> <li>- businesses are constantly being graded and reviewed,</li> </ul>

		<p>which makes it a reliable source of information;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It's the most reliable source (after personal communication) for brand experiences.</li> </ul>
<b>Reaching new people and focus/target groups</b>	<p>19. With the use of SNS organizations can (easily) reach a large network of people in a short period of time.</p> <p>20. With the use of SNS you can (easily) reach focus/target groups.</p> <p>21. SNS gives the possibility of reaching younger generations.</p>	<p>Almost all of the respondents mention that SNS gives the possibility of reaching people worldwide, but also gives the opportunity of reaching targets groups only. Next to that, several respondents mention that SNS is especially useful for reaching the younger generation. Therefore this category is separated into three items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reaching new people (worldwide);</li> <li>- Reaching the target group;</li> <li>- Reaching younger generations.</li> </ul>
<b>Cost-effective tool</b>	<p>22. SNS are relatively cheap methods for communicating/advertising the EB.</p>	<p>Several respondents state that SNS are cheap methods for advertising, compared towards advertising on TV or in the new papers. In order to indicate this the word 'relatively' is added.</p>
<b>Possibility of analyzing your target group</b>	<p>23. SNS gives the opportunity of analyzing organizations' audiences and therewith to match the interests of individuals with the right messages (retargeting).</p>	<p>Several authors mentioned different notions for the possibility of gathering information of your audience, such as remarketing/retargeting. It includes matching the interests of individuals with the right messages. The next item covers all the notions with the usage of the word 'analyzing' your audience and respond on that for your branding purposes.</p>
<b>Approachability</b>	<p>24. SNS shows that your organization is approachable for the public.</p>	<p>The respondent only gave the word 'approachable'.</p>
<b>Higher response rate</b>	<p>25. SNS enable that businesses will receive more and better responses of candidates due to targeted reach.</p>	<p>One respondent mentioned that SNS enables more and better responses. What kind of responses was not directly said. But after analyzing the researcher judged that the respondent meant candidates.</p>



<b>Transparency</b>	26. SNS enable the organization to increase their transparency towards their target group.	<i>One respondent mentioned transparency for target group as a benefit for SNS through Employer Branding.</i>
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**Table x** Derived items regarding conditions

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Explanation of choice</b>
<b>The company should be real and attractive in itself</b>	27. Generating stories (anecdotes regarding successes, norms and values etc.) on SNS requires that the company is real and attractive in itself.	<i>One respondent mention that the organization really needs to be attracting (interesting/inspiring) in reality before it will be useful to generate 'stories' into the social space. Stories here refer towards a cohesion regarding successes, norms and values etc. of the company.</i>
<b>Fit between company and interest of (potential) employees</b>	28. The organizational culture should match the personal interests of people, only then they will share positive content of that particular company. 29. Companies should focus on the interest of the potential candidate.	<i>One respondent state that sharing (positive) content is only done when the companies culture matches the personal culture of people. Therefore one item is focusing on this statement. Secondly one other respondent mention more generally that companies should approach (potential) candidates based on their interests (not mentioning the result of sharing content). Therefore this category separated into two items.</i>
<b>Personalize approach towards interested people</b>	30. Companies should personalize the approach (personal answering/interacting) towards people who are interested in their company.	<i>One respondent mention that it is not only beneficial that SNS gives the possibility of personalizing your approach towards people, it should also be a made sure that it has been done. This means that companies should personal answer/interact with people that are interested.</i>
<b>Quality of content</b>	<p><b>Should not look like spam</b></p> <p>31. Companies are required to control their EB messages, so that messages not look and are not perceived like spam.</p> <p><b>Quality for the purpose of sharing</b></p> <p>32. Companies are required to make messages of EB easily available and seen, for the purpose of sharing the content.</p> <p>33. The EB messages of a company should be of the highest quality to standards of people (regarding the nature of the story, the way it looks and the tone etc.), for the purpose of sharing the content.</p>	<p><b>Should not look like spam</b> <i>Three respondents mention that messages of employer branding should not look like spam. One respondent adds that companies should control their messages therefore. These statements can be included into one item.</i></p> <p><b>Quality for the purpose of sharing</b> <i>One respondent highlights the importance of inspiring people and therewith sharing the content of businesses. He states that therefore the content needs to fulfill two conditions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Content should be easily available and seen (publicly)</i></li> <li>- <i>Content should be of the highest quality to standards of people (the nature of the story, the way it looks and the tone etc.).</i></li> </ul> <p><i>These two conditions are separated into two items.</i></p>

