e-HRM viewed from a management fashion perspective; an exploratory study based on the case study research

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Date: 24-05-2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank everyone who contributed to this thesis and my educational life in general. I want to thank my parents for supporting me both financially as well as emotionally throughout my studies. I was not always the easiest person to deal with during that time. You were really important in achieving my goal. Also a big thanks to my brother and sister, Ties and Elske, who also had a lot of patience with me during the last few years. I want to thank my sister for giving me constructive feedback on a concept version of this thesis. Furthermore, I want to thank all my friends, family and fellow students who helped me to get through my studies, and also made studying fun outside the campus.

Finally, this thesis would not have been possible without my supervisors, Tanya Bondarouk and Huub Ruël. Especially Tanya Bondarouk spent a lot of time in reading and commenting on my work. To both supervisors; thank you for your constructive feedback and support during the last phase of my master! It helped me a lot in writing and finalizing this thesis.

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates e-HRM from a management fashion point of view. It uses management fashion theory to determine if and to what extent e-HRM can be considered a fashion. The management fashion theory has been discussed in academic literature quite extensively. A total of 79 academic articles were read for this research, all contributing to e-HRM theory or management fashion theory. In the end, for this exploratory research, 13 case studies on the adoption and implementation of e-HRM systems within organizations have been analyzed, which were selected in consultation with Prof. Dr. T. Bondarouk, who is a senior researcher within the e-HRM field. These case studies were analyzed to find the factors influencing the adoption and implementation of e-HRM within the organizations under study, and to find out if these processes show similarities to the management fashion setting process displayed in figure 3. The findings indicate that e-HRM can be considered as rational and progressive. e-HRM systems and applications are used to save time, increase profitability, decrease errors, offer higher quality services and reduce administration costs. They also have unintended benefits, like improved image of the HRM department, more transparency or a greater autonomy of employees. Furthermore, a lot of socio-psychological and techno-economic forces were found which influenced the decisions regarding the adoption and implementation of e-HRM systems within organizations. A few examples of socio-psychological factors are national culture, organizational culture, mindset and behavior of employees, IT skills of employees, interpersonal communication with other e-HRM adopters, educational level of employees and the levels of technology acceptance among employees and line managers. A few examples of techno-economic forces are organizational size, environmental infrastructure, industry, available resources, government regulations, firm performance and pressure from competitors. So far, e-HRM shows a lot of characteristics of a management fashion. But, what was very difficult to analyze within the scope of this research, was the supply side of management fashions. This consists of management fashion setters disseminating e-HRM to the market. It is impossible to define all management fashion setters for e-HRM and to measure and analyze the dissemination process based on case studies. However, we could draw some conclusions regarding the management fashion setting process based on case studies. Governments can for example also play a role in the adoption and implementation process of e-HRM, especially for small- and medium sized firms, by encouraging firms to take part in conferences. Also, employees, line managers and particularly top management do play a role in 'selling' e-HRM in organizations. Top management can convince employees to use their e-HRM system, but the HRM department can also convince top management to adopt e-HRM systems or applications. To conclude, e-HRM shows important characteristics of a management fashion, but there are also a few 'black boxes' which need to be unraveled. The management fashion theory is a meta-level theory, which always works to a certain extent. This makes it difficult to draw conclusions based on this theory. It is a theory that makes you think, and makes organizations aware of the factors influencing their decision making.

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INTRODUCTION

The Human Resource Management field is changing very fast. An important question for organizations at the moment is: how should the HR function be organized in order to add value in this changing business environment? Organizations are undergoing dramatic changes with significant implications for how human resources are managed (Lawler & Mohrman, 2003). Not only the rapidly changing business environment and the increasing complexity of the organizations itself are causing these changes, but also the rapid rise of information technology (IT) plays an important role (Lawler & Mohrman, 2003). This is where e-HRM comes in. For example, organizations recruiting employees are increasingly using LinkedIn to find these employees (e-recruitment). While in February 2009 LinkedIn 'only' had 36 million members around the world, this has grown to 467 million members worldwide in Q3 of 2016 (Girard & Fallery, 2009; Statista, 2016).

In the past, the HRM function has been largely administrative in nature. Nowadays, this function is partly taken over by information technology. HRM activities can nowadays be delivered not only by specialized HR professionals, but also increasingly by line managers, information technologies and through outsourcing (Parry, 2011). With the innovative use of information systems, HRM has the potential to be far more strategic then it is now; taking on new roles, identities and functions (Barrett & Oborn, 2013, p. 252). So, e-HRM makes HRM more of a strategic business partner, instead of being considered mostly an administrative function by employees and managers.

This research will focus on e-HRM as a management technique. HRM in general is defined as 'an art of managing people at work in such a way that they give the best to the organization' (Srivastava, 2010, p. 47). E-HRM makes life easier for organizations by reducing the amount of paperwork, and makes it easier to understand the talents and skills of human resources within a quick time. Srivastava (2010) calls e-HRM an 'Implementation Support System (ISS) for HRM', offering online support in the management of HRM in a modern company. Bondarouk and Ruël (2009, p. 507) describe e-HRM as a set of IT applications that cover 'all possible integration mechanisms and contents between HRM and Its aiming at creating value within and across organizations for targeted employees and management'. Strohmeier (2007, p. 20) defines e-HRM as 'the planning, implementation and application of IT for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities'. Besides e-HRM, there are some further concepts which refer to the same phenomenon, such as terms as virtual HR(M) (Lepak & Snell, 1998), web-based HR(M) (Ruël, Bondarouk, & Looise, 2004) or business-to-employee (B2E) (Huang, Jin, & Yang, 2004).

E-HRM is divided into different dimensions and indicators, namely e-recruitment, e-selection, e-education, e-evaluation and e-rewarding (Tavakoli, Nazari, Ahmadi, & Niknam, 2015). E-HRM can be used for:
   a) transactional activities; those that involve day-to-day transactions and record keeping
   b) traditional HRM activities, such as recruitment, selection, training, compensation and performance management
   c) transformational activities; those that add value to the organization (Thite, Kavanagh and Johnson, 2009, p. 15), and may be used to manage HR across the whole employee life cycle (Parry, 2011, p. 1146).
E-HRM does not only vary in the functions for which it is used, but also in the degree of sophistication of the IT applications which are involved (Martinsons, 1994).

Ruel et al. (2004) summarized the whole process from initial HRM strategy and policy to HRM outcomes in a model. According to their model, this process consists of four stages, namely (Ruel et al., 2004, p. 370):

1. Initial HRM strategy and policy (and different approaches to strategy)
2. E-HRM goals; these are influenced by the internal and external environment
3. E-HRM type (transactional, relational or transformational)
4. E-HRM outcomes (effectiveness, commitment and competences)

All four stages are influenced by internal agents, like employees, workers council, line management etcetera. E-HRM goals are also influenced by external, environmental factors like the labor market, technological development, competition etcetera (Ruel et al., 2004). Strohmeier (2007, p. 21) developed a framework which argues the same basically. In his framework, the configuration of e-HRM will determine the consequences of e-HRM. But, both the configuration as well as the consequences of e-HRM may be preceded and moderated by contextual factors. Ruël and van der Kaap (2012) indeed found empirical evidence that contextual factors facilitating e-HRM usage are indeed positively related to HRM value creation. Furthermore, they moderate the relationship between e-HRM usage and HRM value creation. If the facilitating contextual factors are high, then the relationship between e-HRM usage and HRM value creation is weaker. One thing is highlighted within this research; e-HRM usage is only one aspect generating HR value. Contextual facilitating factors are of great importance as well (Ruël & van der Kaap, 2012). The same reasoning can be applied when examining the effect of e-HRM usage on e-HRM effectiveness (Ruël, Bondarouk, & van der Velde, 2007). In a later stadium of this research, contextual factors influencing the adoption and implementation of e-HRM will be discussed, based on case study research.

Literature on e-HRM suggests that overall, the three goals in introducing e-HRM are reducing process and administration costs, improving HRM services and improving the strategic orientation (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2013). Furthermore, e-HRM can speed up transaction processing, reduces information errors and improves the tracking and control of HR actions. So, using e-HRM within an organization can improve service delivery (Lengnick-Hall & Moritz 2003, p. 369).

Other generally acclaimed strategic advantages of e-HRM are:
- Changing the role of the HR function towards becoming a business partner. For example using HR metrics for strategic decision making (Hendrickson, 2003), and the empowerment of managers through the development and support of management capacity to conduct HR activities (Parry & Tyson, 2011).
- Increasing the time available for strategic HR issues (like strategic people management activities), because of the automation of routine HR tasks (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2013; Martin, Reddington, & Alexander, 2008). Because of the automation of HR tasks, HR professionals transform from administrative paper handlers to strategic partners (Voermans & van Veldhoven, 2007).
- Improving talent management through e-selection, self-assessment and e-performance management (Martin et al., 2008). E-HRM will help to address the four major global talent management challenges (e.g. right numbers, right location, right competencies and motivation, right price) as identified by Schuler, Jackson and Tarique (2011).
- The branding of organizations, and improving the organizational image (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2013).

HR departments are charged with simultaneously being strategic, flexible, efficient and customer oriented (Lepak & Snell, 1998, p. 217). In large international organizations, globalization is identified as a driving force for e-HRM. In practice, in organizations the goals are not always clearly defined. Most of the time e-HRM is directed at cost reductions and efficiency, rather than improving the strategic orientation (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2013).

While the goals and strategic advantages of e-HRM are clear, it is very interesting to investigate what the driving forces behind e-HRM adoption and implementation within actual organizations are. Are

these decisions based on the same goals and strategic advantages as mentioned above? Or is it just a popular management technique that is used because competitors or big organizations use it? And which other factors do influence this decision making process within organizations? To investigate this, the current paper will contribute to fashion theory as well as e-HRM research by trying to answer the research question:

To what extent can e-HRM as a management technique be considered a management fashion, according to management fashion theory?

Although some authors challenge e-HRM, this paper will be the first that systematically approaches e-HRM by using fashion theory. To do this, an extensive description of the theory is needed. The management fashion theory is described, analyzed and criticized in the next chapter.

Theory of Management Fashion

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the notion that management ideas and techniques are subject to swings in fashion, just like aesthetic aspects of life like clothing styles, hair length, furniture design, music taste etcetera (Clark, 2004). In 1996, Eric Abrahamson of Columbia University published the article about management fashion in the Academy of Management Review. Fashion (just like modes, vogues, rages and crazes) frequently revolutionizes many aspects of cultural life (Abrahamson, 1996). But, until 1996, theories of fashion narrowly focused on fashion in aesthetic forms (like clothing or haute cuisine). These theories were used unmodified to explain fashions in technical forms, like management techniques (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 254). Abrahamson argues that management fashions must not be treated as a special case of aesthetic fashions. Not only Abrahamson's theory is important for management fashion theory. Other researchers also made important contributions to his theory. These will also be discussed in the current chapter.

Abrahamson argues there are two important differences between aesthetic and management fashions, namely (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 255):
- Aesthetic fashions only need to appear beautiful and modern , while management fashions also have to be rational and progressive. In other words, they have to be efficient and innovative and need to be an improvement compared to older management techniques.
- The demand for aesthetic fashions are primarily shaped by socio-psychological forces, while such forces compete with economic and technical forces in the case of management fashions.

