

UMEÅ UNIVERSITY  
Umeå School of Business  
Department of Business Administration  
Supervisor: Per Nilsson  
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# Employer Branding and Talent-Relationship-Management – Improving the Organizational Recruitment Approach

Author: Robin Jeffrey Katoen  
Andreas Macioschek

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

By the time we started working on our study, we were hardly aware of the journey lying ahead of us. Per, as our supervisor, tried to warn us about being overambitious with our research intention. True, the work has been hard but we have been convinced by the synergy effect, which is involved with working in a team. This ambition enabled us to accomplish both a quantitative and qualitative research approach within a limited period of time.

We have to admit that we faced some serious challenges during the time we worked on our master thesis. But every time we overcame an obstacle, new energy was regained, which motivated us to continue. We found our devotion in the quote: *“Difficult takes a day, impossible a week.”*

Now, after ten weeks have passed, we are proud of and satisfied with the accomplished work. We hope that reading the thesis will be interesting and pleasant, since either most readers are about to graduate and will soon be in a situation, where Talent-Relationship-Management and Employer Branding might play an important role or are dealing with these concepts in a professional setting.

However, we would never have been able to complete this master thesis without the contributions of many others. Therefore we would like to express our appreciation to all, which have played a role in the realisation of this thesis. In particular we would like to thank the interviewees at the participating companies: Alexandra Alfredsson (Volvo), Therese Karlsson (Swedbank), Sanna Östberg (Ernst & Young) and Elisabeth Österlund (ABB). Furthermore, we express our gratefulness to the respondents of our survey: Master Students at USBE as well as the scholarship holders of the VSB and Leonardo da Vinci Scholarship Program. We would like to thank our supervisor, Per Nilsson, for his feedback as well as Vladimir Vanyushyn for his patience and help concerning statistical questions. In addition, we would like to express our appreciation for the exceptional service of the Library of Umeå University, which purchased numerous books for us, which were not present in the collection.

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*“Tomorrow’s battle is won during today’s practice.”*

Samurai Maxim

Umeå, May 2007

Andreas & Robin

## SUMMARY

Apart from products, goods and capital it is the employees who are the biggest asset of an organization. They are the human side of a company, which create products and services that attracts customers. The importance of human resources gets even more apparent when taking into consideration today's fast changing business environment and the increasing demand of a skilled workforce with valuable competences and expertise.

However, due to an ongoing demographic change and increasing job mobility on the labour market, the recruitment of key-employees has become a challenge. To this end, there are two fairly new concepts in the area of Human Resource Management, which have the aim to differentiate companies on the labour market and to support them effectively in their endeavour to approach, acquire and retain the most talented employees. The Employer Branding concept, on the one hand, develops the corporate brand further and places the organization as a trustworthy and attractive company on the market. On the other hand, Talent- Relationship-Management creates an active relationship between an organization and in particular skilled applicants in order to sustain a pool of highly qualified candidates over a long-term basis.

The two central research questions in this thesis are *what does an effective Employer Branding strategy need to contain and how should the concept be managed in order to attract, recruit and retain a high potential workforce as well as how can the TRM approach be successfully managed and which instruments are essential to sustain a pool of highly skilled and motivated candidates over a long period of time?*

The first purpose of this study is to investigate the internal and external determinants, which form an appealing employer brand. The second objective is to gain a deeper understanding of the prioritisation of different Talent-Relationship-Management instruments, which are important to build a long-term relationship with talented candidates. The empirical findings should contribute to the development of theory as well as to derive practical implications for companies in order to extend and develop their organizational recruiting strategy.

To this end, four semi-structured interviews with exceptionally successful companies in the field of Employer Branding have been conducted. Furthermore, a web-based questionnaire among students and recent graduates facilitated the empirical data collection about the perception of Talent-Relationship-Management instruments.

The conducted interviews, which focused on the Employer Branding approach, led to a modification of the initially constructed conceptual framework. The major findings outline that there is a continuous challenge in balancing the actual and desired corporate image, while the Employer Branding concept aims to create consistency in favour of a credible employer brand message. In addition, the employer brand plays an important role in preventing unplanned impulses, which result out of negative impacts from the business environment. Commitment among the employees is achieved through instruments of the *Total Work Experience*. Through development seminars, the culture and values of a company are emphasized, which appears to be interrelated with an increasing level of loyalty among employees. In addition, committed personnel do not only play an important role in achieving satisfied customers, but they also act as brand ambassadors by communicating a true picture outside the organization.

In order to find an answer to the second research question, a web-based questionnaire was sent out to 518 students and scholarship holders in Sweden, Germany and The Netherlands. The comparison of the major findings among the different groups shows that there is a rather consistent pattern in the perception and ranking of the instruments. However, the instruments 'Information about vacancies', 'Scholarship', 'Company Workshops' as well as 'Exclusive Information' are among the most valued ones in comparison with 'Periodical Services', 'Personalized Websites' or 'Giveaways', which most respondents do not perceive as interesting. In an effort to classify the 19 instruments in a more consistent way, a four-field matrix has been derived, which should help organizations in their endeavour to find a more appropriate 'set of TRM tools'.

The results also indicate that there has rarely been any experience with any of the TRM instruments, while there is a clear opinion in favour of an extension of the concept. This demonstrates the potential of the concept and should therefore be reason enough for companies to intensify their effort towards the TRM approach.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CRM	Customer-Relationship-Management
e.g.	exempli gratia or for example
E-Recruitment	Electronic Recruitment
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
ibid	ibidem or 'in the same place'
SCS	Social Corporate Story
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SME	small and middle-sized enterprises
TRM	Talent-Relationship-Management
USBE	Umeå School of Business

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*This chapter will introduce the background of this master thesis with the aim to provide the reader with a broad overview of the chosen topic. Based on the problem statement, the research question as well as the purpose of the study are presented. The first chapter ends with demarcations and an outline of the upcoming chapters.*

### 1.1 Background

In today's fast-changing business environment it is crucial for an organization to possess a highly qualified and motivated workforce in order to keep up with the fast pace of the market. The demand of competent personnel is increasing steadily, in particular for key-positions which require in-depth knowledge and expertise. In contrast, the ongoing *demographic change* in certain parts of the world makes the situation on the labor market even more difficult. Even though the timing and magnitude of change will vary among European countries, a recent study outlined that the number of people in the age band of 20 – 29 will fall by 20 per cent, while the number in the group of 50 – 64 will increase by 25 per cent.<sup>1</sup> In other words: whereas the population is getting older, birth rates are on a historical low level. If someone considers the direct impact on the labor market, it is without question that many organizations will encounter problems finding highly skilled successors to replace the 40 to 70 per cent of all senior executives who will be eligible for retirement in the next five years.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the shortage of skilled labor, due to an ongoing demographic change and the increasing demand for skilled personnel, organizations have to face growing *job mobility* among their talented workforce. Whereas it was common to change companies just once or twice during the whole career ten years ago, there is a growing propensity to switch the job more often.<sup>3</sup>

As a consequence, organizations are exposed to a continuous '*battle*' for the best employees, which resulted in a fierce competition for skilled individuals on the labor market. Due to an increasing demand for professional staff, it becomes more and more difficult for organizations to approach and recruit so called '*high potentials*'. Therefore, companies have shown an interest in differentiating themselves to a higher extent on the labor market when it comes to the '*battle for talents*'.

A concept for the attraction and retention of skilled personnel is the so called *Employer Branding*, which has become more and more popular in recent years. The employer brand is a holistic concept of strategic brand management from the field of marketing. It helps organizations in the process of profiling themselves on the labor market as an employer of choice for future employees as well as to ensure organizational identification among current employees.

Within the concept of Employer Branding lies one of the main focuses of this master thesis. The second one, however, is yet another step to professionalize the organizational recruitment process to a higher extent. Due to a shift from a traditional recruiting approach to online recruiting, companies face an increasing number of applications, which they receive on a day-to-day basis. Even though it can be assumed that there is a large number of talented

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<sup>1</sup> Buck, H. & Dwortschak, B. (2003) Ageing and work in Europe – Strategies at company level and public policies in selected European countries, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Gandossy, R.P. & Kao, T. (2004) *Talent wars: out of mind, out of practice*, Human Resource Planning, Vol. 27, Issue 4, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Chambers, E.G. et al. (1998) The war for talent, *The McKinsey Quarterly* 1998, No. 3, p. 48. See also Michaels, E.G. et al. (2001) The war for talent, p. 5.

candidates among the applicants, in the end of the recruiting process only one fortunate individual will finally hold the job.

If someone takes the amount of highly qualified and motivated applicants into consideration, which had to be rejected, it becomes clear that a great and valuable opportunity is neglected by companies. When it comes to new vacancies in the future, the organization has to start the whole recruiting process from the beginning, which comes along with high costs and time effort. Instead, companies could build a *long-term relationship* with those high-potential candidates that could not be considered for the position. To this end, the *Talent-Relationship-Management* (TRM) concept, based on the principles of *Customer-Relationship-Management* (CRM), creates a dialogue with highly qualified applicants over a longer period of time in order to enable a consideration of the individual for a later vacancy.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

The current economic landscape has changed dramatically. Product lifecycles have become shorter, products and services are threatened by substitutions and innovation is accelerating. Today's ongoing business environment is driven by ongoing changes, globalization, growing complexity and changes in the nature of work. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to possess a highly skilled and motivated workforce in order to succeed in today's business environment. The above presented concepts of Employer Branding and TRM are two modern approaches, which could support companies effectively in their endeavour to approach, acquire and retain the right personnel. The Employer Branding approach, on the one hand, develops the corporate brand further and places the organization as a trustworthy and attractive company on the market. On the other hand, TRM creates an active relationship between an organization and in particular skilled applicants in order to sustain a pool of highly qualified candidates over a long-term base.

### 1.3 Research Question and Purpose of the Study

The master thesis intends to answer the two main questions of

- *what does an effective Employer Branding strategy need to contain and how should the concept be managed in order to attract, recruit and retain a high potential workforce?*
- *how can the TRM approach be successfully managed and which instruments are essential to sustain a pool of highly skilled and motivated candidates over a long period of time?*

Whereas the first research question will be answered by conducting interviews with four large organizations, concerning the second a web-based questionnaire among university graduates and international scholarship holders should deliver a satisfying answer.

The first purpose of this study is to investigate the internal and external determinants, which form an appealing employer brand. The second purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of the prioritisation of different Talent-Relationship-Management instruments, which are important to build a long-term relationship with talented candidates.

The empirical findings should contribute to the development of theory as well as to derive practical implications for companies in order to extend and develop their organizational recruiting strategy.