<b>Need for strategy/focus</b>	34. Social networking for EB requires a clear long term strategy, whereby you necessary think about who you want to reach and what your specific message is.	<i>Two respondents emphasizes the need for a strategy. One state that you need a long term vision. The other add that you necessary should think about who you want to reach and what your specific message is. In line, another respondent add that you should focus your network. So, the three statements can be merged into one item.</i>
<b>Control of activities</b>	35. Employees of a company should control their activities on social networking sites as prospective candidates have sight of their activities.	<i>One respondent mention that people on SNS are aware of what others are posting, liking or commenting. Therefore employees in a company should be aware of their activities on SNS, as also prospects for their company have sight of their activities (everything leaves a digital trail).</i>
<b>Ability of communicating differently</b>	36. The company should be aware of the 'specific' language on social networking sites (such as slang, abbreviations and usage of emoticons). It requires the ability of companies to communicate differently on SNS than with face-to-face communication.	<i>One respondent state that the language on SNS differ compared with the language in face-to-face communication. In other words, Social communication is expected to be shaped differently than face-to-face communication. Although, it depends on the context and user(s) the company interacting with. Nevertheless, the point of this category (and therefore included in the item) is that the companies should be aware of the differences in language and be able to apply the 'specific' language on SNS.</i>
<b>Need for social media training</b>	37. For effectively usage of the different social networking platforms it is required that EB professionals receive social media training.	<i>One respondent mention that not all platforms are the same, so each will have its different set of limitations. To deal with these limitations (and therewith use SNS effectively) a condition should be that employer branding professionals must have social media training.</i>

**Table x** Derived items regarding limitations

Category	Items	Explanation of choice
<b>Limited reach of (potential) employees</b>	<b>Different usage of SNS</b> 38. People that work in the manufacturing area differ in the usage of SNS compared with people in the services area. These two groups cannot easily be reached within the same social platform.	<b>Different usage of SNS</b> <i>One respondent separates two groups of people, and states that they differ in SNS usage:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Blue collar people: they work in a manufacturing setting.</i></li> <li>- <i>White collar people: they work in an office setting.</i></li> </ul> <i>So the first item includes that these two type of people cannot be approached by the same SNS.</i>
	<b>Non-usage of SNS</b> 39. Companies should take into account that there are (target)	<b>Non-usage of SNS</b>