A management fashion is viewed as a transitory collective belief, disseminated by management fashion setters, that a certain management technique leads rational management progress (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 257). It can differ in scope, and in duration. It is important to understand that management fashion setters constantly redefine their own as well as their followers beliefs about which techniques lead to this progress (Abrahamson, 1996). They deliberately produce management fashions, in order to market them to fashion followers (Abrahamson, 1996). Abrahamson (1991) argued that fashion setters sometimes promote innovations that are already adopted by certain organizations (most of the time these are technically efficient innovations), and try to sell it to organizations that have not adopted these innovations yet.

Management fashion setters can for example be consulting firms, business mass-media publications, business schools, management gurus, consultants, academic gurus and publishers. To be regarded fashion setters, they have to sense the collective preferences of managers, develop a rhetoric to describe management techniques as contributing to management progress and they need to disseminate these techniques to managers and other organizational stakeholders before other fashion setters do (Abrahamson, 1996).

Clark (2004) elaborated in more detail about the different types of management fashion setters. He distinguishes between:

- *Management Gurus*:
  the creators of innovative, popular strategic ideas, by publishing best-selling books, articles in leading business journals or talks on the international lecture circuit. For example academic gurus, consultant gurus and 'hero managers' (Clark, 2004, p. 3-4).
- *Management Consultants:*
  Consultancy firms are both significant producers as well as consumers of management knowledge (Clark, 2004, p. 4). Not only do they draw on management gurus (see above), but they also often position themselves as 'thought leaders' by actively creating in-house gurus. They have experience with clients and they have enough research capabilities within their firms (Clark, 2004).
- *Business schools and management academics:*
  Of course, business schools and management academics also are important consumers as well as producers of management ideas. But, in general, academic literature is seen as lagging compared to business press. This is caused by lengthy peer review processes and high rejection rates. Also, the problem with ideas developed by business scholars is that they are perceived to be less valid compared to management gurus and consultants (Clark, 2004).
- *Publishers:*
  Publishers are concerned with identifying, producing and distributing ideas that are likely to have mass appeal (Clark, 2004, p. 4). They go out into the field an act as scouts attempting to identify potential stars from the existing pool of talent and sign them up (Clark, 2004, p. 4). They work closely with their authors helping them shape their ideas prior to publication. Also, they try to minimize risks by producing books according with rules about what has been successful in the past. They at least have to meet the expectations of managers, and they will hopefully exceed these expectations to become a best seller (Clark, 2004, p.4).

The management fashion process consists of the sensing of management fashions by management fashion setters on the one hand and the launching of these fashions on the other hand (Abrahamson, 1996). The sensing of management fashions consists of a creation and a selection phase, while the launching of fashions consists of a processing and dissemination phase (Abrahamson, 1996). These four phases each play their role by shaping the supply and demand for management fashions, namely:

- **Creation:** the new management technique has to be a significant departure from the state of the art management technique (it needs to be progressive, as stated before). Management fashion setters produce collective beliefs that these management techniques are both innovations and improvements relative to the state of the art. This can be accurate, but it can also be inaccurate. It can for example be an old and forgotten technique, which is slightly adjusted (Abrahamson, 1996). In Abrahamson's article this is mentioned as 'old wine in new bottles' (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 266).
- **Selection:** Little is known about this stage. Abrahamson argues that it could be that management innovations are invented by managers, and then scouted and selected by management fashion setters. The other option is that fashion setters create a new management innovation or resurrect old and forgotten techniques (old wine in new bottles, like described in the 'creation' phase) (Abrahamson, 1996). Other fashion setters may imitate these decisions (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 266).
- **Processing:** this phase involves the elaboration of a rhetoric by fashion setters which can convince fashion followers about the rationality of a management technique and the fact that it is progressive to other techniques (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 267). Most of the time the rhetoric discusses a performance gap which can be addressed by using a particular technique. This rhetoric can consist of carefully and clearly discussing scientific evidence, but

also addressing performance gaps in a dramatic fashion can be a tactic used by fashion setters (Abrahamson, 1996).

- **Dissemination:** the spreading of a management technique, from management fashion setters to users. The different type of fashion setters, and the publications they use to spread certain techniques were discussed earlier in this chapter. Fashion setters can directly disseminate their rhetoric to managers through publications they control, but sometimes publications they do not directly control use their rhetoric (academic literature can also adopt rhetoric developed by the popular management press) (Abrahamson, 1996).

Abrahamson argues that socio-psychological and techno-economic forces compete in the end in shaping the demand for a particular management fashion (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 271). Both are external factors, and can consist of for example globalization, environmental changes and customer preferences (Abrahamson, 1996). Which of the forces prevail in the end depends, in part, on whether and how management scholars intervene in the fashion-setting process (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 271).

So, socio-psychological and techno-economic forces are the drivers of the whole change process; the most important factors shaping the demand and supply of management fashions. Socio-psychological factors originate from people's desires, and consist of psychological states like boredom, striving for individuality and novelty (compared to the mass, who are 'out of fashion'), frustration and striving for status differentiation (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 271). Frustrations and despair leaves managers vulnerable to unrealistic hopes that using another management technique will magically relieve them from pressure (Abrahamson, 1996). As Abrahamson and Fairchild (1999, p. 708) point out, emotionally charged, enthusiastic and unreasoned discourse characterizes the upswings in management fashion waves, whereas reasoned, unemotional and qualified discourse characterizes their downswings. This evidences a pattern of superstitious collective learning according to Abrahamson and Fairchild (1999, p. 709). The process of status differentiation is called a trickle-down fashion process by Abrahamson and Fombrun (1994). Lower status organizations adopt fashionable techniques to make their organizations look like higher status organizations, putting the pressure on higher status organizations to distinguish themselves again (Abrahamson, 1996).

Techno-economic forces are for example macro-economic fluctuations, political forces and contradictions originating from within organizations (Abrahamson, 1996). These forces open gaps between organization's actual and desired performance (desired state). The management fashion setting process brings these performance gaps to the collective awareness and articulates new progressive and collectively acceptable techniques for narrowing these gaps (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 271). This does not mean these gaps can be measured easily and can be solved by technically efficient management techniques straight away. Techno-economic changes create preferences among fashion followers. Based on these preferences, fashion setters will shape demand for management techniques (Abrahamson, 1996).

So, fashion setters will not always just shape the demand for management fashions (based on norms of rationality and progress), but they can also sense the demand for management techniques based on socio-psychological and techno-economic forces. There is a reciprocal relationship between what fashion setters select and what fashion users demand (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 267).

Finally, some fashions can achieve widespread adoption and continued use for a considerable period of time. On the other hand, some fashions will decline quickly. These fashions are considered to be 'fads' (Grant, 2011, p. 118). Also, in a period of decline (within a certain subject area), a redefinition can take place. In this case, fashion setters can introduce a new innovation (Grant, 2011). This process and an example of a common lifecycle is displayed in figure 1. This figure is based on the work of Abrahamson and Fairchild (1999).
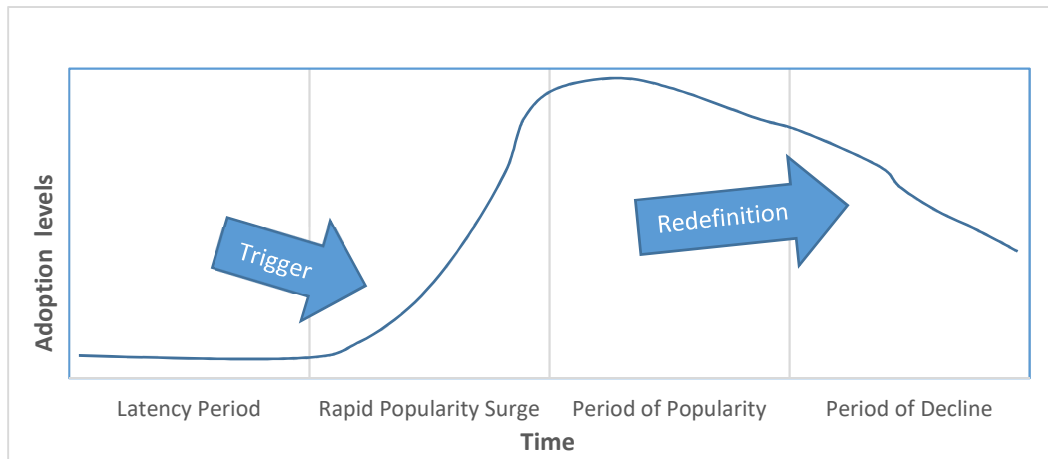
Figure 1: Lifecycle discourse of management fashions

The described process is summarized in a model by Abrahamson (1996). This model is displayed below, in figure 2.
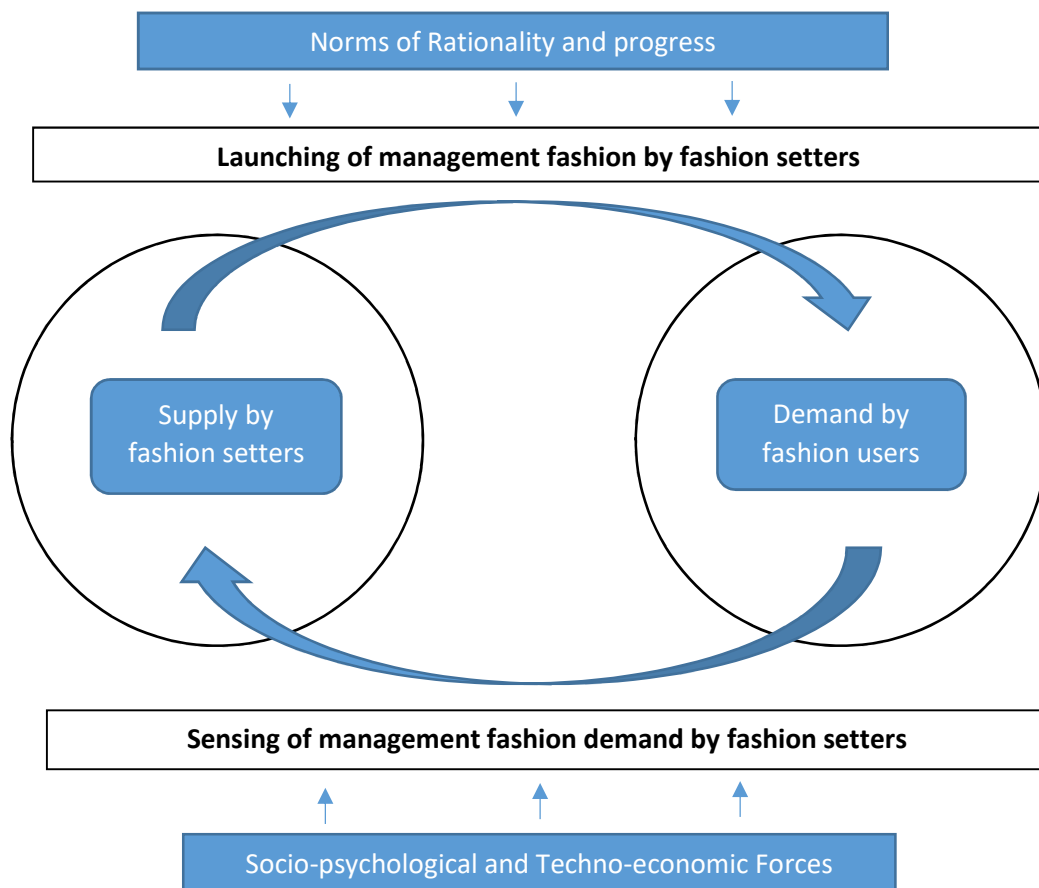

Figure 2: the Management-Fashion-Setting Process

As mentioned earlier in this paper, there are other management fields which borrowed Abrahamson's theory and applied it to management techniques within their fields of research. In table 1 an overview is given of research areas where the management fashion theory is applied to, which goal the researchers tried to achieve with their studies, which methods were used to study the phenomenon, and these articles' findings and contribution to what already has been written about management fashion theory (if there is any).