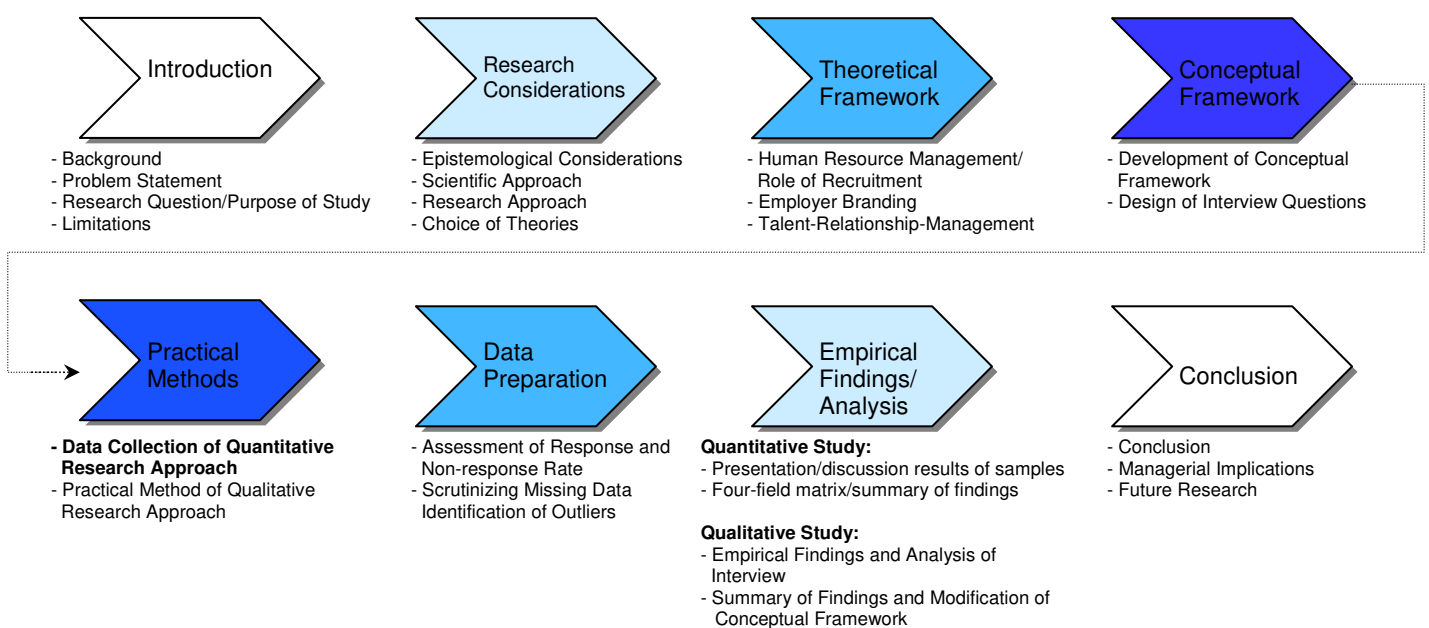
### 1.4 Demarcations and Limitations

Even though the initially introduced term ‘*battle for talents*’ reveals a lot about the current situation on the labor market, it says little about the kind of talents which are in demand for. Therefore, it is important to mention that throughout this master thesis the perspective of graduates and students is taken, since this group will be proportionately difficult to recruit in the near future. In addition, it will become apparent in the following chapters that the concepts of Employer Branding and TRM can be divided into an internal and an external focus. Whereas both internal and external Employer Branding is part of the empirical study, the questions in the web-based survey focus only on the external side of TRM. This can be motivated by the fact that the external perspective embraces the stance of applicants and is, thus, of greater interest for the purpose of this study.

### 1.5 Disposition

The aim of this section is to provide the reader with an outline of the eight chapters in this master thesis. The first chapter has started with a discussion of the problem background, followed by the problem statement. Based on that the two research questions have been stated in combination with the purpose of the study. The second chapter introduces the research considerations as for instance research philosophy, research method and research approach. It also builds a methodological base for the following theoretical and practical approach. Chapter three is concerned with the theoretical framework of the Employer Branding and TRM concepts. The different theories in this part will lead naturally to the construction of a conceptual framework in chapter four, which guides the research process of the quantitative and qualitative study. The way in which the data has been collected is described in chapter five, followed by the preparation of the quantitative data in chapter six. The following chapter seven has the aim to present and analyze the empirical findings and to compare the outcomes of the theoretical part with the ones of the empirical study. The master thesis is concluded in chapter eight by the conclusions based on the analytical part, managerial implications and future research indications.

The disposition of the master thesis can be visualized in the following figure. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that not all subchapters are included in the illustration.



**Figure 1.1:** Disposition of Master Thesis

## 2. RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

*The purpose of this chapter is to describe and discuss the research considerations of the master thesis. In addition, the choice of certain methods and theories will be motivated in order to enhance the reader's understanding.*

### 2.1 Choice of Subject

The research focus of this master thesis is a result of a journey through many different problem areas of the fields of management and marketing. Both of us are currently studying in the Master Program in Management with different backgrounds; one with a Bachelor Degree in Marketing, the other with a Diploma in Management and Economics. The idea behind finding a suitable topic for the master thesis was to concentrate on an area of interest in which we both would see enough potential and motivation for the work with the thesis.

Already in the beginning of the search for an adequate subject, we discovered that there is an extent overlap between the fields of *Marketing* and *HRM*. Especially within the recruitment process, the area of marketing nowadays plays a major role in attracting potential candidates for organizations. The reason why we came in contact with the concepts of Employer Branding and TRM was due to the fact that one of us has already carried out a study on the adequacy of E-Recruitment in a Bachelor Thesis in 2006, in which both ideas were briefly covered as an extension of the online recruiting concept. Even though the two approaches have gained attention and popularity within the last year, from a theoretical point of view, they still remain unexplored.

Our interest in the topic became even more accentuated, after reviewing textbooks and scientific articles about the subject. Moreover, by taking a look in the national *DiVA portal* as well as the *USBE thesis database*, we discovered that there has been only one thesis so far which focused on Employer Branding and none on TRM. Additionally, there have not been any theses yet which combines the TRM and Employer Branding concepts.

The choice of subjects can be explained in two different ways. First, as prospective graduates we will find ourselves very soon in a situation where concepts as Employer Branding or TRM might have a direct influence on our personal choice for an organization. A strong employer brand, for instance, has a direct impact on our orientation on the job market. Second, as already outlined in the last chapter the prevailing demographic factor in most parts of the world leads to labor shortages in specific job functions. Therefore, Employer Branding and TRM contribute to an improvement of the recruiting and retention approach in organizations and, thus, enhance the company's competitiveness on the labor market in its '*battle for talents*'. In other words, a strong employer brand in combination with a good TRM system might have the capability to tip the scale in the competition of talented job applicants and the retention of key employees. To this end, the study is both interesting and exciting, since there is not only an identification with the subject, but we can also contribute with new insights to a current topic within recruitment.

### 2.2 Theoretical and Practical Preconceptions

When it comes to the research of unexplored scientific areas, it can be assumed that the researcher is influenced from prior knowledge. This prior knowledge can be used as a tool to gather and understand new information and to link it with existing knowledge. However, Employer Branding and TRM have not in particular been part of any marketing or management courses. Even though the related fields of *Strategic Brand Management* and *CRM* were partly covered in basic marketing lectures, an impact on any preconceptions in this area can therefore be ruled out. As mentioned above, one of the authors has already written a

thesis in the field of (online-) recruiting. Without question, the prior knowledge was beneficial while constructing parts of the theoretical framework. However, this knowledge should rather be seen as pre-knowledge instead of theoretical preconception.

In addition, the fact that Employer Branding and TRM are two rather unexplored concepts has encouraged us to approach the subject from a wider perspective, e.g. to also study theories of related areas as Marketing. In other words, while constructing the theoretical framework of this master thesis, the aim was to embrace a wide variety of sources from different fields of study. Thus, a valuable contribution could be provided by taking not only contrasting, but also complementary views into consideration.

Apart from theoretical preconceptions, it is important to mention that there have not been any practical preconceptions which could have influenced this study. Even though both of us have already done internships in the field of Marketing and HRM, the work was not in any way related to the concepts of Employer Branding and TRM.

### 2.3 Epistemological Considerations

Epistemology is concerned with the question “of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline”<sup>4</sup>. In other words, epistemological considerations are not only concerned with the way the researchers think about the development of knowledge, but the choice of epistemology also has an impact on the methodological stance relevant to the study. There are three approaches dominating within scientific theories and literature - *positivism*, *realism*, and *interpretivism*. They are different ways of looking at the world – ways to observe, measure and understand social reality.<sup>5</sup>

*Positivism* is widely used in the field of natural sciences. It is associated with the analysis of data, collected in a value-free manner. In addition, positivist researchers prefer precise quantitative data and often use experiments, surveys and statistics, while they claim to be external to the process of data collection.<sup>6</sup> Scientific statements are mainly preferred in the positivistic approach. *Realism*, in contrast, is based on the idea that reality exists independently to the researchers’ beliefs, but is rather close to a positivistic stance.<sup>7</sup> *Interpretivism*, which can be seen in contrast to positivism’s instrumental orientation, adopts a more practical orientation. Here, the subjective data from individuals are considered and the statements are interpreted in a way that reflects the distinctiveness of human beings.<sup>8</sup>

As already mentioned, a positivistic view is considered to be value free and the researcher who embraces this view is likely to be external to the process of data collection.<sup>9</sup> From our point of view this perspective is hard to follow during this thesis, since it is difficult to imagine an interview situation where every respondent would be asked exactly the same question in exactly the same way. Furthermore, in the last subchapter it is indicated that Employer Branding as well as TRM might gain in importance for our own personal situation in the near future. Hence, retaining an objective view throughout the study would have been difficult, if not impossible.

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<sup>4</sup> Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business Research Methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, p. 13. See Saunders, M. et al. (2007) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall 2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p. 102.

<sup>5</sup> Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2007) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall 2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p. 103. See also Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 73.

<sup>7</sup> Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business Research Methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15. See also Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2007) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall 2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p. 103.

Instead, the aim is to understand the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants. Without the subjective statements of the interviewees it would not have been possible to get a closer insight in the Employer Branding approach of the chosen companies. This holds also true for the quantitative research approach in this thesis. Throughout both research approaches, the respondents' argumentation is based on their experience and subjective opinion. A researcher who takes an interpretivistic view is challenged by entering the social world of their research subjects and understanding their world from their point of view.<sup>10</sup> According to that, it can be outlined that in the course of this master thesis an *interpretivistic view* is embraced.