	<p>audiences that restrictive or not use SNS.</p> <p><b>Older people less reachable</b></p> <p>40. Older people (including employees) are less reachable on SNS.</p>	<p><i>Three respondents generally mention that not all people (including their target audiences) are very active on SNS. These three statements are embedded in one item.</i></p> <p><b>Older people less reachable</b></p> <p><i>One respondent mention very specific that older people are limited in the usage of SNS. She further states that a number of older colleagues are very skeptical about the use of SNS. Summarizing, there can be said that older people will be less reachable with SNS.</i></p>
<b>Functional/Technical limitations</b>	<p><b>Functional limitations</b></p> <p>41. Due to the big amounts of messages on social networking sites, one message is easily overseen.</p> <p>42. Availability of many different social networking platforms makes it difficult to choose which platform to use for EB.</p> <p>43. Not all SNS are platforms necessarily designed for recruitment and EB purposes.</p> <p>44. The messages on SNS comes with limited communication possibilities, as messages are relatively short or relied only on an image.</p> <p><b>Technical limitations</b></p> <p>45. As user you can give limited amount of information on one SNS, as it is often necessary to link to another site.</p> <p>46. Each platform has different set of requirements that limits users' communication styles.</p> <p>47. Actions and interactions on SNS are not linked towards business information systems in organizations, which carry on disconnected data.</p>	<p><b>Functional limitations</b></p> <p><i>Four respondents mention that SNS for employer branding is not always as functional as it seems. They all mention different kind of functional limitations, so this category will be separated into four items. Noticeable is that one item specifically mention Facebook, however the current research generally speaks about SNS. So the item will be changed towards a more general statement (suitable for multiple SNS).</i></p> <p><b>Technical limitations</b></p> <p><i>Four respondents mention different kind of technical limitations. One of them specifically mention LinkedIn limitations. However, as noticed in the research generally speaks about SNS. So, this specific item could be embedded into the item of 'each platform has different set of requirements that limit the user to communicating in specific ways'.</i></p>
<b>Limited control</b>	<p>48. SNS enables people to easily and anonymously complain regarding the company.</p>	<p><i>Due to the uncontrollability on SNS, one respondent mentioned that it is easy for people to complain.</i></p>
<b>High response expectations</b>	<p>49. The fast way of communication within SNS creates expectations for fast responses from the company, while this is not always possible.</p>	<p><i>One respondent mention that people want fast responses, due to that SNS makes fast communication possible. She adds that some questions, however some questions need (much) effort to figure out. So, the previous is embedded into one item.</i></p>
<b>Interpretation of messages</b>	<p>50. Messages on social media are often limited towards a specific 'language', in combination with slang, abbreviations and emoticons.</p>	<p><i>Two respondents state that SNS limits the way of communication towards people. They mention:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The 'specific' language;</i></li> <li>- <i>The different interpretations people have on messages.</i></li> </ul>

	51. Messages on SNS are interpreted differently by people.	<i>These two statements can be divided into two items.</i>
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**Table x** Derived items regarding usage

Cluster	Items	Explanation why
<b>Posting of (divers) business information</b>	<p><b>Posting specific content</b></p> <p>52. Our company posts employer branding content that fits the special interests of the focus group.</p> <p><b>Posting of images/video</b></p> <p>53. Our company makes use of visuals/ videos in the EB messages.</p> <p>54. Our company makes use of infographics in our EB messages (combination of images and text).</p> <p><b>Posting of events</b></p> <p>55. Our company posts historical events to promote EB.</p> <p>56. Our company posts celebrations within the company to promote EB.</p> <p>57. Our company posts all new projects to promote EB.</p> <p>58. Our company posts all innovations within the company to promote EB.</p> <p>59. Our company performs storytelling on SNS for inspiring people towards the EB (sharing stories regarding successes, failures, rituals and values).</p>	<p><b>Posting specific content</b> <i>One respondent specifically mention that the content is depending on the interest of the focus group.</i></p> <p><b>Posting of images/video</b> <i>Several authors mentioned the visual side of showing their employer branding, using words as visuals, videos and Infographics. Infographics can be seen as a combination of images and text. The category can be divided into two items: usage of videos/visuals and the usage of infographics.</i></p> <p><b>Posting of events</b> <i>Several respondents mention that they are posting several kinds of events of their companies online. They all mention different kind of events, and therefore they are all mentioned separately in the items.</i></p>
<b>Sharing employer branding posts of other companies</b>	60. Our company shares EB posts of other companies that we perceive as interesting.	<i>One respondent also share activities of other companies. This can also be stimulating the Employer brand, as you as a company show what you find interesting.</i>
<b>Sharing of employee experiences</b>	61. Our company posts stories regarding employee experiences to enhance EB.	<i>One respondent mention that they share stories regarding the experiences of their employees. The item speaks for itself.</i>
<b>Advertisement purposes</b>	62. Our company posts advertisements for reaching new people.	<i>One respondent mentions that they post advertisements on SNS.</i>
<b>Expanding network</b>	<p>63. Our company use SNS for connecting and interacting with EB professionals from other companies.</p> <p>64. Our company sends invitations towards interested people for following the business page(s) on SNS.</p>	<i>Two respondent mention that they use SNS as a tool for expanding their network. One mention it as a way of connecting and interacting with other EB professionals. The other respondent use it for broaden the followers of the company. Therefore the category is divided into two items.</i>