Table 1: Management Fashion theory contributions

RESEARCH FIELD AND AUTHORS	GOAL OF THE RESEARCH	METHODOLOGY	FINDINGS	CONTRIBUTION TO MANAGEMENT FASHION THEORY
TALENT MANAGEMENT (TM)				
ILES, CHUAI AND PREECE (2010)	Investigating whether TM is really distinct from traditional HRM practices, or that it is just 'old wine in new bottles'	Case studies (7) in Beijing. These companies consisted of 4 MNEs and 3 global management consultancy firms. In total, 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted.	TM showed certain characteristics of management fashion in some organizations, but it could not be adequately explained by management fashion alone.	They do not really apply Abrahamson's theory. They put an emphasis on the distinction between TM and traditional HRM, by comparing how TM is conceptualized by consultancy MNCs in China. They do not take into account the factors influencing the implementation of TM (triggers), and the actors involved in spreading and persuading managers to adopt TM in their organizations.
SELF-MANAGING TEAMS				
NIJHOLT AND BENDERS (2007)	This research checks Abrahamson and Fairchild's theory (1999) that the lifecycle of discourse promoting a fashionable management technique co-evolves with that of the techniques' diffusion across organizations.	Comparing data from different Dutch research institutes, secondary data analysis. Also, they are using print media indicators to review the popularity of self-managing teams as a management technique.	The lifecycle of discourse promoting a fashionable technique only partially coevolves with the lifecycle of its diffusion, which led the researchers reevaluate Abrahamson and Fairchild's (1999).	This research investigates the co-evolvement of the discourse of promoting a fashionable management technique and it's diffusion across organizations, which has not been done by most of the researchers in the management fashion area. The focus is more on the lifecycle approach, and not on Abrahamson's framework from 1996.
HR ANALYTICS				
MARLER, CRONEMBERGER AND TAO (2016)	Examining the diffusion trajectory of HR Analytics in the U.S by applying diffusion of innovation theory and management fashion theory.	Analyzing published popular trade, business press, and peer-reviewed academic articles by using natural language	Business press appears to influence the adoption process of HR Analytics by broadcasting positive outcomes and through creating management	This paper improves the understanding of how media influences the spreading of new HRM techniques across organizations. A limitation of this study is it only takes mass media into account as actor influencing this adoption, while Abrahamson's framework identified more actors which could

	Investigating which role mass media play in influencing the diffusion process of HR analytics in a U.S. context.	processing (a big data analytical technique).	fashion trendsetting rhetoric. Nevertheless, HR analytics is still at the early stage of adoption.	influence this adoption process. This paper also contributes to e-HRM literature by taking diffusion of innovation theory (DOI) and management fashion theory to examine how HRM practices enabled by e-HRM (in this case HR analytics) spreads across organizations.
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (KM)				
GRANT (2011)	This paper examines KM through the lens of management fashion theory.	Bibliometric and content analysis techniques to examine publications and discourse in the field from 1990 to 2009. The research consists of a discourse life cycle analysis and a diffusion life cycle analysis.	KM is not a fad and is becoming an enduring management activity (no evidence of decline yet). The paper provides bibliometric evidence that there has been a sustained interest in KM that is quite unlike that of other popular management techniques over the last 30 years.	This article elaborates on three different types of Guru's, namely the **Academic Guru** (for example Henry Porter and Michael Porter), the **Consultant Guru** (for example BCG or McKinsey) and the **Hero-manager Guru** (for example Donald Trump or Steve Jobs). This article also states that in most cases of management fashion a period of latency (perhaps 5 years or more) is followed by a rapid growth in popularity (typically 3-5 years) with a very short peak (sometimes for as little as 1 year) and then a steady decline in interest to a much lower state (over a 5-7 year period. The typical complete cycle is around the 10-15 year range (Grant, 2011, p. 119).
SCARBOROUGH AND SWAN (2001)	This paper wants to provide evidence on the emergence and diffusion of the discourse of knowledge management (KM).	Literature review of KM and learning organization (LO) books and papers between 1993 and 1998.	The fashion model only offers a partial explanation of the observed diffusion of knowledge management. KM practices within firms need to be seen as less a product of fashion than of mediated organizational responses and interpretations.	Management fashions do not simply appear, grow and disappear to be replaced by another management fashion in the end. They have a variety of disjunctive and enduring ripple effects. Existing models of management fashions do not into account these different ways in which management discourses are deconstructed and appropriated within heterogeneous communities (Scarborough and Swan, 2001, p. 10).
SCARBOROUGH, ROBERTSON AND SWAN (2005**)**	Analyzes the role and responses of professional groups and their media	Literature review of professional media associated with Human	Development of KM as a management fashion is established and described as	-

	outlets in relation to the discourse of fashionable management concepts.	Resource (HR) and Information Systems (IS) practitioners and their responses to KM, and content analysis (by coding the abstracts of the articles).	a fashion subject to cyclical tendencies of growth and decline. HR media highlights the behavioral issues related with its application more, while mainstream media put an emphasis on IT rhetoric.	
INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTING (ICA)				
FINCHAM AND ROSLENDER (2003)	Employ the fashion perspective to critically explore how these ideas were being expressed and what this might mean for aspects of the occupational and organizational role of accounting.	Critical literature review; review of professional media on ICA and management fashions	ICA models reviewed in this paper represent a body of ideas and forms of knowledge that are in many ways characteristics of management fashions, represented by efforts by senior practitioners, academics and other influential authorities to convince accountant of this management technique.	-
FINCHAM AND ROSLENDER (2004)	Contributing to the critique of dissemination theory by exploring the fashion of Intellectual Capital Accounting.	Case studies of ICA in six UK firms. 4 respondents for each firms, leading to a total of 24 interviews (which were taped and transcribed).	The case firms came to their ideas not by just reinterpreting ideas from outside (like fashion theory). They often already had developed performance measurements, and new initiatives came from inside the organizations (internal forces). Only when these were not sufficient, the possibility exists for controlling intangible assets.	The process of dissemination here was more a function of operational constraints and internal controls, instead of coming from outside the organization. So internal forces can also compete to shape a management fashion.

STRATEGY

CLARK (2004)	Examining strategy through the lens of management fashion. Identifying the key members within the management fashion setting community and describe their roles.	Critical literature review: review of main themes within management fashion literature. Also, outline areas for future research.		The article argues for a greater inclusion of external agents in strategy research. Furthermore, it emphasizes that researchers in the future are required to examine how strategy is produced, negotiated, transformed and mobilized within a complex and shifting network of relationships.

LEAN PRODUCTION (LP)

BENDERS AND VAN BIJSTERVELD (2000)	Examining the reception of one particular fashion in one particular country: lean production in Germany	Literature review and quantitative analysis of data (Dutch database). Frequency of key words related to lean production counted by using 'OnLine Contents' database.	The meaning of lean production was shaped and reshaped on a continuous basis. Different interpretations of the meaning of fashion make that the actions undertaken in the name of a fashion are likely to become loose coupled from the fashion's original content.	The authors state that is important to study the empirical impact of management fashions (and concepts in general), although this is complicated. Improved insight in the processing and shaping of and reshaping fashions can help individual actors to position themselves better within these processes. Also, national traditions in organizational design are likely to influence national interpretations of fashions.

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM)

DAVID AND STRANG (2006)	Analyzing changes over time in the types of consulting firms offering TQM services.	Measuring number of articles on TQM between 1992 and 2001 by using 'Kennedy's directory of management consultants', to analyze the lifecycle of TQM. Secondary data analysis.	When TQM was a booming management fashion, consultants tended to be generalist with weak links to the technical foundations of the practice. After the fashion went bust, TQM consulting was increasingly populated by specialist with quality control expertise (so, fashionable practices can	This article argues that in a rich (booming) market, management fashions are disseminated by all sorts of consultancies; those with expertise, but also consultancies with no connections to the practice. It is also more likely generalist consulting firms will enter the market. In a declining market, the more focused firms with expertise will remain.

				return to their technical roots after the hype is over)
BALANCED SCORECARD (BSC)				
MADSEN AND SLÅTTEN (2013)	Empirically analyzing the level of involvement of actors such as consultants, professional groups, software firms and conference organizers in the cross-national diffusion of the Balanced Scorecards (BSC) in three Scandinavian countries.	Interviews (22) with BSC consultants in three Scandinavian countries. Secondary data analysis of 39 interviews with users of BSC in Scandinavia. Also, using various types of data from archives and research on internet.	The data showed how both local country-specific actors and international actors are involved in the national management fashion markets build around BSC. Pioneering actors influence the local emergence of concepts, and the relative importance of different types of actors varied across the countries.	This paper contributes to the management fashion theory by taking into account the cross-national component of the diffusion of management concepts. Furthermore, they perform a comparative study, in which they investigate how management concepts are diffused in different countries and communities. Also, extra actors involved in the management fashion arena are identified, like analysts/shareholders, conference organizers and software firms.
MALMI (2001)	Find out how BSCs are applied in Finland and why companies adopt them.	A series of semi-structured interviews held in spring 1998 in 17 organizations in the Helsinki metropolitan area.	BSCs are used in basically two different ways, namely management by objectives and BSCs as information system. The idea behind BSCs was not well understood by the early adaptors. In explaining the popularity of BSCs in Finland, supply-side forces (like consultants) seem to have an important role (a high number of interviewees mentioned motives related to managerial fads and fashions).	-

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING				
MARCUCCIO AND STECCOLINI (2005)	Gaining a better understanding of the reasons underlying the adoption of social and environmental reporting (SER) by Italian local authorities by applying the concept of management fashion.	19 local authorities from one Italian region were selected and contacted. Documentary analysis and interviews with the people identified as being responsible for the introduction and production of SER in each local authority took place.	Both socio-psychological and techno-economic forces combine to shape the SER phenomenon, and a management fashion is currently in place among local Italian authorities. Even when SER is adopted in response to technical gaps, its largely being driven by the need to signal that local authorities are adopting a tool which is gaining momentum in academic and professional discourse.	This article just takes Abrahamson's theory, and analyzes the socio-psychological and techno-economic forces that played a role in shaping the management fashion 'SER'. It does not criticize his theory, nor does it add a lot to the theory. Instead of analyzing which actors played a role in shaping this fashion, it already selected the actors responsible and interviewed them. But, it is not really clear who identified these actors as being responsible for the adoption and implementation of this management technique.
PAY FOR PERFORMANCE (FOR CEOS)				
ROST AND OSTERLOH (2009)	Investigate whether Pay-for-Performance for CEOs really is effective, or that is can be considered a management fashion.	Meta-analysis: analyzed 75 previous empirical studies (n=123.797 firms) that examined the relationship between variable executive pay and firm performance on numerous different dates.	This article shows empirically as well as theoretically that Pay-for-Performance has not achieved its aim (it has counterproductive effects), like many fashions.	-
STAW AND EPSTEIN (2000)	Examining some of the most important organizational consequences of popular management techniques.	Analyzing informational reports on quality, empowerment, teams, as well as a measure of the implementation of total quality management	Companies associated with popular management techniques did not have higher economic performance. Nevertheless, they were more admired,	This paper shifts to institutional theory in an early phase. It does not add a lot to management fashion theory. What the authors do argue though, is that managers seldom look to the organizational research community for deciding whether to adopt a new technique, unlike in other sciences like