## 2.4 Scientific Approach

Before carrying out an empirical study, it is important to be aware of the *scientific approach* which will be followed throughout the thesis. Similar to the previous section, the chosen scientific approach will be based on the research question and the purpose of the study. The scientific approach can be distinguished between a *deductive* and *inductive approach*. Whereas the first one is concerned with the development of theory and hypothesis that must be subjected to empirical scrutiny, the latter one involves the collection of data and development of theory as a result of the data analysis.<sup>11</sup>

*“Research using a deductive approach involves the development of a theory which is subjected to a rigorous test”<sup>12</sup>*

In this study, the intention is to get an insight into what an Employer Branding approach has to contain to place a company successfully in the mind of talented job seekers. The aim is to compare the results of the interviews with the conceptual framework, which is constructed out of the theoretical part of this thesis. At this point, it is important to consider that the construction of the framework required *in-depth knowledge* about the Employer Branding concept. Hence, without conducting a thorough literature review, it would neither have been possible to select theoretical concepts nor to construct a conceptual framework. Taking this into consideration, the scientific approach shows characteristics of a rather *deductive approach*, since the empirical study is based on theory. An additional attribute in favour of a deductive approach is that out of the results, the theory is either confirmed or rejected, with the consequence that modifications are indicated and the theory becomes modified in the lights of the results.<sup>13</sup>

In the second part of the empirical study, a web-based questionnaire among graduates at USBE as well as participants of a German and a Dutch scholarship program will deliver an answer to the question which elements of TRM are most preferred from the perspective of the applicants. Similar to the qualitative study described in the paragraph above, there is a need to expand current knowledge about the concept as well as to build a theoretical background, before carrying out the quantitative study. Furthermore, there is an intention to select a sample of appropriate size in order to generalize conclusions. To this end, there is a movement from theory to data, which clearly shows a characteristic of a *deductive approach*.

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<sup>10</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2000) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall 2000, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition., p. 86.

<sup>11</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2007) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall 2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, pp. 117/118. See also Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business Research Methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, pp. 9/10.

<sup>12</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2007) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall 2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p. 117.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

### 2.5 Research Approach

When it comes to the collection of empirical data, there is a distinction between *quantitative* and *qualitative research*. Whereas the latter is based on ‘soft data’ in form of impressions or expressed through words, quantitative research is concerned with ‘hard data’ in the form of numbers.<sup>14</sup> There is also a difference in the way gathered data is analyzed. The analysis of quantitative data is mostly conducted through the use of diagrams and statistics. In contrary, qualitative data is analyzed through the use of conceptualizations.<sup>15</sup>

As it already has become clear in the previous chapter, a *combination* between quantitative and qualitative research is used throughout the thesis. This research approach is often referred to as *mixed-method research*.<sup>16</sup> In contrary to a multi-method research approach, which enables the researcher to use more than one data collection technique either within quantitative or qualitative study, mixed-method is the *general term* for using both quantitative or qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures.<sup>17</sup>

The advantage of this research approach is that different methods can be used for *different purposes* in a study. Another positive aspect is that it enables *triangulation* to take place.<sup>18</sup> This process, also referred to as *triangulation of method*, occurs when both qualitative and quantitative research approaches are used.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the research approach used during the thesis can be classified as rather complementary, since two methods are employed in order to investigate different aspects of Employer Branding and TRM, both contributing to an improvement in recruiting and retaining talented employees.

However, the use of a mixed method research approach is not without controversy among researchers. The first group, on the one hand, takes the stance that quantitative and qualitative research is grounded in incompatible epistemological principles. Thus, a mixed method approach is not possible.<sup>20</sup> The second group, on the other hand, acknowledges that there is a connection with distinctive epistemological and ontological assumptions, but that these are not viewed as fixed and ineluctable. Therefore, this more technical version views the two research approaches as not only compatible, but also feasible and desirable.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.6 Choice of Theories

Given that the concepts of Employer Branding and TRM are two rather new approaches within the area of recruitment, it is important to shortly highlight the discipline of HRM in combination with its several functions. The aim is to not only classify the area of recruitment within HRM, but also to stress the overall importance of this function in comparison to the other dimensions. Based upon the solid background, the concept of Employer Branding with its functions is theoretically built up. Here, the intention has been to provide an extensive overview about the different dimensions of this approach in order to construct a conceptual framework with the aim to give guidance through the conducted interviews as well as to answer the first research question in a satisfactory way. Following, the concept of TRM has been explored in order to provide ample theoretical knowledge, which is essential for the

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<sup>14</sup> Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 134.

<sup>15</sup> Ghauri, P. & Grønhaug, K. (2002) *Research Methods in Business Studies*, Prentice Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 86.

<sup>16</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2007) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall 2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p. 145.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>18</sup> Ghauri, P. & Grønhaug, K. (2002) *Research Methods in Business Studies*, Prentice Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 182.

<sup>19</sup> Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 137.

<sup>20</sup> Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business Research Methods*, Oxford University Press 2003. p. 481.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 481/482.



construction of the questionnaire. In addition, the concept of Employer Branding has been enriched by drawing comparisons to the approach of *Strategic Brand Management*.

### 2.7 Secondary Data Collection

The main focus in this master thesis in terms of secondary data lies on books written by researchers as well as scientific articles. To a lesser extent Internet sources have been used, which have provided an additional valuable insight into the areas of Employer Branding and TRM.

Due to the fact that both concepts are relatively new approaches within the area of recruitment and retention, it turned out to be rather complicated to find adequate textbooks at the *Umeå University Library*. This problem was partly solved by making use of the 'Interlibrary Loan' option, which allowed us to order books either from other libraries in Sweden or to buy the literature through the *University Library*.

In order to get access to scientific articles, search engines as *EBSCO*, *Emerald* and *Google Scholar* as well as the *Umeå University Library database ALBUM* and *LIBRIS* have been used. In this context, keyword searches of the respective concepts, as well as the authors names, found in reference lists of books and articles, were used, e.g. *employer branding*, *talent management*, *talent*, *HRM*, *recruiting and so on*. Apart from the secondary data collection for the theoretical part, an extensive literature search was carried out to find scientific articles and textbooks, which enriched the other parts of the master thesis as well. To this end, it is important to mention that the extensive review of books and scientific articles focused on English literature. However, in terms of the TRM concept, literature written in German was considered since the approach is not sufficiently covered in textbooks and articles in English.

Even though this section is concerned with the description of the secondary data analysis, it is important to mention that primary and tertiary literature sources have also been used to a minor extent in the course of this thesis. To this end, primary literature in terms of annual reports and internal documents provided by the interviewed companies have been used to complement the analysis of the empirical findings in *chapter seven*. In contrary, the attentive reader will encounter some references referring to a HRM encyclopedia as well as an online encyclopedia, which can be characterized as tertiary literature sources.

### 2.8 Criticism of Secondary Data Collection

As mentioned before, our aim has been to conduct the literature review with a wider perspective. Consequently, contiguous fields, as for example, *Talent Management* or *Strategic Brand Management* were studied. Furthermore, it is important to consider, that throughout the master thesis, there has been a focus on taking peer-reviewed scientific articles or books with a clear research orientation into consideration. However, during the review, we got the impression that some textbooks and articles written about the subjects had a more *practical oriented approach*. They often contained best-practice examples as well as descriptions of other authors' experiences with the respective topic in 'practice'. Furthermore, attention had to be paid to theories that had the characteristics of the employer brand concept, but were not named in accordance with that. Nonetheless, it has to be outlined that the major part of them gave a valuable and interesting insight. Without those theories it might not have been possible to construct the theoretical framework in the way the reader will encounter it in the next chapter.

Apart from the characteristics of the chosen literature, it needs to be pointed out that throughout the master thesis it has been our intention to refer to the original secondary sources within other authors' work. This has not been successfully done in all cases, since some sources were simply not detectable or accessible. In these cases, a reference to the so-called second-hand source was made. In addition, the 'up-to-date' characteristic of the Employer Branding and TRM approach had a direct impact on the topicality of most of the scientific articles and textbooks used throughout the study. Thus, the major part of the references in this master thesis has been written within the last years. Our aim was to consider the latest available edition for the review of textbooks and it is our opinion that we succeeded in that. Nonetheless, the strong demand on, for instance, methodology books have sometimes made it difficult to use the latest editions of the literature.

In the following chapter, the reader will notice that there is an omnipresence of the authors, Barrow & Mosley, Hetrick & Martin and Dibble. Even though we tried hard to find other sources for certain concepts, their work within the field of Employer Branding is so fundamental that an exclusion of their work from this thesis would have been questionable.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that one German Ph.D. study<sup>22</sup> and a number of German scientific articles have been used throughout the thesis. This does not only create the risk of language biases, but also results in a situation where interested readers are not able to follow or check references, which refer to German literature due to language barriers. The reason for using German literature can be explained in the already mentioned weak theoretical background of the TRM concept within literature in English. However, the risk of creating language biases can be seen as very low, since we see ourselves, after one year of studying at the University of Umeå, as experienced enough to use and combine foreign and native literature.

In addition, particular attention has been paid to the use of Internet sources in the course of this thesis. In this context, it is essential to be cautious towards this kind of secondary data since the content is not reviewed, as it would be the case with scientific articles. Considering that only a few references are made to an Internet source, this matter plays a minor role in this master thesis.

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<sup>22</sup> The Ph.D. study is written by Antje von Dewitz and was published in 2006. The study highlights the concept of TRM and scrutinizes its application among 15 innovative middle-sized companies in Germany.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following chapter provides a deeper understanding of the concepts Employer Branding and TRM. It is essential to first introduce the function of recruitment and its role within HRM, in order to achieve a theoretical base in a coherent context. Throughout this initial part, the interrelation between both concepts and HRM will be outlined. Whereas the second part of this chapter is concerned with the Employer Branding approach, the third section introduces TRM and its different instruments. Apart from providing a selection of the most important theoretical concepts in this chapter, an additional aim is to build a solid fundament for the construction of a conceptual framework in the next chapter.

#### 3.1 Human Resource Management and the Role of Recruitment

##### 3.1.1 The Nature of Human Resource Management

Personnel as a business function can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution in England in the 1880s. Nonetheless, it took almost an additional sixty years until there was an increasing demand for personnel specialists, a consequence of the labor shortage due to the First and Second World War.<sup>23</sup> During this period, most writers used labels as *personnel management* and *personnel administration* which referred to the attraction, retention, motivation and development of the labor input of workers. This standard terminology was used until 1960, when a notable trend took place to replace the old term *personnel management* with *human resource management (HRM)*.<sup>24</sup> Strauss argues that the new title was viewed as more prestigious and up-to-date rather than radically different from the former term.<sup>25</sup> Similar to this statement, Armstrong compares the replacement of the old term with old wine in new bottles. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that HRM has the virtue of emphasizing the treatment of people as a key resource. Furthermore, it can be said that HRM is to a larger extent driven by senior management to promote the interest of the organization that they serve.<sup>26</sup>

Based upon the short evolution of the term, HRM can be defined as a strategic and coherent approach to the management of employment relations which emphasizes that leveraging people's capabilities is critical to achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. This is being achieved through a distinctive set of integrated employment policies, programs and practices.<sup>27</sup> Within this definition, one crucial issue can be highlighted. It is the capability of the companies' employees which are crucial for achieving and sustaining competitive advantage. This underlines the importance of a HRM function in an organization, with the task to motivate and develop their workforce in order to achieve competitive advantage.