<b>Engagement purposes</b>	<p>65. Our company applies a “Find. Attract. Engage.” approach towards potential employees.</p> <p>66. Our company uses SNS for the purpose of meeting and engaging with colleagues.</p>	<p><i>Two respondents mention that they use SNS as a tool for engaging certain people:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>One mention engaging potential employees</i></li> <li>- <i>One mention engaging employees within the company.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Results of Employer branding on SNS</b>	<p>67. Our company makes visible the results of EB actions on SNS.</p>	

## Appendix VI: Second round E-mail sent towards participants

Dear Mr./Ms. X,

I would like to thank you again for your collaboration in the first round! We now proceed towards the second round.

What is expected from you now: in Round 2, I ask you to rank the groups according to their importance, in your view. There is no “objective” importance! All is about your own experiences and opinions! Answering the questions below should not take more than 10 min. Your answers will be treated anonymously.

For your information: after the first round I have incorporated all the answers into XXX categories. It resulted in 67 so-called “items”. After that I grouped those items into larger categories: from a total of 67 items, I came up with 33 categories of items. I formulated items as close to the words of the participants as possible.

Please send your answers to [L.M.Nijhuis@student.utwente.nl](mailto:L.M.Nijhuis@student.utwente.nl), in **one week time**. In the third round, the last round, we will send you the feedback on the second Round, and present you the clusters in accordance to the ranking received.

Thank you for your collaboration and I am looking forward to receiving your answers!

Best regards,

Lisanne Nijhuis

**Table 1: Statements regarding the benefits of Employer Branding through SNS**

SNS = Social Networking Sites (Facebook /Twitter /LinkedIn etc.) EB = Employer Brand(ing) ITEM	LEVEL OF YOUR AGREEMENT						
	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. SNS make it possible to present your organization as an interesting employer, both wide and specific.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. SNS really capture what your company wants prospective job applicants to see.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. SNS are easy tools for exposure of the employer identity of your company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. SNS enables the organization to publish stories (stories/anecdotes regarding successes, norms and values) to achieve specific goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. SNS offer a fast way of communicating the EB due to the possibility of duplicating and sharing messages.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. SNS offers a fast and direct way of communicating the EB due to the possibility of targeting your audience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. SNS is a flexible tool due to the fact that adaptations of the EB can be realized quickly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. SNS offer many possibilities for vivid expression, such as photographic, video and text.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. SNS are tools for informing (inside and outside) talent regarding the EB	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. SNS connect the company with EB experts, which gives organizations the ability to learn/improve their knowledge and ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. SNS is the future for advertising the EB, with the goal of directly putting people into action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Paid advertisements on SNS give organizations a possibility to get in touch with people that do not know them yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. SNS serve as a vital strategy for attracting (inside and outside) talent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. SNS serve as tools for building better relationships with (inside and outside) talent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\*Employer branding is a process or long-term strategy of a company, focused on building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and managing the awareness and perceptions of employees and potential employees, for gaining a competitive advantage.

**Table 2: Statements regarding the benefits of Employer Branding through SNS**

SNS = Social Networking Sites (Facebook /Twitter /LinkedIn etc.) EB = Employer Brand(ing) <b>ITEM</b>	LEVEL OF YOUR AGREEMENT						
	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. SNS give the possibility of interaction/ discussion with the organizations' (target) audience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. SNS enable businesses to tell stories (stories/anecdotes regarding successes, norms and values etcetera) and validate the brand messages.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. SNS enable businesses to constantly being graded and reviewed, which makes it a reliable source of information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. SNS are the most reliable sources (after personal communication) of sharing brand experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. With the use of SNS organizations can reach a large network of people in a short period of time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. With the use of SNS you can (easily) reach focus/target groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. SNS give the possibility of reaching younger generations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. SNS are relatively cheap methods for communicating/advertising the EB	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. SNS give the opportunity of analyzing organizations' audiences and therewith to match the interests of individuals with the right messages (retargeting).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. SNS show that your organization is approachable for the public.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. SNS enable that businesses will receive more and better responses of candidates due to targeted reach.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. SNS enable the organization to increase their transparency towards their target groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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**Table 3: Statements regarding the conditions of Employer Branding through SNS**