		(TQM) programs. The sample consisted of the 100 largest U.S. industrial corporations (from 25 industries) for which data could be obtained on either corporate reputation or executive compensation.	perceived to be more innovative and rated higher in management quality. Also, higher pay was also given to chief executives. The results provide strong support for institutional theory, demonstrating how both internal and external legitimacy can be gained by using popular management techniques.	physical and biological sciences. This means, according to them, academic literature does not play a big role in shaping management fashions.
SOCIAL MEDIA				
BERGQUIST, LJUNGBERG, ZAFFAR AND STENMARK (2013)	Examining how a management fashion discourse on Social Media unfolds.	Analyzing generally available reports on corporate social media management strategy, (desk research), white papers, handbooks and strategy guides. The top 500 reports were selected using Google search engine. These reports were coded and clustered.	Social media discourse differs somewhat from the discourse of previous IT fashions, due to the fact that it is propelled by forces outside the company, entailing both risk and opportunity. Social media still seems to be in its upswing phase.	-
MADSEN AND SLÅTTEN (2015)	The article provides a preliminary conceptual elaboration and analysis of how different social media platforms may influence the diffusion and dissemination of fashionable concepts and ideas.	Critical literature review	Social media change the role played by suppliers and consumers and their interaction, as well as publication time lag, life cycle, and virality of management fashions. From now on, social media should be considered a new communication channel in the management fashion	This paper adds Social Media to the management fashion arena. In this case, they are not only suppliers of ideas, but also consumers of new management ideas. The authors argue that Social Media platforms may even become an 'arena within an arena', where different types of actors interact and develop ties and relationships. Also, Social Media are different from print media in for example the role of suppliers and consumers and their interaction, time lag, life cycle and virality of fashions.

			arena (not only for suppliers, but also for consumers of ideas).	
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)				
WANG (2010)	The study examines organizational impacts of the fashion phenomenon in IT.	Analysis of data collected from published discourse and annual IT budgets of 109 large companies (based on the Fortune 500 list between 1994 and 2003, where they needed to appear at least five times), whereof data could be obtained.	Firms whose names were associated with IT fashions in the press did not have higher performance, but they had a better reputation and higher executive compensation. Companies investing in IT in fashion also had a higher reputation and executive pay, but they had lower performance in the short term and then improved performance in the long term. These results explain fashion for the middle diffusion phase of IT innovations, and suggest that practitioners balance between performance and social approval when they confront whatever is hottest in IT	This study contributes to management fashion theory, in the way that the authors have found that being associated with IT fashions increase the reputation of firms. Furthermore, these companies payed their executives better. But, being associated or investing in IT fashions does always lead to a higher performance. This paper leaves out the way the management fashion is distributed, but it contributes to the theory by explaining what happens if firms invest in these kind of fashions.

As we see in the table, a few limitations of Abrahamson's theory appear. For example; what Abrahamson (1996) did not mention in his paper, is the fact that concepts are often characterized by conceptual ambiguity. This means there are no clear cut recipes for certain problems. To increase the change of gaining popularity, fashion setters should try to keep their 'product' ambiguous to a certain degree. This way, a fashion can be interpreted in different ways by different actors demanding a solution for their problems (i.e. performance gaps). This is called 'interpretative viability' by Benders and van Veen (2001), originally a term of Ortmann (1995). Buyers of management fashions may recognize their own situation in the rhetoric used for selling the management fashion, which increases the potential market for a management fashion. In this case, the e-HRM buyers can select those elements that appeal to them, and are suitable for their purposes. The fashion can also unite different parties because each party is in favor of the concept to further its own particular interests (Benders and van Veen, 2001). Furthermore, one discourse niche (which is a recurrent source of demand for rationally managing particular organizational components, like an employee-management fashion niche) can accommodate a succession of fashionable management techniques serving different technical, political and social purposes (Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999, p. 712). But, important to state here is that these fashion niches cannot carry an unlimited amount of management fashions (Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999).

Fincham and Roslender (2003, p. 787) argue more or less the same, by stating that the management fashion approach is confusing, because it produces fixed patterns in the popularity of ideas. The method only takes a limited account of variations in the content of ideas. This not always the case in reality; ideas may be labeled the same, but they take a lot of different forms in different contexts.

Furthermore, the management fashion literature has only taken into account the international dimension to a limited extent. The management fashion arena may be configured differently in different countries. Country specific configurations may shape the local impact of management fashions (Madsen & Slåtten, 2013). In organizational studies a lot of work has been done on highlighting the role of local actors and institutions in shaping the adoption and implementation of management concepts, models and ideas as they are diffused across countries, which makes it surprising management fashion literature only did this to a limited extent (Madsen & Slåtten, 2013, p. 111).

Finally, Scarborough and Swan (2001, p. 10) state that one of the limitations of the management fashion model lies especially in the treatment of the adoption process and the relatively passive role it affords to the recipients of new discourses. The emphasis of the fashion theory is on the diffusion process and the actions of suppliers (fashion setters). It tends to treat the adoption of new ideas as an episode that is somehow discrete from their implementation, and it treats users as passive recipients of new ideas invented elsewhere (only partly in response to their demands) (Scarborough & Swan, 2001, p. 9).

Based on the research mentioned and analyzed in table 1, a few remarks can be made. For example, the research methodologies which were used the most by researchers in the management fashion field were critical literature reviews, case studies, interviews and secondary data analysis. Of course, these are very different research methodologies. This can be explained by the fact that researchers take a very different approach to studying management fashion theory in combination with management techniques. Within HRM research for example, some researchers studied the management technique under study from the supply side. For example, Marler et al. (2016) analyzed business media to find out how they influence the spreading and adoption of new HR analytics techniques across organizations. Other researchers, like Iles et al. (2010), tried to figure out whether Talent Management is really distinctive (progressive) from traditional HR practices. Finally, Nijholt and Benders (2007), studies in which phase of the management fashion lifecycle self-managing teams as a management technique is located, by comparing (secondary) data from Dutch research

institutes and print media-indicators. So, within HRM research, management fashion is discussed in different ways, using different research techniques and offering different explanations of the phenomenon.

This is also the case for other research fields, whether it is Knowledge Management (KM), Intellectual Capital Accounting (ICA) or Balanced Scorecard research, researchers take different approaches, studying different domains of Management Fashion Theory. Some researchers study the management fashion setters, like Madsen and Slåtten (2013 and 2015), Clark (2004) and Scarborough et al. (2005), while others want to know why companies adopt a certain management technique, like Marcuccio and Steccolini (2005) and Malmi (2002). Furthermore, there are researchers who investigated whether a management technique is really effective (norms of rationality), like Rost and Osterhloh (2009). Finally, Benders and van Bijsterveld (2000) studied the reception of Lean Production (LP) as a management fashion in a particular country (in this case Germany), while Wang (2010) examined the impact the fashion phenomenon has on organizations.

Secondary data analysis (document analysis, content analysis, bibliometric analysis) is mostly used to investigate the diffusion of a management fashion. Interviews and case studies are used when dealing with questions regarding the adoption and implementation of a certain management technique. What stands out in the table, is the fact a lot of researchers are having trouble explaining the management fashion phenomenon and drawing conclusions on their own research. Most articles only explained a part of the theory, there is no paper which analyzed the management fashion theory as a whole. Probably because it is too time consuming or difficult to analyze. Also, most findings indicated that the management techniques under study could not be fully explained by Management Fashion Theory.

When you want to apply the whole management fashion theory to a management technique, you will need different research techniques combined together. Next to qualitative research like interviews and case studies (to figure out why organizations adopted and implemented the management technique), also quantitative research and secondary data analysis needs to be performed to figure out what the management fashion setting community looks like, and in what phase of the management fashion lifecycle a management technique is located at that moment in time. Analyzing the management fashion setting community will take a lot of time and will be very difficult, because (confidential) data is needed not only from documents, but also from interviews with fashion setters. The spreading of rhetoric regarding a particular management technique to fashion users is not always documented well. So, it is almost impossible to get a good overview of the whole management fashion setting community, because there is also a lot of hidden information which cannot be measured by researchers.

So, what do the different researchers in table 1 add to Management Fashion Theory? Madsen and Slåtten (2015) added Social Media as a management fashion setter, not only as a supplier of ideas but also as a consumer. They argue that Social Media is a totally different actor then for example print media, because of its 'networking' capabilities. Grant (2011) names different kind of Guru's. Not only Management Guru's like Abrahamson (1996) mentioned, but also Academic Guru's, Hero Manager Guru's and Consultant Guru's. Fincham and Roslender (2004) argue that the process of dissemination of management fashions can also be function of internal controls and operational constraints, instead of always coming from outside an organization. Madsen and Slåtten (2013) take the cross-national component of the diffusion of management fashions into account (according to them, they are subject to country-specific configurations). They also add other management fashion setters, like software firms, analysts/shareholders and conference organizers. Madsen and Slåtten (2015) also add Social Media; not only as a management fashion setter, but also as a consumer of ideas. Finally Wang (2011) argues that firms adopting management fashions in general have a better reputation, and pay their executives better (not necessarily leading to better performance). These

findings combined with Abrahamson's framework lead to the research model in figure 3, which can be found in the methodology chapter.

METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on e-HRM as a management technique. To investigate to what extent e-HRM is a management fashion, academic literature and professional media associated with e-HRM (HR and IS literature) were reviewed. A critical literature review gives an overview of (Emerald Group Publishing, 2016):

- what has been said about the subject (e-HRM and management fashions)
- who are the key writers
- the prevailing theories and hypotheses regarding the subjects
- questions being asked
- the appropriate and useful methods and methodologies
- weaknesses and gaps in the existing research, contrasting views of particular authors and questions raised

The current study will investigate to what extent e-HRM is a management fashion according to Eric Abrahamson's framework. The research question is:

To what extent can e-HRM as a management technique be considered a management fashion, according to management fashion theory?

So, the goal of this research is exploring e-HRM from a management fashion perspective. It will investigate e-HRM through the lens of management fashion theory. A framework will be proposed and used to analyze e-HRM as a management technique, based on criteria derived from the management fashion literature. So, this is an exploratory study; aiming at establishing and investigating relationships, and finding out which external factors can moderate these relationships.

To be able to answer to research question, 13 different academic articles which used case studies as a research methodology were analyzed (secondary data analysis). These articles had to investigate the adoption or implementation of e-HRM. The case studies were selected together with Prof. Dr. T. Bondarouk, who is a senior researcher within the e-HRM field.

The qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts. Case studies should be considered when answering 'how' and 'why' questions, when the researcher cannot manipulate the behaviours of those involved in the study, when the researcher wants to cover relevant contextual conditions to the studied phenomenon or when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p.545). The case study method is used for this study, because it concerns an exploratory study where little is known about the relationship between e-HRM and management fashion and the conditions that influence this relationship until now. Furthermore, the behaviour of those involved cannot be manipulated by the researcher.

The case studies which were used for this paper are introduced in table 2 below. They all used case studies on the adoption and implementation of e-HRM within organizations as their research methodology. A short description of every research paper is given in the table.