After having defined the concept of HRM, it is important to take the key activities into consideration. HRM can be divided into *several key functions* with the aim "to attract and select qualified job applicants, to develop performance management and compensation systems that align employee behaviors with organizational goals, and to assist in the

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<sup>23</sup> Bratton, J. & Gold, J. (2003) *Human Resource Management – Theory and Practice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Kaufman, B.E. (2001) *Human resources and industrial relations – commonalities and differences*, Human Resource Management Review, Vol. 11, pp. 341/342.

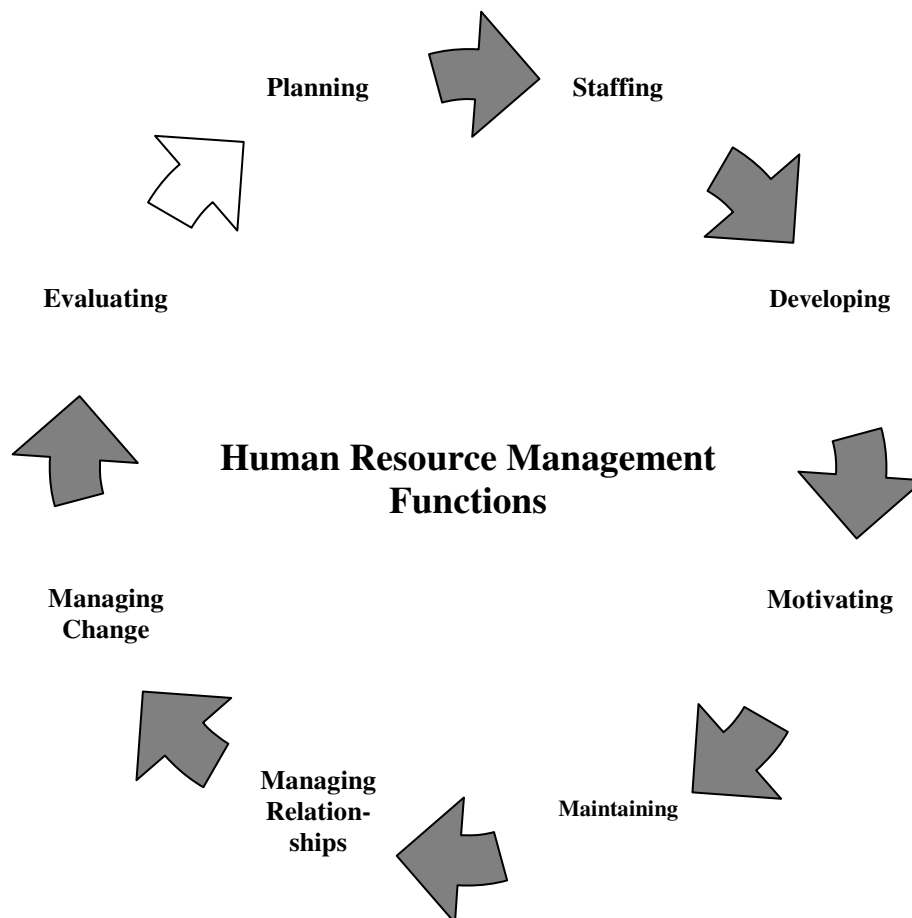
<sup>25</sup> Strass, G. (2001) *HRM in the USA: correcting some British expressions*, International Journal of Human Resource Management, Vol. 12, No. 6, September 2001, p. 878.

<sup>26</sup> Armstrong, M. (2000) *Strategic Human Resource Management – A guide to action*, London: Kogan Page, pp. 21/23.

<sup>27</sup> Bratton, J. & Gold, J. (2003) *Human Resource Management – Theory and Practice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 7. See also Armstrong, M. (2000), *Strategic Human Resource Management – A guide to action*, London: Kogan Page, p. 6.

development and retention of a diverse work force to meet current and future organizational requirements”.<sup>28</sup>

The several key functions are illustrated in the following cycle.



**Figure 3.1:** Human Resource Management Functions

The white arrow indicates that the HRM cycle begins with the *planning function*, which is concerned with a focus on the forecasting of future HR needs, management succession planning, or other aspects of planning within the field of human resources.<sup>29</sup> The information flow towards staffing contains credible data about any open vacancies within the organization and deals with the question if they should be filled internally or externally. To this end, the *staffing function* is concerned with the job analysis, recruitment, selecting and promoting of people. In other words, the main aim is to obtain individuals with appropriate skills, knowledge, abilities and experience to fill vacancies in the company.<sup>30</sup>

The derived definition of HRM in the beginning of this chapter has made it clear how significant the development and motivation of employees are in an organizational context. Hence, the *developing function* can be described as the analysis of the learning requirements of each employee to make sure that individuals within the organization possess the knowledge

<sup>28</sup> Huselid, M.A. (2005) *Blackwell Encyclopedic Dictionary of Human Resource Management*, p. 169.

<sup>29</sup> Walker, J.W. (2005) *Blackwell Encyclopedic Dictionary of Human Resource Management*, p. 326.

<sup>30</sup> Snyder, D.J. & McDaniel, M.A. (2005) *Blackwell Encyclopedic Dictionary of Human Resource Management*, p. 320. See also Bratton, J. & Gold, J. (2003) *Human Resource Management – Theory and Practice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 15.

and abilities to perform satisfactorily in their jobs or to advance in the company.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, the *motivating function* within HRM is concerned with the design and administration of reward systems, which includes job evaluation, performance appraisal, pay and benefits.<sup>32</sup>

Without question, each key function plays an important role within HRM. However, from the authors' point of view the functions of planning, staffing, developing and motivating are most important when it comes to the attraction, recruitment and retention of highly skilled individuals. These functions are playing the main role in acquiring the key employees for tomorrow and retaining them over a long period of time. Due to the fact that the concepts of Employer Branding and TRM are employed at these early stages of the HRM cycle, the following stages of maintaining, managing relationships, managing change and evaluating are not further discussed in this context.

Before constructing the theoretical framework for the concepts of Employer Branding and TRM, the activity of staffing, in particular the attraction, recruitment and selection of individuals, has to be further specified in order to enhance the understanding and classification of the two approaches within the recruitment function.

### 3.1.2 The Role of Recruitment within HRM

*“Business will live and die based on their ability to attract the right talent for the job”*<sup>33</sup>

The quotation outlines the crucial role of attracting and recruiting personnel within companies. Undoubtedly, this function of HRM is crucial to organizational success.<sup>34</sup> Without the acquisition of highly qualified and motivated employees in adequate numbers, an organization will simply not work.

Caused by a variety of combined economic trends, the recruitment of high-potential candidates has become even more important than in the past. These trends can be summarized by

- the rapid pace of technological change, which results in a need for high-aptitude, multi-skilled employees,
- the growth of business strategies that depend on high employee involvement for success,
- the rise of 'knowledge-based' companies that create value through the intellectual capital of their employees.<sup>35</sup>

Most definitions of recruitment refer to Reynes, who defines recruiting as a function which encompasses all organizational practices and decisions that affect either the number or types of individuals who are willing to apply for or to accept a given vacancy.<sup>36</sup> Reynes understanding of recruitment implies that applicants have a choice concerning which

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<sup>31</sup> Bratton, J. & Gold, J. (2003) *Human Resource Management – Theory and Practice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> Leonard, D. (2000) *They're coming to take you away*, Fortune Magazine Online, URL: [http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune\\_archive/2000/05/29/280609/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2000/05/29/280609/index.htm) [2007-03-20].

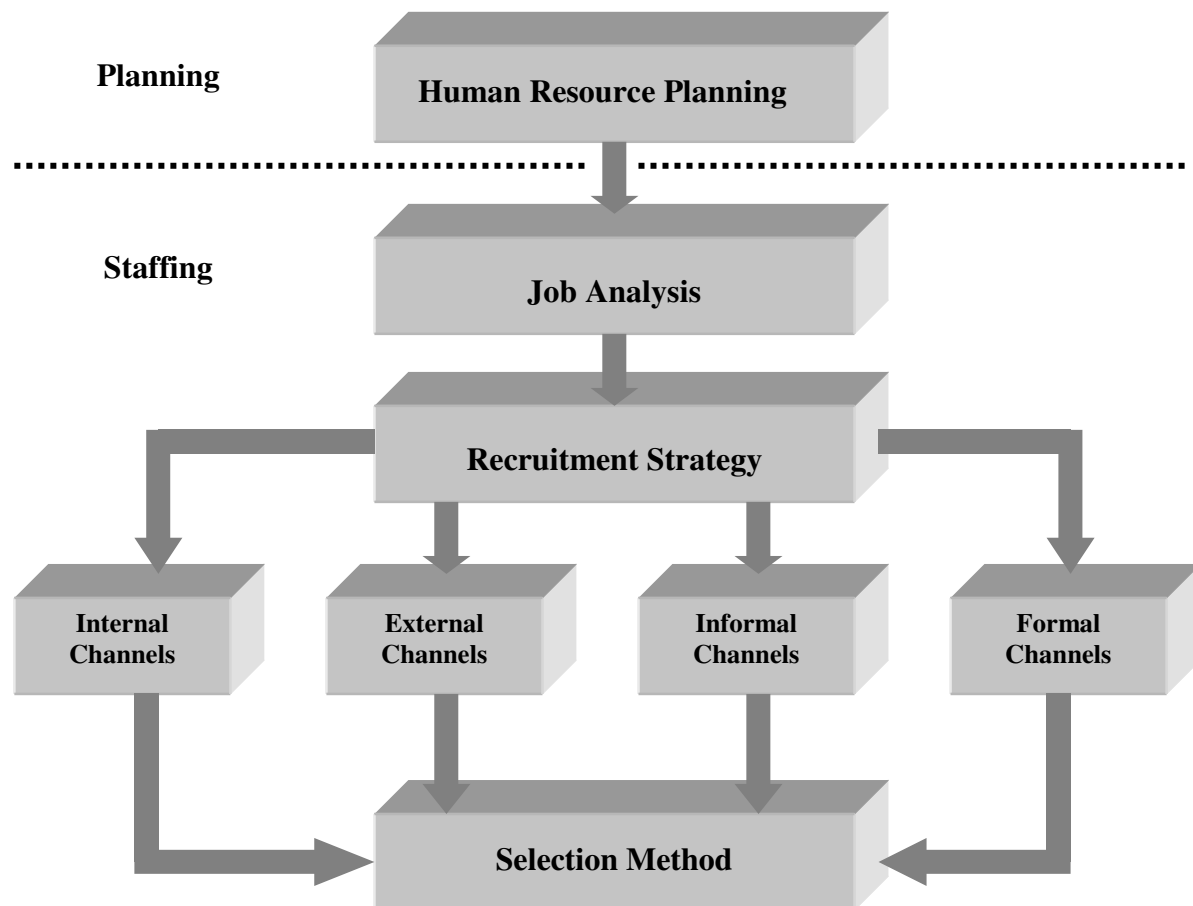
<sup>34</sup> Carlson, K.D. et al. (2002) *Recruitment evaluation: The case for assessing the quality of applicants attracted*, Personnel Psychology, Vol. 55, Issue 2, p. 461.