*SNS = Social Networking Sites (Facebook /Twitter /LinkedIn etc.) EB = Employer Brand(ing) <b>ITEM</b>	<b>LEVEL OF YOUR AGREEMENT</b>						
	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Neither agree or disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
27. Generating stories (anecdotes regarding successes, norms and values etc.) on SNS requires that the company is real and attractive in itself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. The organizational culture should match the personal interests of people, only then they will share positive content of that particular company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. Companies should focus on the individual interest of the potential candidate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. Companies should personalize the approach (personal answering/interacting) towards people who are interested in their company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. Companies are required to control their EB messages, so that messages do not look and are not perceived like spam.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. Companies are required to make messages of EB easily available and seen, for the purpose of better sharing the content.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. The EB messages of a company should be of the highest quality to standards of people (regarding the nature of the story, the way it looks and the tone etc.), for the purpose of better sharing the content.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Social networking for EB requires a clear long term strategy, whereby you necessary think about who you want to reach and what your specific message is.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. Employees of a company should control their activities on social networking sites as prospective candidates have sight of their activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. The company should be aware of the 'specific' language on social networking sites (such as slang, abbreviations and usage of emoticons). It requires the ability of companies to communicate differently on SNS than with face-to-face communication.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37. For effectively usage of the different social networking platforms it is required that EB professionals receive social media training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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**Table 4: Statements regarding the limitations of Employer Branding through SNS**

SNS = Social Networking Sites (Facebook /Twitter /LinkedIn etc.) EB = Employer Brand(ing) <b>ITEM</b>	LEVEL OF YOUR AGREEMENT						
	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
38. People that work in the manufacturing area differ in the usage of SNS compared with people in the services area. These two groups cannot easily be reached within the same social platform.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. Companies should take into account that there are (target) audiences that restrictive or not use SNS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. Older people (including employees) are less reachable on SNS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41. Due to the big amounts of messages on SNS, one message is easily overseen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. Availability of many different social networking platforms makes it difficult to choose which platform to use for EB.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
43. Not all SNS platforms are necessarily designed for recruitment and EB purposes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. The messages on SNS come with limited communication possibilities, as messages are relatively short or relied only on an image.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
45. As user you can give limited amount of information on one SNS, as it is often necessary to link to another site.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
46. Each platform has different set of requirements that limits users' communications styles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
47. Actions and interactions on SNS are not linked towards business information systems in organizations, which carry on disconnected data.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
48. SNS enable people to easily and anonymously complain about a company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
49. The fast way of communication within SNS creates expectations for fast responses from the company, while this is not always possible.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50. Messages on social media are often limited towards a specific 'language', in combination with slang, abbreviations and emoticons.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
51. Messages on SNS are interpreted differently by people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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**Table 5: Statements regarding the usage of SNS for Employer Branding**

SNS = Social Networking Sites (Facebook /Twitter /LinkedIn etc.) EB = Employer Branding (EB)  ITEM	USE INTENSITY OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES				
	Frequent	Moderate	Occasionally /sometimes	Almost never	Never
52. Our company posts EB content that fits the special interests of the focus group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
53. Our company makes use of visuals/videos in the EB messages.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
54. Our company makes use of infographics in the EB messages (combination of images and text).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
55. Our company posts historical events to promote EB.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
56. Our company posts celebrations within the company to promote EB.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
57. Our company posts all new projects to promote EB.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
58. Our company posts all innovations within the company to promote EB.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
59. Our company performs storytelling for inspiring people towards the EB (sharing stories regarding successes, failures, rituals and values).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
60. Our company shares EB posts of other companies that we perceive as interesting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
61. Our company posts stories regarding employee experiences to enhance EB.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
62. Our company posts advertisements for reaching new people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
63. Our company use SNS for connecting and interacting with EB professionals from other companies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
64. Our company sends invitations towards interested people for following the business page(s) on SNS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
65. Our company applies a "Find. Attract. Engage." approach towards potential employees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
66. Our company uses SNS for the purpose of meeting and engaging with colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
67. Our company makes visible the results of Employer branding actions on SNS.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\*Employer branding is a process or long-term strategy of a company, focused on building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and managing the awareness and perceptions of employees and potential employees, for gaining a competitive advantage.