Table 2: description of case studies

CASE STUDIES	DESCRIPTION
OLIVAS-LUJAN, RAMIREZ AND ZAPATA-CANTU (2007)	The researchers investigate four case studies in Mexico, while also performing a critical literature review of e-HRM and HRM in Latin America. The firms in their study where deliberately chosen (not randomly); the firms needed to have a strong reputation regarding their 'traditional' HRM practices, and were from different industrial sectors (manufacturing, consumer and business products, and service industries for both businesses and consumers). Also, access to key managers who were willing to cooperate was also an important factor in selecting the firms. The selected firms consisted of a large beverage company, a local bank, a construction company and an IT service provider.
BONDAROUK, SCHILLING AND RUËL (2016)	This study investigates the adoption of e-HRM in a developing country, namely Indonesia. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews in 11 (MNC) subsidiaries. They chose Indonesia, because it is the fourth most populous country in the world, it has a strong potential for the use of IT innovations and for HRM in general. All companies investigated in this research were located in the Greater Jakarta Area on Java. After having contacted 150 companies, 11 companies agreed to participate in the research. They come from different sectors and vary in size both globally and locally.
RUËL ET AL. (2004)	Here, the researchers selected five organizations that have already been on the 'e-HRM road' for a couple of years. These were all large organizations, with more than 15.000 employees. They needed to have a good reputation regarding developments in e-HRM. The companies selected were Dow Chemicals, ABN AMRO, Ford Motor Company, IBM and Belgacom. They all operate in different markets, and have different cultures and structures. They were studies according to an extensive research model designed by the researchers, which goes step by step from the initial HRM strategy to e-HRM outcomes. Conversational interviews are the most dominant technique for data collection within this research.
PANAYOTOPOULOU, VAKOLA, AND GALANAKI, (2007)	This paper discusses the development of e-HRM use in Greek firms, and the reasons for the adoption of e-HRM practices. Also, the researchers discuss the driving forces and critical success factors of e-HRM adoption and implementation in Greece. After having randomly selected 150 HRM departments, a total of 76 usable questionnaires were collected and analyzed. The researchers also used focus groups a research technique. The sectors that were chosen for this are manufacturing, banking and telecommunications, because they were represented the strongest in the quantitative research. The focus groups were important to get a more in-depth understanding of the quantitative results.
BURBACH AND ROYLE (2010)	The researchers conducted a single case study here (a US MNC), and studies a few of its subsidiaries in Germany and Ireland. The goal is to assess whether or not the diffusion of e-HRM practices in this subsidiary is mediated by the same institutional factors as the ones that influence the transmission of standard HRM practices. A series of 14 in-depth interviews with key decision-makers and stakeholders in the area of e-HRM in the German and Irish subsidiaries provided the data for this research. Subsidiaries in both countries were chosen, because of the distinct cultural, economic, business and employments system background in these countries. Interviewees were

	selected based on their involvement and decision-making power regarding the use of e-HRM within the subsidiaries.
COMMACCHIO AND SCAPOLAN (2004)	This paper analyzes the antecedents of the adoption process of e-learning solutions in Italy. The researchers question if this process is driven by the rational arguments (economic benefits), or that is driven by emotional arguments (the fear of losing legitimacy or strategic advantage compared to competitors). The methods used are a survey, interviews and document analysis. The researchers chose the pharmaceutical and banking sectors as units of analysis, because e-learning has been adopted to a greater extent than in other sectors. The pharmaceutical sample included 20 organizations, while the banking sample consisted of 22 companies.
HOOI (2006)	This study tries to understand the extent to which e-HRM is practiced in the small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the manufacturing industry in Malaysia, and explores the readiness and feasibility of implementing e-HRM within those SMEs. Primary data obtained from questionnaires, observations and interviews were the basis of this research.
BONDAROUK AND RUËL (2013)	The researchers opted for a single case study here, investigating the strategic benefits of e-HRM based on a survey, face-to-face semi-structured interviews (21 interviews with HR specialists, line managers and IT professionals), focus groups and document analysis. The case which was selected was a large federal governmental organization in Belgium, namely the Belgian Federal Public Health Service. This organization was already on the e-HRM road for around seven years.
HUSTAD AND MUNKVOLD (2005)	This research is based on a case study at global telecommunications company Ericsson, and studies the implementation project (especially the challenges accompanying this project) of a competence management system. Ericsson has more than 140 countries with approximately 52.000 employees. The data collection in this case took place in the Norwegian branch of Ericsson, with 700 employees. The data was obtained by semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Interviewees consisted of the implementation project manager, as well as key users such as competence managers, the HR manager and the IT/IS managers.
MARTIN AND REDDINGTON (2010)	The researchers developed a model of e-HRM in this paper, focusing on the relationship between HR strategy, e-HRM goals and architectures and positive and negative outcomes. They illustrate certain features of this model, based on a case study of a leading international oilfield services provider in the UK, in which they studied the implementation of e-HRM within this company. The company under study is a major international company with around 64.000 employees in 80 countries. The research took place in two contrasting business units (SBUs, both UK based), on which within-case analysis was performed, especially to examine the influence of context on the implementation of e-HRM.
RUTA (2005)	This study was performed to assess HRM portal implementation in subsidiaries of MNCs. The article adds to HRM research by integrating change management theories with IT user acceptance models, and describing ways to effectively implementing HRM portals. To do this, they performed a case study at Hewlett-Packard, studying the implementation of their @HP Employee Portal in their Italian subsidiary.
WIBLEN (2016)	The goal of this research is to frame the usefulness of e-HRM in talent management, by studying a professional service firm in Australia as a case study. The firm has 6.000 employees located in offices around Australia,

	separated over 6 business units. Publicly available data and semi-structured interviews were conducted over a three-year period to obtain the necessary data. Overall, a total of 79 interviews with 44 executives form the basis of this research.
SCHALK ET AL. (2013)	This study investigates how strategic considerations influence the decision making on e-HRM applications. To do this, three case studies were performed, using in-depth descriptions of decision-making processes in large organizations. Key informants in these organizations were interviewed, and written documents were analyzed. The organizations which were analyzed were from various backgrounds, and different e-HRM maturity stages. All three organizations were (semi) profit organizations with 4.000 to 28.000 employees in the Netherlands (but they are internationally active). The organizations selected were a provider of asset management, administration and communication serviced for pension funds, a financial service provider and a transport organization.

Based on the critical literature review of articles regarding management fashion theory, the research model could be defined, and pictured in a model. The research model is displayed in figure 3. Based on this research model, the case studies were analyzed. Important here is to find the internal and external factors which played a role in the adoption and implementation of e-HRM within organizations (socio-psychological and techno-economic forces), and the reasoning which is applied by the people involved in this decision making process.
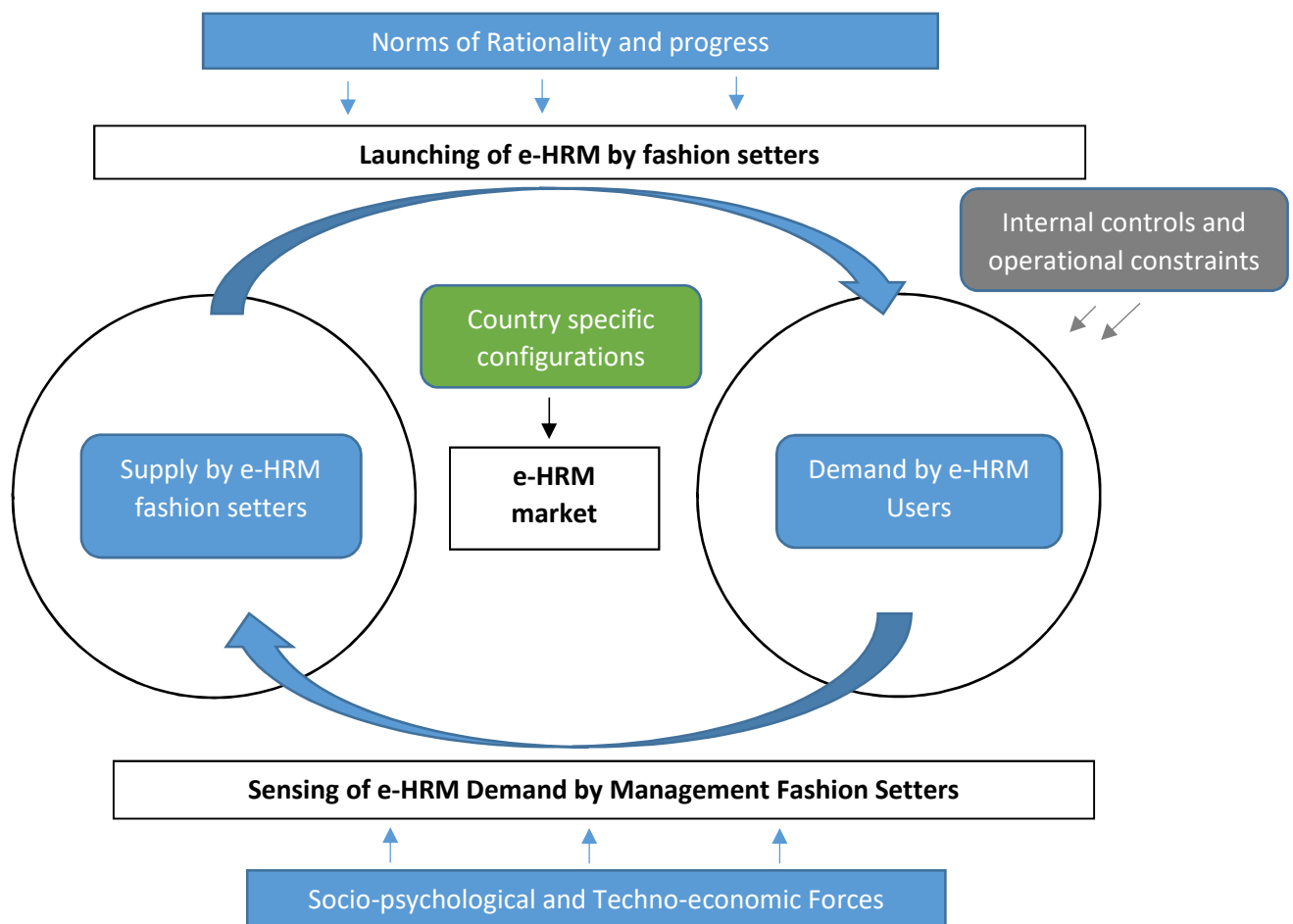

Figure 3: the Management-Fashion-Setting Process for e-HRM

This research model needs to be defined further, to make the concepts in the model measurable. Also, it is important to understand where to get the information from that is needed to analyze the model. In table 3, definitions for the different concepts in the model are given, together which the sources of information.