<sup>35</sup> Trank, C.Q. et al. (2002) *Attracting applicants in the war for talent: Differences in work preferences among high achievers*, Journal of Business and Psychology, Vol. 16, No. 3, p. 332.

<sup>36</sup> Reynes, S.L. (1989) *Recruitment, job choice, and post hire consequences: A call for new research directions*, in CAHRS Working Paper Series, p. 46.

organization they wish to work for. Under the constraints of the earlier mentioned demographic factors and the so called war for talents, it becomes clear that there is a need to professionalize the organizational recruiting activities in order to position the company as the employer of choice in the mind of highly skilled and qualified job seekers.

However, in order to create a complete picture about the recruitment function within HRM, it is essential to take on a rather holistic view of the process. Thus, the recruitment or staffing of individuals can be divided into the following stages:



**Figure 3.2:** The Stages of Recruitment

The recruitment procedure is triggered by the indication of staffing needs through the function of *Human Resource Planning*. At this stage, a decision is taken whether the placement should take place internally or externally. Whereas internal recruitment refers to relocation of personnel within the company, external recruitment means the acquisition of individuals from outside the organization. However, it is important to mention that Human Resource Planning does not originally belong to the recruitment process, which was outlined in the last subchapter. Therefore, the first stage of recruiting is the *job analysis*, which is concerned with gathering all relevant information about the job demands and to set the hiring standards.

The second component is the spreading of relevant information among the possible set of applicants. Thereby, the *recruitment strategy* can be classified in the following way:<sup>37</sup>

- internal channels: advertisements in the company's newspaper, referrals from employees, referrals by managers;
- external channels: advertisements in national or regional newspapers, employment agencies, head-hunters, and so forth;
- informal channels: referrals by friends or relatives outside the firm, referrals by employees, "walk-ins" and "write-ins" (self-initiated), advertisements in the internal newspaper;
- formal channels: advertisements in national and regional newspapers, job centers, head-hunters, radio advertising and labor exchange offices.

Even though the classification of the recruitment strategy seems clear at a first glance, it is important to consider that the decision for one of the strategies has enormous consequences in terms of costs and time. The use of external channels as for instance an ad in a national newspaper and the prolonged recruiting process of external candidates imply higher cost than internal relocation. Without question, each channel has advantages and disadvantages and it will most likely depend on the individual situation which strategy is finally chosen.

In addition, some authors also distinguish between active and passive recruitment.<sup>38</sup> The first attitude towards recruitment is adopted, when there is a high demand for new employees or professional individuals which possess certain skills or expertise. In contrast, a rather passive attitude can be justified when there is a low demand of labor or a high amount of applications for a vacancy. The term of passive recruitment will emerge again during the TRM concept when it comes to the construction of talent pools.

The following figure shows different methods and levels of active and passive recruiting:



**Figure 3.3:** Active and Passive Methods of Recruitment<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Russo, G. et al. (1995) *Issues in recruitment strategies: an economic perspective*, International Journal of Career Management, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Jung, H. (1997) *Personalwirtschaft*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, München, Wien, Oldenbourg 1997, pp. 138-140.

<sup>39</sup> Adapted from Trost, A. (2006) *Möglichkeiten einer talentorientierten Recruitingstrategie*, p. 25. Working paper URL [www.armintrost.de](http://www.armintrost.de) [2007-02-19].

Independent of the chosen recruitment strategy, the last stage of staffing is the *selection method*, which is concerned with screening the applicants' abilities and traits in order to assess the degree of success and compatibility of the individual in the organization.<sup>40</sup>

The last two pages have provided a deeper understanding of the recruitment function. However, the traditional recruiting approach, as many other business functions, has changed remarkably due to technological process. The next subchapter will introduce the approach of *E-Recruitment*.

### 3.1.3 E-Recruitment

In recent years, the traditional approach to recruitment has been revolutionized by the concept of online recruitment (or E-Recruitment). Due to the diffusion of the Internet in combination with an increasing number of users, the concept of E-Recruitment has gone through a rapid growth.<sup>41</sup> The approach of E-Recruitment enables organizations to publish their vacancies on their corporate webpage or on so called job boards, instead of relying on expensive newspaper ads. In other words, it is cheaper, faster and more targeted than print-based advertising.<sup>42</sup>

When shifting the perspective from the company side towards the applicant, it is important to mention that applications sent through E-mails or so called 'application forms', which are based on the organizational website, simplify the application process for job seekers in terms of time and costs. Consequently, this leads to an increasing number of applications, which is sometimes better described as a 'flood' of applications that a company receives on day-to-day basis. The downside is the large number of resumes which do not meet the minimum requirements for the job and, hence, recruiters are forced to spend more time on screening applications.<sup>43</sup> However, it is without question that the chance to screen potential candidates out of a huge pile of applicants is higher in comparison to a limited number of applications.

After having touched on the field of HRM and classified the function and role of recruitment, the next two chapters deal with the modern concepts of Employer Branding and TRM. It will be underlined that these are strongly interrelated with the E-Recruitment approach. Whereas the talent pool, one of the main elements within TRM, receives its applicant data from web-based applications, successful Employer Branding plays an important role in the Internet arena.

## 3.2 Employer Branding

In the following subchapter, the concept of Employer Branding is explored. After a short introduction, which underlines the important role of brands and provides a first insight into the Employer Branding approach, a framework is constructed by reviewing theories of branding, identification, reputation, image and organizational identity. It is not before section 3.2.5 until a proper definition of Employer Branding is provided. The reason for this is that it is crucial to create a coherent picture of the concept in combination with its underlying constraints, before a definition can be derived. Based on that, employer brand loyalty and equity are introduced which, in the course of this section, naturally lead to the approach of total work experience. This subchapter will conclude by outlining the benefits of the concept in terms of employee satisfaction and organizational profitability.

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<sup>40</sup> Russo, G. et al. (1995) *Issues in recruitment strategies: an economic perspective*, International Journal of Career Management, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> iLogosResearch (2003) *Global 500 Website Recruiting 2003 Survey* URL: <https://www.taleo.com/research/whitepapers/2003Survey/index.php> [19.03.2007].

<sup>42</sup> Sandler, S. (2000) *Online Recruiting: What works, what doesn't*, HRfocus, Issue 3, March 2000, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous (2004) *The pros and cons of Online Recruiting*, HRfocus, Vol. 81, p. S2.



### 3.2.1 The Important Role of Brands

Until the late twentieth century most people would have only associated the term brand with consumer goods and services. Nowadays, the term is used far more widely and it is common for the term brand to be used to describe virtually anything carrying a distinct identity, and the reputation, good or bad, associated with that identity.<sup>44</sup>

Whereas the concept brand was, until some years ago, only used within the field of marketing to promote the products the company produced and the services it provided, nowadays HR departments of many companies seem to have become aware of the strength and benefits of a brand to attract the most important and valuable resource to produce those products; their employees. As competition increases, more and more companies are trying to distinguish themselves from others to be purchased by customers. “*Do you drive a car or a Volkswagen?*” is a marketing message that clearly distinguishes a car manufacturer making use of its brand. It is people who create such reputations for excellence and memorable brands. Moreover, attracting retaining and engaging talented people are increasingly reliant on high quality reputations and brands.<sup>45</sup>

It is the aim of the following subchapter to demonstrate how theories, associated with a unique identity, are resulting in the concept of Employer Branding.

### 3.2.2 Introducing the Concept of Employer Branding

Scholars have been describing, or clarifying, concepts out of the field of marketing by using vocabulary to a large extent referring to war. Metaphors such as price war, counterattack and defending are totally integrated within the marketing theory. Now *Marketing* and *HRM* are more interrelated with each other, this tendency can be found in the latter field of study as well. In 1943, Montgomery told his 220.000 men in the desert: “*When all this is over and they ask you what you did in the war you need only say I was in the Eighth Army*”<sup>46</sup>. This statement clearly outlines an early thought in the direction of Employer Branding, in combination with embedded elements of pride and identification. Another example can be provided, by looking at the Russian army during the Second World War. Deserters, those that left the army, were shot at the time to prevent their fellow soldiers from quitting. Nowadays, companies have less violent methods to retain their employees, a concept that later will be introduced as *brand equity*, which derives from Employer Branding.

Marketers have been good at using the language of branding and communication to shed new light on people management. They have produced practical tools for assisting HR professionals to apply the language of branding to people management problems. However, despite of the interest shown by marketing and branding specialists, it is argued that the understanding of the linkages between *HRM* and *Marketing* are not sophisticated enough in the brand management- and reputation building processes. Little is said about the complex nature of employees’ identification with brands and organizations, other than at a general level and usually in highly prescriptive manner.<sup>47</sup> In parallel, Backhaus & Tikoo underline that even though the concept of Employer Branding has received much attention in

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<sup>44</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., (Foreword).

<sup>46</sup> Hamilton, N. (2001) “The Full Monty: Montgomery of Alamein 1887 - 1942”, Allen Lane (ed.) in Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., p. 34.

practitioner venues, the underlying theoretical foundation for Employer Branding has not been fully developed in the academic field.<sup>48</sup>

Within this study a deeper understanding of the Employer Branding concept itself and its drivers will be developed. Furthermore, the strategic branding theory from the field of marketing will be explored to provide an additional valuable insight.

### **3.2.3 Branding, Identification, Reputation, Image and Organizational Identity**

Before going any deeper into the concept itself, an understanding of the knowledge of the theories, on which the concept is built, is crucial in order to place Employer Branding in a salient context. To this end, it is important to consider that the following theoretical subchapter is provided with the purpose to get the right picture rather than extensively exploring the respective theories.

#### **Identity**

The name and logo of a company are the two basic elements that distinguish it from other companies. It gives a company its own identity in order to become recognized by customers. This is one of the main reasons why it is not allowed to use the names or logo's, or very similar to those, of existing companies. It would evoke assumptions towards a company that would not hold true.

In this context, organizational identity refers broadly to what members perceive, feel and think about their organization. It can be seen as a commonly-shared understanding of the company's distinctive values and characteristics.<sup>49</sup> In addition, an identity also indicates how a company views itself, and –thus- also influences the perception of others towards the company, what can best be described by *image*.<sup>50</sup> Identity used for selling purposes, one step ahead of recognizing, is known as brand. In this context, the following definition can clarify the narrow border between identity and brand. According to the *American Marketing Association*, a *brand* is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition.<sup>51</sup> In the context of this research the crucial difference between identity and brand is that a brand concentrates on goods and services of a seller or a group of sellers. As a consequence, it is necessary to see identity in a wider perspective. In other words, a company might possess a range of different brands, but has one identity. An organization itself or the jobs it offers should be regarded to as goods or services, that the company 'sells' on the labour market, in order for Employer Branding to be valid. This is required since the concept relates so closely to the field of marketing.