**The end of round 2, thank you for your collaboration!**

**Please send the completed questionnaire to [l.m.nijhuis@student.utwente.nl](mailto:l.m.nijhuis@student.utwente.nl)**

## Appendix VII: Third round E-mail sent towards participants

Dear Mr./Ms. X,

Firstly I thank you for participating in Round 1 and Round 2 of the Delphi study on the benefits and limitations of employer branding through Social Networking Sites. Now, in the third round, you are asked to rank 5 categories per proposition, from 1 to 5 (**1= highest important; 5= least important**). Please put ranking numbers in tables, and also if possible, give a brief explanation of your choice for extreme ranks. Please note that the items are presented randomly! The questionnaire is found in the appendix.

Please send your answers to [L.M.Nijhuis@student.utwente.nl](mailto:L.M.Nijhuis@student.utwente.nl) in **one week time**.

After we have received all the answers, we will inform you about the progress of our study and as soon as possible we will send you the final results of our study. Thank you for your collaboration and we are looking forward to receiving your answers.

Best regards,

Lisanne Nijhuis

Please rank the following 5 items from 1 to 5

1 = the highest importance  
5 = the least importance

<i>According to the participants</i> <b>The Benefits of Social networking sites for employer branding are:</b>	<b>Rank (number)</b>
The possibility of reaching younger generations	
The possibility to present your organization as an interesting employer as wide and specific possible	
Strategy for attracting inside and outside talent (by informing/ building relationships with them on SNS)	
To become publisher of stories (stories/anecdotes regarding success, norms and values etcetera) and therewith validate the brand messages.	
The possibility of communicating the employer brand on a fast way due to the possibility of duplicating and sharing messages.	

**Please give a brief explanation of your number 1 choice:**

[Click here to enter text](#)

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Please rank the following 5 items from 1 to 5

1 = the highest importance

5 = the least importance

<i>According to the participants</i>	Rank
<b><i>The Conditions of Social networking sites for employer branding are:</i></b>	<b>(number)</b>
A clear long term strategy, whereby you necessary think about who you want to reach and what your specific message is.	
A personal approach (personal answering/interacting) towards people who are interested in their company.	
Messages of EB which are easily available and seen, for the purpose of sharing the content.	
Controlling of EB messages, so that messages not look and are not perceived like spam.	
Receiving of social media training, for the effective usage of the different social networking platforms.	

***Please give a brief explanation of your number 1 choice:***

[Click here to enter text](#)

Please rank the following 5 items from 1 to 5

1 = the highest importance

5 = the least importance

<i>According to the participants</i> <b><i>The Limitations of Social networking sites for employer branding are:</i></b>	<b>Rank (number)</b>
Easy and anonymously way of complaining regarding a company.	
The limit amount of (EB) information that can be given, as it is often necessary to link to another site.	
The restrictive use or non-use of SNS, which carries on that not all (target) audiences can be reached.	
Creating of expectations for fast responses from the company, due to the fast way of communicating (while this is not always possible).	
The easy way of overlooking an EB message, due to the big amounts of messages that passes on SNS.	

***Please give a brief explanation of your number 1 choice:***

[Click here to enter text](#)

Please rank the following 5 items from 1 to 5

1 = the highest  
importance

5 = the least  
importance

<i>According to the participants</i> <b>The most important activities for promoting the EB on Social networking sites are:</b>	
	<b>Rank (number)</b>
EB messages regarding Innovations within the company.	
EB content that fits the special interests of the focus group.	
EB messages including storytelling for inspiring people towards the EB (sharing stories regarding successes, failures, rituals and values).	
EB messages regarding all new projects within the company.	
EB Advertisements for reaching new people.	

**Please give a brief explanation of your number 1 choice:**

[Click here to enter text](#)

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