Table 3: definitions of concepts

CONCEPT	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
NORMS OF RATIONALITY AND PROGRESS	Society-forced expectations that managers have to use management techniques that are believed to be new, improved and the most efficient.	Literature review (few examples of these norms)
LAUNCHING OF E-HRM	The processing and dissemination of a rhetoric by fashion setters which can convince potential e-HRM users to use this management technique.	Case studies, literature review,
SUPPLY BY E-HRM FASHION SETTERS	The volume of rhetoric the management fashion provides to the e-HRM market.	Case studies; to check from which actors within the management fashion setting community organizations adopt e-HRM.
DEMAND BY E-HRM USERS	The explicit willingness of organizations to buy e-HRM services for a certain price.	Case studies; to identify why organizations are adopting/implementing e-HRM
SENSING OF E-HRM DEMAND BY FASHION SETTERS	The selection and creation of the e-HRM fashion by the fashion setting community, based on the demand by potential e-HRM users.	
SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL AND TECHNO-ECONOMIC FORCES	Forces based on peoples desire's (socio-psychological), macro-economic fluctuations, politics and contradictions within organizations (techno-economic).	Case studies, literature review
COUNTRY SPECIFIC CONFIGURATIONS	Local actors and institutions that influence the adoption and implementation of e-HRM within organizations	Case studies
INTERNAL CONTROLS AND OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS	Internal forces that compete to shape the demand for e-HRM within organizations.	Case studies, literature review

Ideally, the case studies should be reviewed by more than one person, to improve the reliability and validity of the findings. Like in other qualitative research, for example interviews, the same case studies can be interpreted differently by different researchers. In the case of interviews researchers should ensure the 'intercoder reliability' is as high as possible. For case studies, the same reasoning can be applied. With more researchers interpreting and discussing the results, a higher reliability of the research findings is ensured. To reduce researcher bias and improve the reliability and validity of

the research, as much case studies were reviewed as was possible within the time and scope of this research.

FINDINGS

Norms of rationality and progress

The most important drivers in the management fashion setting process in figure 3 are the norms of rationality and progress, and the socio-psychological and techno-economic forces. Because these drivers shape the demand and supply of e-HRM and do influence the decision making within organizations regarding the implementation of new e-HRM systems, they will be discussed first in the next paragraphs.

Norms of rationality and progress are defined as society forced expectations that managers have to use management techniques which are believed to be new, improved and the most efficient. They determine whether or not a manager is interested in a particular management technique, in this case e-HRM. Academic literature was reviewed to come up with a few examples of these norms; in the case of rationality the focus lies on the effectiveness of e-HRM, while the progressiveness of e-HRM is evaluated based on factors that determine the innovativeness of the management technique. Based on a case study among 10 different organizations, Parry and Tyson (2011) suggested that e-HRM brings a certain value to organizations. They analyzed organizations from different industries in the UK that implemented e-HRM a year or more before their study. These organizations were in different stages of e-HRM implementation and they had different e-HRM systems in place. The results showed that e-HRM is introduced in order to improve efficiency, service delivery, standardization and organizational image, to empower managers and to transform HR into a more strategic function. Efficiency, service delivery and the standardization goals were often realized according to the results (Parry & Tyson, 2011, p. 335). Parry and Tyson also found some evidence of transformational impact; HR staff had more time and information to support the organization's business strategy, which means e-HRM increased efficiency and effectiveness. But, the realization of these norms depends also on the design and implementation of e-HRM systems, and also may depend on the appropriate redeployment and up-skilling of HR staff (Parry & Tyson, 2011, p.352).

What is missing in the study of Parry and Tyson (2011), is the individual user as a unit of analysis. They only studied the impact of e-HRM on an organizational level. Ruël and van der Kaap (2012) address this issue with a literature review on the benefits of e-HRM, in which they also include the user-level determinants of e-HRM value creation (Ruël & van der Kaap, 2012). They assume firms invest in e-HRM to create value, and came up with a table which summarizes the benefits of e-HRM, categorized on levels of effectiveness, efficiency and service (Ruël & van der Kaap, 2012, p. 263-264). Examples of efficiency benefits of e-HRM are cost reduction (Lawler, 2005), increasing the quality and pace of HRM function (Biesalki, 2003), time savings because of e-communications (Ramirez and Cantu, 2008), increasing profitability, market share and size (Foster, 2009) and increasing the administrative efficiency (Heikkila, 2010; Marler & Fischer, 2013). Benefits on a service level are for example faster information exchange (Holm, 2010), data accessibility and availability (Holm, 2010), higher quality services (Maatman, Bondarouk, & Looise, 2010), decreasing of information errors and improving service delivery (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2009; Lawler, 2005).

Furthermore, Findikli and Bayarçelik (2015) performed interviews with HR specialist from the service industry, and found that time management, easy acquiring and access to personal data and the reduction of administration costs were the primary motivators for electronic human resource applications (Findikli & Bayarcelik, 2015, p. 430). E-HRM reduced organizational costs, improved communication between manager and employees and reduced the processing time for e-HRM usage (Findikli & Bayarcelik, 2015, p. 424).

Of course there are more studies which identified factors that influence the decision to adopt and implement e-HRM within organizations, based on case study research. For example, Commachio and Scapolan (2004) argue, based on articles and consultant's reports on e-learning, that e-HRM can have two main advantages, namely the gain of flexibility and economies of scale. Olivas-Lujan, Ramirez and Zapata-Cantu (2007) found that a e-HRM strategy helped to achieve cost-effectiveness for one of the firms in their case studies, and argued that firms cannot afford the disadvantages related to traditional, labor intensive HR tasks in a globally competitive marketplace. Ruel et al. (2004) mentioned in their article that e-HRM is an innovation in terms of HRM. It creates opportunities to put employee-management relationships in the hands of employees and line managers, and information technology helps in designing HRM tools and instruments more easily. Ruël et al. (2004) also argue that especially in terms of the operational and information processing work, there will be less demand for HR people. For the more strategic roles (like management and organization development), HR staff (and the accompanying experience) will still be necessary. Martin and Reddington (2010) argue that e-HRM has the potential to result in a radically changed or even virtualized HR function. Furthermore, it can reduce HR transaction costs and HR headcount, make the sharing of information easier and more flexible, and facilitate more effective virtual 'customer relationship' and internal labor markets. (Martin & Reddington, p. 1553-1554).

Also, Hustad and Munkvold (2005), who studies a IT supported competence system in at Ericsson, argued this system had a large potential for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of competence management in the organization. Also, gaining global access to the competence resources of the company can also increase innovativeness and stimulate new learning processes (Hustad & Munkvold, 2005, p. 86). Ruta (2005) studied the worldwide implementation of a HP Employee Portal at Hewlett Packard (HP). This portal was designed to increase the speed and ease of access to internal communications and corporate information in order to increase effectiveness and the production capacity of employees (Ruta , 2005, p. 41). The goal of HP was to reduce IT and HR operating costs, and to increase integration among the different business units. Two years after the lauch, the HR department in Italy (for example), saved 15% of the costs on average.

Wiblen (2016) argues that e-HRH can enhance efficient and effective management of human resources, standardize and harmonize the HR function resulting in faster and more accurate decisions, and provide stakeholders with access to data about talent (Wiblen, 2016, p. 95). She studied a professional service firm in Australia, and found the implementation of e-HRM systems were perceived as useful (compared to older HRIS systems) and cost effective. The abilities of employees were measured more easily and the system helped to make sure that the organization could categorize employees based on performance and potential. Furthermore, e-HRM could standardize the meaning of talent (based on boundaries of required skills and capabilities; making it objectively measurable), improve the consistency between business units and make sure that talent identification processes were integrated and strategically aligned (Wiblen, 2016).

Finally, e-HRM can also result in unintended benefits, such as an improved image of the HRM department, the professionalization of HR specialist, greater transparency, a more objective measuring of employee performance etcetera (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2013). e-HRM is also related to a positive image of the organization among (potential) employees, a greater autonomy of employees and new roles within the HRM function (Schalk, Timmerman & van den Heuvel, 2013).

To conclude, e-HRM as a management technique is rational and progressive, or at least has the potential to be, according to academic literature. A few examples of these norms are named, like time saving, increased profitability, decreasing of errors, higher quality services and the reduction of administration costs. According to scientific research e-HRM is (or has the potential to be; depending

on the context) efficient as well as progressive (new compared to older techniques), and can help to achieve HRM goals.

Socio-psychological and techno-economic forces

As was shown in the research model, socio-psychological and techno-economic forces shape the demand of (potential) e-HRM users. Socio-psychological forces are based on people's desires and psychological states, while techno-economic forces are based on for example macro-economic fluctuations, politics, contradictions within organizations etcetera. To find out which socio-psychological and techno-economic forces (contextual factors) played a role in adopting and implementing e-HRM, academic literature in general, and specifically the literature which used case studies as a methodology were analyzed again (secondary data analysis).

Ruël and van der Kaap (2012) named a few contextual factors on the micro- and macro level, based on a literature research within the e-HRM field. These findings are backed up by the other authors in the e-HRM field, who used case studies as a research methodology for their research. On the micro-level for example skills and behavior, information availability and accessibility, privacy and data security, support from managers, the manager's compulsion to use e-HRM and the degree of involvement in e-HRM design and implementation play a role (Ruël & van der Kaap, 2012, p. 267).

Voermans and van Veldhoven (2007) conducted research at Philips Electronics in the Netherlands, and studied the attitude of employees toward e-HRM systems. Their research is partly based on the technology acceptance model (TAM), a framework published by Davis (1989). This framework is based on the assumption that the perceived usefulness and ease of use of a technology together shape the attitude towards the use of this technology. Also, the preferred role HR has to play within an organization according to employees, determines the attitude towards e-HRM (Voermans & van Veldhoven, 2007). Voermans and van Veldhoven (2007) also found that (logically) positive experiences with an IT system (especially the usability) and the employees preference as to the role played by HR in the organization (especially the strategic preference) improves the attitude towards e-HRM, and makes it easier to implement e-HRM. Generally, e-HRM is more valued by managers who prefer a more strategic role for the HRM function. Also, user support is very important for managers, because it causes a more positive attitude towards e-HRM (Voermans & van Veldhoven, 2007). They argue that technological, organizational and human factors all appear to be equally important and they mutually influence each other during implementation (Voermans & van Veldhoven, 2007, p.900). Yusliza and Ramayah (2012) conducted a comparable study in Malaysia, because this part of the world has not been covered with this type of research yet (contrary to Europe and the US). They found similar results; user satisfaction, the clarity of e-HRM goals, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, social influence, user support and facilitating conditions all had a positive influence on using e-HRM (Yusliza & Ramayah, 2012).

On the macro-level, for example organizational size, computer experience of the firm, the (duration of) existence of a HRIS department, the nationality of the firm, multicultural context and national culture play a role (Ruël & van der Kaap, 2012, p. 267). Olivas-Lujan, Ramirez and Zapata-Cantu (2007) argued that especially in developing countries, organizations have to take local idiosyncrasies into account. Ramirez and Cantu (2008) also add organizational culture to this list.

Other researchers found other determinants of e-HRM adoption and implementation. For example, Strohmeier and Kabst (2009) found that next to organizational size, the configuration of HRM plays an important role. In table 4, an overview of the socio-psychological and techno-economic forces influencing the adoption and implementation of e-HRM is given.