The concepts of and implications on how the identity of a company can be transformed or redefined into a brand will be covered in the following section.

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<sup>48</sup> Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) *Conceptualizing and researching employer branding*, Career Development International, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 503.

<sup>49</sup> Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M. (1997) *Relations between organizational culture, identity and image*, European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 31, No. 5/6, p. 357.

<sup>50</sup> Gregory, J. R. & Wiechmann, J. G. (1998) *Marketing corporate image, The company as your number one product*. Chicago: NTC Business Books, p. 64.

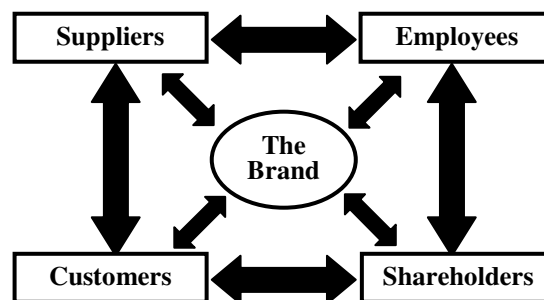
<sup>51</sup> Keller, K. L. (2003) *Strategic brand Management, Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., p. 3.

### Branding

Procter & Gamble created the brand management concept in 1931 and it has remained the basis for running effective customer-facing businesses ever since.<sup>52</sup> However, they might not have expected that a brand could create lifestyles.

If it is the car someone drives or the clothes someone wears, a particular brand provides the customer with a way of expressing himself. Through the perception of others towards that brand one can build its own image. It is a different way of communicating, if somebody throws its BMW keys on the table instead of one's Skoda keys, just as it makes a difference if somebody, regardless of one's function, works for Shell or a local retailer. With having that in mind, HR departments have become aware of the fact that money is not something that mainly motivates people to work. It is rather the way they can identify themselves, contributing to their personal reputation or image.<sup>53</sup>

This is leading to the distinction between a product brand and an employer brand. The first one is marketed on the consumer market, the latter one on the labour market. However, the two concepts are interrelated and are reinforcing each other. A product brand that is perceived in a positive way can contribute to the strength of the employer brand of the same company. Vice versa, and in parallel to the beginning of *section 3.2.1*, it is people who create the reputations for brands. Therefore, it can be argued that a strong employer brand reinforces the product brand. The figure below clearly illustrates that one brand can have different audiences, which should be treated as different target groups. Even though the dimensions of 'suppliers' and 'shareholders' are not considered in the following pages, they contribute here to an overall understanding of brands.



**Figure 3.4:** One Brand, Different Audiences<sup>54</sup>

Although a definition of brands has already been provided in the previous section, it is important to consider that there are several existing definitions that all differentiate in the way they can be applied. Due to the fact that the fields of *Marketing* and *HRM* have begun to overlap, as outlined earlier, there is a need for a definition of brands with a rather broad focus. In this context, Hetrick & Martin offer an appropriate definition, which facilitates the understanding of employer brand: "A brand is a promise made and kept in every strategic-, marketing- and human resource activity, every action, every corporate decision and every customer- and employee interaction intended to deliver strategic value to an organization"<sup>55</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., Preface, p. xvi - xvii.

<sup>53</sup> Dibble, S. (1999) *Keeping your valuable employees, Retention strategies for your organization's most important resource*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., p. 217.

<sup>54</sup> Green Lion 2007, *The "Employer Brand" – is it a helpful concept?* URL: [http://www.greenlion.co.uk/thinking/employer\\_branding/](http://www.greenlion.co.uk/thinking/employer_branding/) [2007-04-10].

<sup>55</sup> Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., p. 47.

What is significantly different in this definition is that the differentiation characteristic of a brand seems to be ignored. Instead, a people management dimension has been added. It can therefore be assumed that, although a company does not differentiate itself from competitors, it can deliver value to an organization by being consistent in carrying out its identity. At this point, it is important to mention that throughout this master thesis the term of brand refers to this definition.

In addition, the process of creating mental structures and helping consumers to organize their knowledge about products and services (the brand as described above), in a way that clarifies their decision making and provides value to the firm, is known as branding.<sup>56</sup> A brand without branding is no more than a distinct identity. However, even without branding consumers will create a certain attitude towards the apparently objective identity due to unplanned influencers in the external world.

### **Image**

The image of an organization is built up from received planned (branding) and unplanned visual and verbal communications from that company. It can be seen as the total valuation of a particular company. This influences the way that a corporation is perceived.<sup>57</sup> The image of Philips for example is effected, assumable unintended and negatively, by one unenlightened letter in the lightened Philips logo on the top of the company's roof. Within this study this is referred to as *unplanned impulses*. The image of a company results in the *attitude* of consumers towards that organization. To this end, an attitude is defined in terms of a consumer's *overall evaluation of a brand*.<sup>58</sup> As the concept of Employer Branding does concentrate on becoming an *employer of choice*, the elements that influence a company's image in the minds of prospective employees are relevant to consider. Without question, a successful image program can be a valuable instrument in attracting new, high-qualified employees. It communicates towards potential applicants that a company is worthwhile to consider, since it is well-known and respected by its peers, its industry and the public in general.<sup>59</sup>

### **Identification**

Although one may have a positive attitude towards a company, it does not answer the question of whether someone feels attracted towards the organization. Speaking about identification, the area of psychology is entered. What matters here, both for the product and the employer brand, is if one can and wants to be part of the brand value. In the field of marketing, *brand relationships* are referring to this. It is the final stage on the branding ladder, which indicates the level of identification with a brand. Moreover, Fournier argues that brands can and do serve as viable relationship partners. To this end, he highlights that building a relationship with a brand closely relates to the human world. By seeing a partner in a brand, someone has an empathetic orientation towards the other, a character of reliability, dependability and predictability in the brand and trust or faith in the belief that the brand will adhere to established relationships rules and be held accountable for its actions.<sup>60</sup> By

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<sup>56</sup> Keller, K. L. (2003) *Strategic brand Management, Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., p. 13.

<sup>57</sup> Gregory, J. R. & Wiechmann, J. G. (1998) *Marketing corporate image, The company as your number one product*. Chicago: NTC Business Books, pp. 64/65.

<sup>58</sup> Keller, K. L. (2003) *Strategic brand Management, Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., p. 88.

<sup>59</sup> Gregory, J. R. & Wiechmann, J. G. (1998) *Marketing corporate image, The company as your number one product*. Chicago: NTC Business Books, p. 195.

<sup>60</sup> Keller, K. L. (2003) *Strategic brand Management, Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., pp. 471-474.

concentrating on Fournier's argumentation, the concepts from Marketing are brought closer to HRM. Being married with ones work seems in this context almost possible, as an outcome of feeling highly attracted to a brand of a company.

Less focused on relationships but rather on the question "*who am I*" is the Social Identity Theory (SIT), which can shed a valuable light on the matter of identification in the context of this research. Building up a relationship says as much about the other one as about oneself. In this context, SIT considers the individual and the organization as potentially linked; a role in the authors' opinion fulfilled by branding. One needs knowledge of the existence of a company before identification can take place. By assuming that a prospective employee has sufficient knowledge about an organization, self-categorization can take place. Self-categorization, the first stage within developing a social identity, is concerned with the wish to belong or not to belong to different salient groups.<sup>61</sup> In the case of a student, for instance, that could be the categories of boyfriend, student, Master of Science, Dutch and so on. A self-conception is developed by valuing impressions from groups someone belongs to or aspires to identify with, so called *in-groups*, to enhance ones self-esteem.

In parallel, the valuation of groups, which someone does not want to identify with, so-called out-groups, does contribute to the self-concept as well.

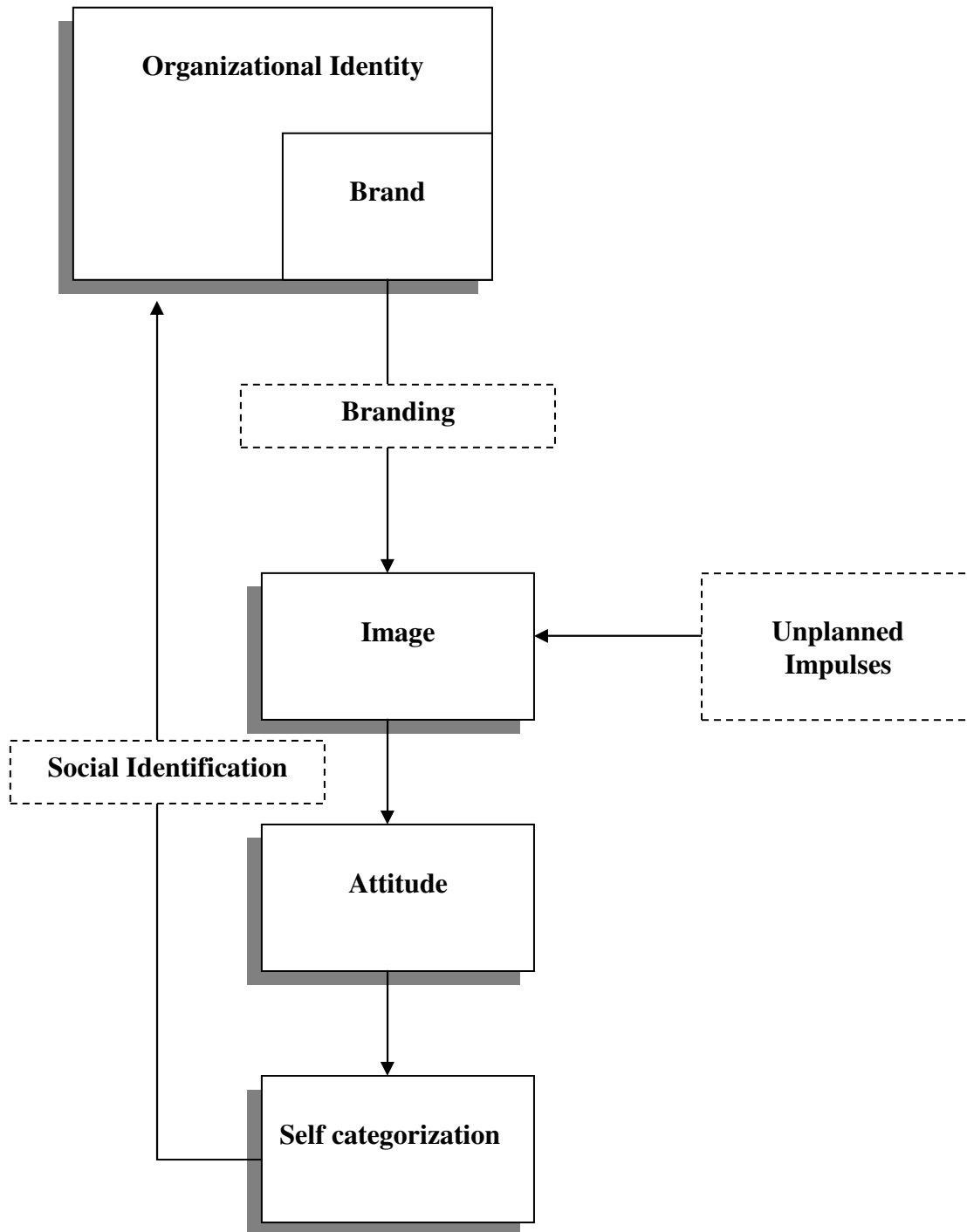
The final stage in this identification process, which also provides an answer to the formulated question above: "who am I?", is called social identification. This occurs in the situation that ones self-concept is in line with, or belongs to a social group one aspires. One accepts the values and norms of the group as an integrated part of itself. To come back on the provided examples, this may result in either dressing like a student or actually becoming one.<sup>62</sup>

The following figure provides a graphical overview of the different theories covered in this subchapter and how they relate to each other.