Table 4: Socio-psychological and techno-economic forces

CASE STUDIES	SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FORCES	TECHNO-ECONOMIC FORCES
OLIVAS-LUJAN, RAMIREZ AND ZAPATA-CANTU (2007)	Local idiosyncrasies (especially in developing countries), cultural influences (for example respect for authority, or a 'digital gap' between generations), managerial support, employee mindsets and educational levels	Industry (for example banks feel more pressure to adopt e-HRM, because ICT is a key factor there to deliver competitive products), country's geography and infrastructure
RAMIREZ AND CANTU (2008)	Organizational culture, national culture	-
RAMIREZ AND CANTU (2008); RUËL AND VAN DER KAAP (2012); BONDAROUK, SCHILLING AND RUËL (2016)	Employee (computer) skills	-
MARLER AND FISCHER (2013)	National culture	Organization size, environmental infrastructure
BONDAROUK, SCHILLING AND RUËL (2016)	Headquarters' influence (and 'traditional' management support	Available resources, business environment (which is different in developing economies, compared to emerging economies), government regulations
RUËL ET AL. (2004)	Mindset and behavior of employees, line managers and HR personnel, IT skills of employees	Shift in power in employment relationship (towards employees), globalization, cultural and language differences, political factors (for example law, work councils), company size
PANAYOTOPOULOU, VAKOLA, AND GALANAKI, (2007)	Interpersonal communication with other e-HRM adopters (communication issues can lead to e-HRM adoption), employees attitude towards technology	Sector (industry)
BONDAROUK, PARRY AND FURTMUELLER (2017)	Organizational culture, mindsets of employees (people factors), user acceptance, HR skills, leadership	Data access, security and privacy, capabilities and resources, planning and project management traditions
BURBACH AND ROYLE (2010)	Organizational culture	Strength of national business system, micro-political relationship between HQ and subsidiaries, institutional differences between home and host countries, organizational structure
COMMACCHIO AND SCAPOLAN (2004)	-	Pressure from competitors

HOOI (2006)	Organizational culture, managerial support, attitudes of employees, availability of expertise, learning capabilities and commitment of employees	Organizational size (SME's in general have more difficulties implementing e-HRM; rapidly growing SME's and SME's with resource shortages are more committed in this sense), the presence of subsidiaries (makes it more cost effective to have one HRM system), availability of (financial) resources and technical infrastructure, government support
PANAYOTOPOULOU, GALANAKI AND PAPALEXANDRIS (2010)	National culture, educational level of employees, IT skills of employees (and past experience), internal communication	Firm performance
BONDAROUK AND RUËL (2013)	-	Globalization
HUSTAD AND MUNKVOLD (2005)	Organizational culture, commitment of employees	Tension between global standardization and local needs (cultural differences in for example labor law and work policies)
MARTIN AND REDDINGTON (2010)	Levels of technology acceptance among employees and line managers	Resources and absorptive capacity of HR function
RUTA (2005)	Individual reactions of employees towards using IT technology (for example effort- and performance expectancy, social pressure and facilitating conditions), managerial attitude towards change, professionalism	Organization size (most of the time large, global organizations implement IT applications), national contextual issues (cultural differences in for example 'power distance' and 'focus on relationships, and local policies), industry characteristics (customers, competition, level of technology etc.), resources
WIBLEN (2016)	Perceived usefulness of e-HRM by stakeholders	-
SCHALK ET AL. (2013)	Interpersonal communication with other e-HRM adopters	-

As discussed earlier, Madsen and Slatten (2013) and Benders and van Bijsterveld (2000) argued that country-specific configurations are important in the diffusion of management fashions. This is confirmed for e-HRM by a few of the authors mentioned in the table. The adoption and implementation of e-HRM is influenced by a country's geography, infrastructure, government regulations, local idiosyncrasies, culture, business environment, political factors, government support and micro-political relationships between home and host countries (Olivas-Lujan et al., 2007; Marler & Fischer, 2013; Ramirez & Cantu, 2008; Bondarouk et al., 2016; Ruel et al., 2004; Burbach & Royle, 2010; Hooi, 2006; Panayotopoulou et al., 2010). So, each country/culture is different; the process of e-HRM adoption and implementation is based on different reasoning within different national contexts.

Furthermore, Fincham and Roslender (2004) argued that the dissemination of a management fashion can also be a function of operational constraints and internal controls, instead of just coming from outside the organization. So, according to them, internal forces can also compete to shape a management fashion. In this table this is confirmed for e-HRM by most authors, who identified factors like employee skills, commitment and behavior, management support, interpersonal communications with other e-HRM adopters, organizational culture, availability of expertise and the perceived usefulness of e-HRM by stakeholders as important factors which influence the decision making process within organizations (Olivas-Lujan et al., 2007; Ramirez & Cantu, 2008; Bondarouk et al., 2016; Ruel et al., 2004; Panayotopoulou et al., 2007; Bondarouk et al., 2017; Burbach & Royle, 2010; Hooi, 2006; Panayotopoulou et al., 2010; Hustad & Munkvold, 2005; Martin & Reddington, 2010; Ruta, 2005; Wiblen, 2016).

The findings mentioned in this chapter are used to fill in figure 3. The new figure is displayed in figure 4.
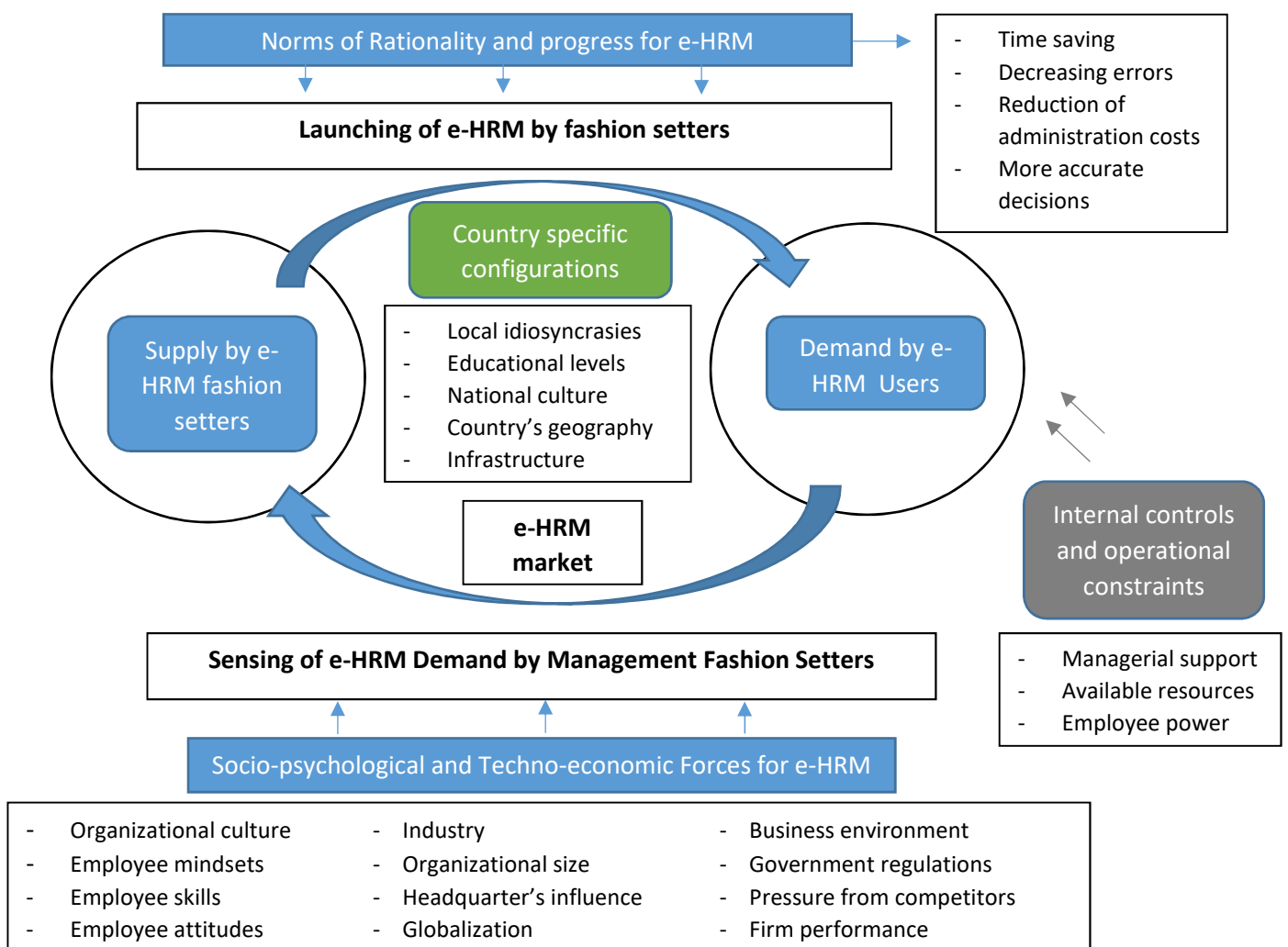

Figure 4: the Management-Fashion-Setting Process for e-HRM; based on case study research

DISCUSSION

So, how can we interpret the research model, displayed in figure 3? After reading trough the case study literature, a few interesting findings could be formulated.

- *E-HRM is progressive as well as rational according to academic literature, and a lot of socio-psychological and techno-economic forces were found in the case studies*

According to scientific research, e-HRM is progressive (innovative), and as well does have the capabilities to gain performance benefits for organizations. Since a few years, ICT's even have become powerful and accessible enough not only be interesting for large firms, but also for medium sized or even smaller firms (Olivas-Lujan et al., 2007). This research originates from 2007, so this will even be more applicable nowadays. There is enough empirical evidence that e-HRM leads to actual economic advantages (Panayotopoulou et al., 2010; Parry & Tyson, 2011; Ruël & van der Kaap, 2012; Ruta, 2005; Wiblen, 2016; Ruël et al., 2004). This is not always the case though, especially when talking about the strategic value of e-HRM (Schalk et al., 2013; Bondarouk & Ruël, 2013). Also, it is not easy to measure the benefits of e-HRM, especially when there are 'soft' factors present, like in talent management and e-learning. In these cases, sometimes the results are of intangible nature. Of course the competences and skills of employees can be measured, but it is difficult to draw conclusions on this, because it could also be that other factors improved the performance of employees. Furthermore, the evaluation process is time consuming and expensive (Comacchio & Scapolan, 2004). e-HRM is also a progressive management technique, because it is different compared to older techniques. Computers are taking over the roles normally executed by human beings, in this case employees working on the HR department of an organization. Finally, there are a lot of different factors (socio-psychological and techno-economic) influencing the adoption and implementation of e-HRM within organizations. An overview of these factors has been given in table 4.

- *It is very difficult to analyze the management-fashion-setting process from the supply side; management fashion setters are difficult to define based on case studies, and the dissemination of rhetoric is difficult to measure*

As stated earlier, some parts of the model cannot be explained by analyzing case studies alone. It will be a very time consuming process to analyze the whole process displayed in figure 3. Furthermore, some parts of the model are difficult to measure, for example the role of management fashion setters. The reviewed case studies for example showed no clear evidence that for example consultancy firms, social media, conference organizers, business media or management guru's play an important role in the implementation and adoption process of e-HRM systems within firms. It is impossible to name all fashion setters responsible for the diffusion of e-HRM, because there is a lot of 'hidden' information which cannot be measured well. Not all rhetoric regarding the diffusion of e-HRM to organizations is documented well. Also, to understand if the decision to adopt and implement an e-HRM system within an organization is based on the rhetoric from management fashion setters, extra interviews with the managers responsible for the adoption and implementations of these systems are necessary. Not only to get an understanding of the emotions that played a role in the decision making process, but also to get a good overview of their reasoning and the arguments they based their decisions on.

- *Governments are also influencers in the process of adopting and/or implementing an e-HRM system, especially for small and medium sized firms*

Hooi (2006) argued that a government can also play a role in the adoption and implementation of e-HRM, especially for small and medium sized firms. They can for example encourage these firms to take part in conferences, but they also have an influence on organizations by means of government regulations and policies. This indicates a government can also be an influencer, but maybe not a fashion setter, because they do not have direct interest in selling e-HRM to organizations.