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<sup>61</sup> Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., pp. 136.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.



**Figure 3.5:** From an Organizational Identity towards a Person's Identity

An organization has its own identity within it carries out one or more brands. By means of branding and through influences of unplanned impulses a certain image is created. An unplanned impulse in the business environment of an organization could be, for instance, a serious error in the product line, which would have a negative impact on the reputation of a company. The evoked image leads to an attitude in the minds of customers. Based on the knowledge someone has through this attitude, self-categorization can occur. If finally one's self-concept is in line with the identity of the organization, social identification with the particular company will take place.

### 3.2.4 Becoming an Employer of Choice

In the beginning of this chapter, it was outlined that becoming an employer of choice is a desired outcome of the Employer Branding concept. It evolves in two distinct ways. The concept targets the audience of prospective employees, on the one hand, and current employees on the other hand. These are interlinked since the latter one influences the employer brand itself towards others. They are the art looked at by others in the exposition that is called employer brand. This is important to bear in mind during the following paragraphs in this section as well as when it comes to the conceptual framework.

One of the ten questions employees may ask themselves before accepting a job offer is concerned with self description: *what does the organization say about itself to customers, shareholders, employees, board, contributors, founders, residents, and so forth? And are the messages in publications such as annual reports and employee newsletter clear and consistent?*<sup>63</sup> These questions reflect that the perception of prospective employees towards the company is mainly influenced by the messages the company itself communicates. A company should therefore be highly aware of the fact, that everything it does creates impressions that affect the opinions of the people it might hope to hire and eventually retain.

When a company advertises, communicates with potential employees, and gives presentations at professional meetings, it is being evaluated. The way an organization presents itself, describes its open positions, and responds to the telephone, it all influences potential employees.<sup>64</sup> What a company specifically communicates about itself is never wrong or right, as long as it contains a *level of consistency*. By taking the latter part into consideration a consistent communication can in fact be considered as building a brand, if someone considers the definition of a brand, which was provided earlier.

Apart from an intended identity distribution, there are several factors that can be outlined, which influence the image of a company unintentionally by the organization itself. This might be spelling errors in a publication or even a product that lacks in quality. It is the role of the future employee to decide if he or she can identify him- or herself with that message of the company and the complete picture he or she has from it.

Organizational success in attracting and retaining talented employees does not preclude others from being successful. There are many employers of choice, each for different reasons. One organization may be an employer of choice because of its mission and technology, another because of its industry, culture and certain benefits for their employees. Employers of choice compete with each other on the basis of their distinctiveness.<sup>65</sup> The way of getting powerful and independent people to make a contribution is through recognition, peer group pressure and the desire of the individual to be associated with a group he or she truly rates.<sup>66</sup>

Apart from that, the message should be credible to current employees, representative for a company's culture and sustainable over time.<sup>67</sup> In other words, when it comes to organizational overall communication, certain principles need to be met in order to contribute to the goal of being an employer of choice.

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<sup>63</sup> Dibble, S. (1999) *Keeping your valuable employees, Retention strategies for your organization's most important resource*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., p. 52.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>66</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> Dibble, S. (1999) *Keeping your valuable employees, Retention strategies for your organization's most important resource*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., p. 219.

Van Riel refers to this as a Sustainable Corporate Story (SCS). The four key criteria against which an SCS should be judged are as follows<sup>68</sup>:

- realism
- relevance
- responsiveness
- sustainability

These forms of communication relate closely to corporate advertising. Via corporate advertising, companies can communicate *who they are* (their identity), *what they are* (their image) and *what they stand for* (the ideas central to their culture). CEO's, marketing managers and HRM executives all have their own opinions about the topic and that reflects just the strength and the characteristic of corporate advertising: It can have so many possible target audiences and is viewed from so many perspectives.<sup>69</sup>

Within the boundaries of this research, the usage of corporate advertising, as a tool to build and to sustain an employer brand, is an interesting one. Corporate advertising deals mostly with perceptions. It is what somebody thinks about a company that counts, not what a company thinks about itself. Thus, every company -even the smallest one- has an image, whether planned or not.

The corporate image is evoked by the public's perception of a company, the preconceived ideas and prejudices that customers form over time. Their perceptions may not always reflect accurately a corporation's true profile, but to the public it is reality.<sup>70</sup>

As briefly mentioned before, there are two main brands within an organizational context that has to be distinguished: a customer brand and an employer brand. Unless both concepts strive to achieve both something different, as for instance attracting customers and employees, in the end they both contribute to the overall goal of becoming a successful organisation. Therefore, it is important that the *brand essence* a company communicates is the same, both for the customer and the employer brand. This is crucial in order to maintain the validity of the *consistency element* within the definition of a brand. To this end, the figure below clearly illustrates that the essence of a company's brand facilitates the customer brand and the employer brand, both delivering benefits, differentiators and reasons to believe in two different target groups.

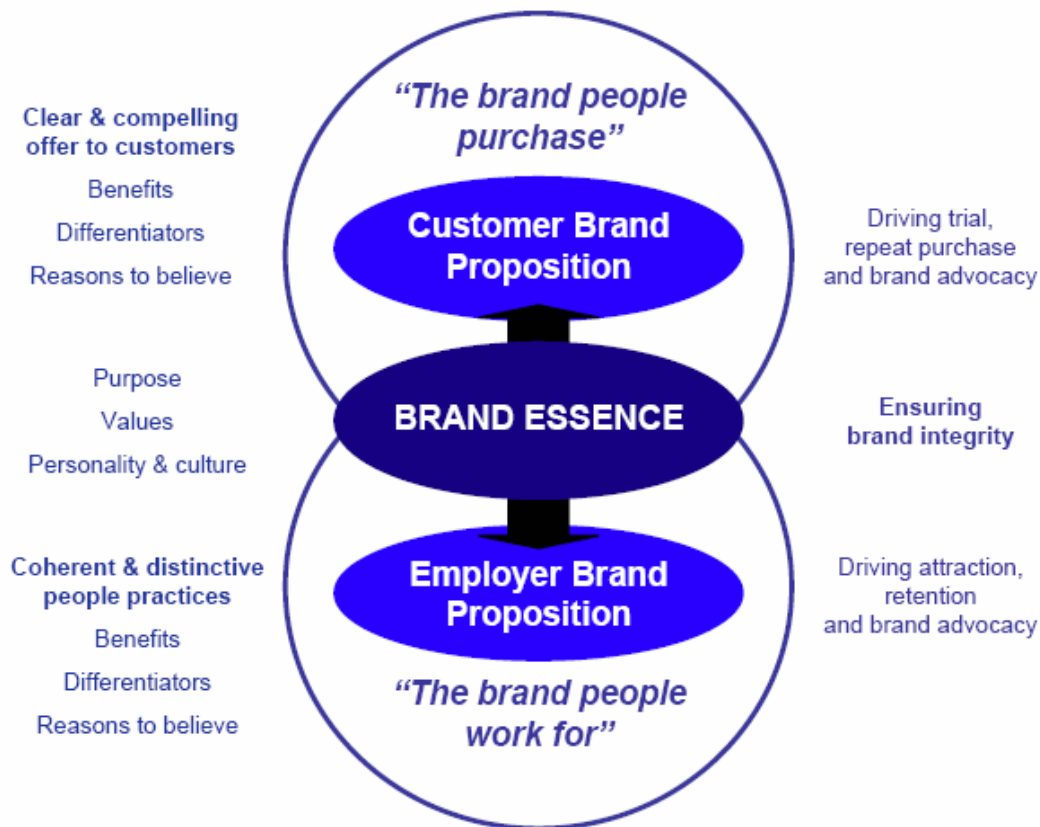
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<sup>68</sup> Martin, G. & Hetrick, S. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., p. 266.

<sup>69</sup> Gregory, J. R. & Wiechmann, J. G. (1998) *Marketing corporate image, The company as your number one product*. Chicago: NTC Business Books, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.





**Figure 3.6:** Customer- and Employer Brand Starting Point and Parallels<sup>71</sup>

The *brand essence* can be perceived as the companies' identity and has to be the same in each of the two directions, in order to avoid an identity crisis. If there would not be any consistency, attracted employees had to create an identity for a product, a brand, which would not be in line with their self-concept. In this context, several studies have shown that breach or violation of the psychological contract, which can be defined as the employee's believe that the employer lives up to its obligations, is positively correlated with reduced job satisfaction, intentions to quit and decreased organizational trust as well as job performance.<sup>72</sup> This outlines the importance of consistent, adequate and honest Employer Branding messages.

### 3.2.5 Definition of Employer Branding

Even though the provided definition of Hetrick & Martin has already provided some understanding of Employer Branding, in the following section different definitions of Employer Branding are compared and an own interpretation of the concept will be derived.

The true concept of Employer Branding, however, is often little more than the communication of attraction, recruitment, motivation and retention. Employer Branding has been defined as the company's image as seen through the eyes of its associates and potential hires, and is intimately linked to the employment experience of what it is like to work at a company,

<sup>71</sup> Mosley, R. (2004) Employer Brand Leadership, A roadmap, September 2004, p. 9 URL: [http://www.web-dms.net/dms/uploaded\\_files/pib/pib.mdb/downloads/Employer%20Brand%20Roadmap.pdf](http://www.web-dms.net/dms/uploaded_files/pib/pib.mdb/downloads/Employer%20Brand%20Roadmap.pdf) [2007-04-03].

<sup>72</sup> Robinson et al., S.L. (1994), *Changing obligations and the psychological contract: A longitudinal study*, Academy of Management Journal, Feb1994, Vol. 37 Issue 1, pp. 141/142. See also Robinson, S.L. (1996) *Trust and breach of the psychological contract*, Administrative Science Quarterly, Dec96, Vol. 41 Issue 4, pp. 575-579.

including tangibles such as salary and intangibles such as company culture and values.<sup>73</sup> Whereas this more up-to-date definition focuses on image, a concept of 1996 highlights the benefits to a larger extent. Thus, “the Employer Brand is the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company”<sup>74</sup>.