- *Employees, line management and particularly top management do play a role in 'selling' e-HRM within organizations*

The current case study analysis showed that, next to fashion setters like consultancy firms, professional media, business schools etcetera (which originate from outside of the organization), also actors from within organizations can play a role in shaping a management fashion (particularly in 'selling' e-HRM to employees). These actors can consist of top managers deciding to implement e-HRM and trying to convince employees to use the e-HRM system, but also line managers can influence the decision making regarding e-HRM applications within firms. Also, the HR department itself can promote their own ideas regarding e-HRM to for example top management, to influence the decision making. In this case, they have to align their vision and strategies with the e-HRM architecture they propose to implement, and the stakeholders needs they wish to stress (Martin & Reddington, 2010, p. 1570). To convince these stakeholders, they have to address an performance gap which can be solved by implementing e-HRM.

In their article, Ruël et al. (2004, p. 374) stated that only two of the five companies which were studied had a clear HRM strategy on which e-HRM was based. The other three companies had an overall idea about where to go in the future, but the link between e-HRM and a HRM strategy was less clear. What is interesting here is that employees, line management and particularly top management played a role in 'selling' e-HRM within the organization. In one case, Ruël et al. argued that 'the cost reduction goal is more of a hope than a short term expectation, and perhaps a way of selling e-HRM plans to the top management'. Also, the HRM department at ABN AMRO Luxembourg started marketing campaigns to stimulate e-HRM use and these were quite successful (Ruel et al., 2004, p. 377).

Bondarouk and Ruël (2013) studied a governmental organization in Belgium, and found similar results. One of the HR specialist they interviewed mentioned that the HR director is a 'fantastic leader' and a driver of the change towards e-HRM (Bondarouk & Ruël, p. 400). In the study of Grant et al. (2009) the introduction of a new senior manager with existing ERP and HRIS knowledge combined with the need to replace the old outdated system initiated the desire to upgrade their system. Martin and Reddington (2010) argue that for an effective e-HRM strategy, the HR department has to build and present a business case for e-HRM and promote their own ideas, to convince senior- and line management, and other stakeholders that e-HRM will have significant benefits. This is confirmed by Ruta (2005) who argues that managerial actions can help manage change and successful IT implementation. In his case, the CEO of HP personally and enthusiastically presented the implementation plan for e-HRM (and used norms of rationality and progress, indicating that the HR department would also be the recipient of significant benefits). The objective was to build awareness and excitement for the HP portal among employees. The top management build a whole communication plan here to influence/improve the acceptance among employees, and ask them to use it for performance benefits (Ruta, 2005).

Wiblen (2016), who investigated the use of e-HRM in talent management in a professional service firm, argued that an array of stakeholders which includes individual executives and business units engage in discursive activity to generate new meaning that help (or hinder) the enactment of talent management (Wiblen, 2016, p. 96). So, here empirical evidence is offered which indicates that stakeholders within the professional service firm determine whether or not e-HRM is adopted for talent management purposes, based on quantitative measurement or through observations. Wiblen (2016) describes the process of adopting e-HRM in this firm as an ongoing process of negotiation whereby measuring and observing approaches as well as divergent interpretations were seen as legitimate. Furthermore, Wiblen (2016) wrote in his article that the discourses of e-HRM were influenced by the power and agency of senior executives and their opinions and approaches towards

e-HRM in relationship with talent management, rather than just based on the ability of the technology to realize performance benefits.

So, to conclude, it seems that not only actors from outside the organization can be management fashion setters (in this case e-HRM fashion setters), but also actors from within organizations (particularly top management) can play this role. In this case, namely, the rhetoric to convince potential e-HRM users does not come from outside the organizations, but from within the organizations. The rhetoric around e-HRM is mostly based on rational arguments, for example performance benefits, business cases and clear objectives (Schalk et al., 2013) and to a lesser extent on emotionally charged and unreasoned arguments. However, this is not always the case. The research on e-learning in Italy of Comacchio and Scapolan (2004) showed that for example in the Italian context, the decision process is far from being rational.

- ***Organizations often already have an ERP or HRIS system in place, before they decide to implement an updated e-HRM system***

Schalk et al. (2013, p. 90) argued that the existence of HRIS technology in the organization is a more important trigger for using e-HRM than specific HR deliverables and business drivers are, and the main reason for adopting e-HRM is adding additional infrastructure. Organizations can feel pressure because other organizations already adopted e-HRM, or the use of web-based applications in daily life create a need for organizations to implement e-HRM applications (Schalk et al., 2013).

Academic relevance

For other areas of Human Resource Management, like talent management (Iles, Preece, & Chuai, 2010) and self-managing teams (Nijholt & Benders, 2007), but also in other fields like lean production (Benders & van Bijsterveld, 2000), strategy (Clark, 2004), intellectual capital accounting (Fincham & Roslender, 2003) and knowledge management (Grant, 2011; Scarbrough, Robertson, & Swan, 2005) researchers investigated whether or not these concepts display features of a management fashion. For e-HRM, this type of research has not been executed yet. This is the first time that e-HRM is systematically approached by using a research model based on management fashion theory. The current paper gives an extensive overview of what has been written about management fashion theory so far, an analysis of the different contributions of researchers from other fields to management fashion theory and their scientific contributions to the theory. Because e-HRM is a popular and upcoming management technique nowadays, it is very valuable to investigate through the lens of management fashion, especially to determine which factors influence the adoption and implementation processes of e-HRM within organizations. What becomes clear from the current paper, is the fact that e-HRM certainly has some characteristics of a management fashion, but there are also a few black boxes which have not been unraveled at the moment. Especially the supply side needs some further investigation. The management fashion theory also does not explain whether e-HRM as a phenomenon will stay or go in the future. The lifecycle discourse theory of Abrahamson and Fairchild (1999) in figure 1 tries to give a theoretical explanation for this, but it is always the question where the fashion is located exactly at a certain moment in time. It is difficult to determine the phase a fashion is located in, when this is for example only based on the number of articles that are indexed. Management fashion theory also does not explain when a fashion goes to a routine. This makes it more difficult to determine whether a management innovation is a fashion, because it is not really clear where the dividing line between a fashion and a routine is located. Because of this, it is difficult to determine to what extent a certain management innovation (in this case e-HRM) is a management fashion. The theory only shows how a certain fashion is brought to the arena, and not what happens after that.

Practical relevance

For different types of organizations, no matter what sector they are in, the current paper could be very valuable. Especially to improve their understanding of the factors influencing their decision making processes regarding the adoption and implementation of e-HRM. Not only does this paper give an overview of the internal and external factors influencing these processes, it also can make organizations aware of the conflicting interests which play a role within these processes. Management fashion setters (for example consultancy firms, or business media) do have other interests compared to the interests of the organizations themselves. Management fashion setters' interest is to sell the management techniques and earn money while doing this, while organizations are interested in improving their businesses. While this is beyond the scope of this research, it would also be very valuable for organizations to know in which fashion setters they can trust and to what extent a fashion improves their business. In general, this paper makes organizations aware of their environment as an influencer within their decision making, rather than just being a 'given' entity.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Of course this research has its limitations, some of them are already mentioned in the paper. For example, the main theoretical building block of this paper is one paper from 1996. This is already a long time ago. However, as table 1 points out, it is still used by researchers in the field. To overcome the fact that the article of Abrahamson may be outdated, an updated model was produced an displayed in figure 3. A limitation of this research is the fact that e-HRM is not differentiated into different types of e-HRM, and there is also no distinction made between IT innovations and HRM innovations. E-HRM is treated as one, 'fixed' technique. The model in figure 3, accompanied by the definitions in table 3, does also not explain how to measure exactly whether e-HRM is a management technique or not. Definitions are given, but it is not clear how to 'score' them and there is no dividing line between 'fashion' and 'no fashion'. Based on the research model, it is difficult to determine to what extent a management innovation is a fashion. So, one can dispute the research question in this paper. By using this research model, based on management fashion theory, it is impossible to measure the extent exactly to which a management innovation is a fashion. Of course, we can say whether a management innovation has characteristics of a fashion, but it is not really measurable to what extend based on this research model.

Also, this research is based on case studies, which is secondary data analysis. These case studies investigated companies within different national contexts. What was already mentioned is the fact that it is very difficult to draw conclusions on the model in figure 3, when the findings are only based on case study research. It is impossible to name all e-HRM fashion setters, also because a lot of rhetoric regarding the dissemination of e-HRM is unknown and not documented. To get a better understanding of the reasons and emotions that played a role in the adoption of e-HRM systems, more interviews are needed with the people responsible for the adoption and implementation of e-HRM within organizations. Most case studies which were analyzed within the boundaries of this research where focusing at how e-HRM was implemented, and the problems which were faced with the implementation of these systems. They did not deal extensively which the question where the people responsible for the adoption and implementation got their information from, and where exactly they based their decisions on. It would be very valuable to know if the organizations involved in the research based their decisions on the rhetoric used by management fashion setters, and if the e-HRM system was 'sold' to them by people from outside the organization.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to contribute to e-HRM research as well as to management fashion research, by investigating e-HRM through a management fashion lens. The goal was to figure out to what extent e-HRM can be considered a management fashion according to the theory. So, is there an unambiguous answer which can be given to the research question:

To what extent can e-HRM as a management technique be considered a management fashion, according to management fashion theory?

First, it is important to note that management fashion theory is a meta-level theory, it always works, and any management innovation is always to a certain extent a management fashion. This research is the first in analyzing e-HRM from a management fashion perspective which is based on case study research. Marler et al. (2016) already studied HR Analytics from the supply side, investigating what role mass media played in the diffusion process of HR analytics in a U.S. context. The current research particularly investigated the demand side of the management-fashion-setting process, by investigating the factors that played a role in the adoption and implementation of e-HRM within organizations. The case studies which were analyzed where executed in many different organizations within different national contexts, both in developing countries and developed countries.

Nevertheless, what is concluded based on the current research, is the fact that e-HRM can be considered rational and progressive. This is a condition that a management technique has to meet according to management fashion theory, in order to be considered for adoption by organizations. Also, this research contributes a lot to the understanding of which factors played a role in the adoption and implementation process. These factors are called socio-psychological and techno-economic forces and the results from the case studies are displayed in table 4. Furthermore, evidence was found that country specific configurations and local idiosyncrasies play an important role, influencing the demand of e-HRM by organizations. Not only forces from outside the organization, but also internal controls play a role in the adoption and implementation of e-HRM. Evidence for this was found in the case studies. Not only the systems already in place and other operational constraints determine whether or not an organization decides to adopt a new e-HRM system, but it could also be the case that line managers, employees and particularly top management play a huge role in 'selling' the new system within the organization. So, e-HRM already shows a lot of characteristics of a management fashion.

So, one side of the model is explained by the current research. E-HRM certainly has some characteristics of management fashion, but there are also some black boxes. For example, no evidence could be found for the supply side of the management-fashion-setting process. The 'sensing of e-HRM demand by fashion setters' and 'launching of e-HRM by fashion setters' could not be measured based on case study research. Like already mentioned, more information is needed to be able to draw conclusions on this particular 'side' of the management-fashion-setting process. Some information will almost be impossible to obtain, like all the rhetoric used by management fashion setters for 'selling' e-HRM and naming all the fashion setters responsible for the diffusion of e-HRM. What could be measured probably is where the managers responsible for the adoption of e-HRM got their information from. It would be interesting to find out what persuaded them to adopt certain e-HRM systems, which fashion setters played a role in this and which rhetoric they used to explicitly demand for e-HRM applications. This way, step by step, the management-fashion-setting process can become more clear for e-HRM, although it will be almost impossible to fill in the whole model for e-HRM in the future.

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