A more detailed definition is provided by the Conference Board, who defines the concept as: “the employer brand establishes the identity of the firm as an employer. It encompasses the firm’s value system, policies and behaviours toward the objectives of attracting, motivating, and retaining the firm’s current and potential employees”<sup>75</sup>. In addition, Sullivan argues that the concept is a strategy and defines different target groups. An employer brand is a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm.<sup>76</sup>

Taking all definitions into consideration, it can be outlined that Employer Branding involves a psychological element (identity or image) and provides benefits for both the employee as well as employer. Within this thesis Employer Branding can be defined as the process of building a unique identity to attract and to recruit applicants as well as to motivate and to retain employees with the aim to contribute to a company’s overall performance.

It is important to consider that Employer Branding starts inside the company; rather than identifying current perceptions of outsiders towards the company since the way current employees perceive the company is the starting point of the concept.<sup>77</sup> Although it was argued before that Employer Branding closely relates to marketing principles, it is essential to highlight existing differences. Instead of conducting a market research to find out what the labour market demands, Employer Branding rather concentrates on its own core values. If a product cannot be changed, change the perception towards it by the current employees, describes the thought behind Employer Branding in one sentence.

### 3.2.6 Employer Brand Loyalty and Equity

Now, after the identification process has become clear and the concept of Employer Branding has been defined, these two sections will be linked together in order to gain a deeper understanding and to form a solid basis for the benefits, which will be derived in the end.

*“An employee’s **commitment** leads to personal identification with the **organisation**, psychological attachment, concern for the future welfare of the organisation and **loyalty**”<sup>78</sup>*

<sup>73</sup> Ruch, W. (2002) *Employer Brand Evolution: a guide to building loyalty in your organization*, Versant Solutions, p. 3 URL: [easylink.terki.no/index.php/content/content/download/209/902/version/file/60EmployerBrandEvolution.pdf](http://easylink.terki.no/index.php/content/content/download/209/902/version/file/60EmployerBrandEvolution.pdf) [2007-04-25].

<sup>74</sup> Ambler, T. & Barrow, S. (1996) *The employer brand*, Journal of Brand Management, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 185 – 206, in Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., Preface, p. XVI.

<sup>75</sup> Conference Board (2001) *Engaging Employees through Your Brand*, in Backhaus, K. & Tikoo, S. (2004) *Conceptualizing and researching Employer Branding*. p. 502.

<sup>76</sup> Sullivan (2004) *Eight elements of a successful employment brand*, in Backhaus, K. & Tikoo, S. (2004) *Conceptualizing and researching Employer Branding*. p. 501.

<sup>77</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., pp. 49/50.

<sup>78</sup> Garbarino, E. & Johnson, M.S. (1999), *The different roles of satisfaction, trust and commitment in customer relations*, Journal of Marketing, April 1999, Vol. 63, Issue 2, p. 73.

One of the challenges of brand management is ensuring that staff has values that concur with those of the firm's brands.<sup>79</sup> To this end, individual identification of employees, internalisation, psychological ownership and commitment are important to consider. Related questions are – *Who am I, what do I believe in, do I feel the organization is mine and will I stay.*<sup>80</sup> These different matters are more recently summarized by researchers in the term of *employee engagement*. Apart from the stated questions above, this concept deals additionally with attitudes that refer to a believe in the organization and its mission, a desire to work to make things better, an understanding of the business context and the strategic drivers of the organization, respect for colleagues and willingness to help, the willingness to go beyond contract and keeping up-to-date with development in their field.<sup>81</sup>

It is important to mention that employees' commitment is interrelated with the marketing term of *brand loyalty*. A customer who is loyal to a brand is less likely to switch to another brand even if there are, for instance, products that offer a better value for the price. To this end, Chaudhuri & Holbrook distinguish between two dimensions of brand loyalty. A behavioural dimension, on the one hand, represents the customers' willingness to repurchase a certain brand. On the other hand, an attitudinal dimension represents the consumers' level of commitment towards the brand.<sup>82</sup> This can be related to the concept of Employer Branding where the behavioural element relates to organizational culture and the attitudinal element to organizational commitment. Whereas customers continue purchasing a certain product, even when there are other alternatives, brand loyal employees remain with the company, even when there are reasons, which might warrant them to consider another employer.<sup>83</sup>

Similar to brand loyalty, *brand equity* can be defined as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers”<sup>84</sup>. In other words brand equity indicates that a consumer does not switch between brands but is *loyal* towards one brand. In terms of Employer Branding brand equity refers to the willingness of employees to continue working for their current employer. It also encourages potential candidates to apply for a certain position. When it comes to the retention of highly skilled employees, employer brand equity can be equated with a high barrier of exit for employees. Backhaus & Tikoo describe the *employer brand equity* as a desired outcome of the Employer Branding activities. Hence, current employees and applicants might react differently to similar recruitment and retention efforts of organizations due to the underlying employer brand equity, which differs from company to company.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> De Chernatony (2001) *From brand vision vision to brand brand evaluation*, p. 5, in Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., pp. 19/20.

<sup>80</sup> Pierce et al., J.L. (2001) *Towards a theory of psychological ownership in organizations*, Academy of Management Review, Vol. 26, Issue 2, p. 305.

<sup>81</sup> Robinson, D. et al. (2004) *The Drivers of Employee Engagement*, Institute for Employment Studies, Report 405. Brighton, p. 8.

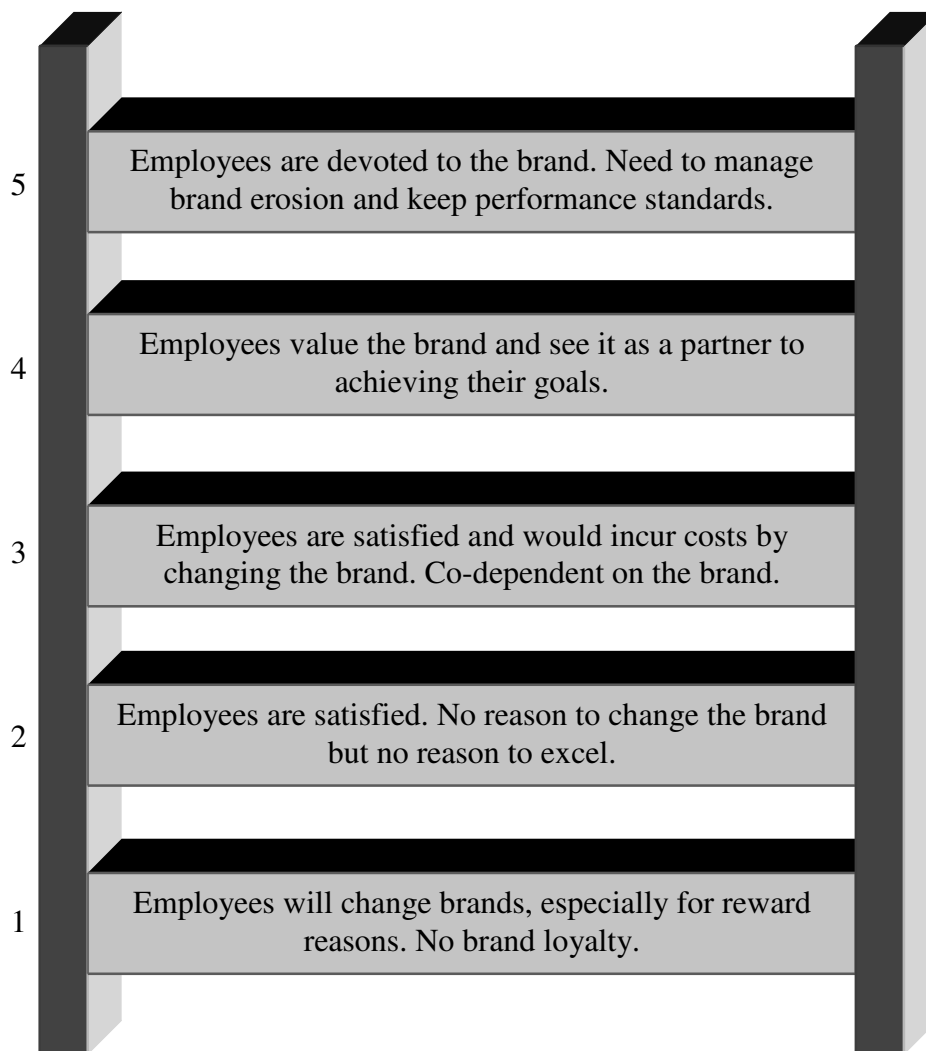
<sup>82</sup> Chaudhuri, A. & Holbrook, M.B. (2001) *The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: the role of brand loyalty*, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 65, p. 90.

<sup>83</sup> Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) *Conceptualizing and researching employer branding*, Career Development International, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 508.

<sup>84</sup> Aaker, D.A. (1991) *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalizing on the Value of a Brand Name*, in Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) *Conceptualizing and researching employer branding*, Career Development International, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 504.

<sup>85</sup> Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) *Conceptualizing and researching employer branding*, Career Development International, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 504.

Ambler describes employer brand commitment in five different stages, which can be presented in a form of a ladder:



**Figure 3.7:** Employer Brand Commitment Ladder<sup>86</sup>

Within area four and five high brand equity can be identified. Once loyalty of employees is achieved, a company has successfully managed its employer brand. In this context, it is important to consider that rung four and five on the ladder are interrelated with the identification theory as introduced in the beginning of this chapter. It can therefore be argued that employees, who can identify with their company, are more likely to establish brand equity towards their employer.

However, the achievements of the different stages cannot simply be influenced by benefits. Several studies outlined that pay and benefits is by far not the most important criteria in influencing an employee's experience towards their work.<sup>87</sup> Even though unfair salaries may

<sup>86</sup> Ambler, T. *Marketing and the bottom line* URL: [http://employerbrand.com/points\\_detail.asp?id=3](http://employerbrand.com/points_detail.asp?id=3) [2007-04-10].

<sup>87</sup> Dibble, S. (1999) *Keeping your valuable employees, Retention strategies for your organization's most important resource*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., p. 217. See also Butler & Waldroop (1999), *Job sculpting – The art of retaining the best people*, Harvard Business Review, p. 145.

demotivate people, Herzberg argues, that it does not mean fat pay checks will increase motivation. Only interesting, challenging work can do that.<sup>88</sup> Emotional engagement is currently a hot topic in the world of work, and the psychological benefits associated with employer brands are just as important as they are to branded products and services. People's emotional attachment to their employer tends to be driven by the value they derive from the total work experience, which is covered in the *next subchapter*.<sup>89</sup>

But before moving on to the next driver of Employer Branding, it is important to refer to the distinction between current and prospective employees, which was made in the beginning of this chapter. This differentiation might have already become clear for the reader, since the ladder above can only be applied on current employees of a company. In order to embrace the side of future employees, brand relationship from the field of marketing can enhance the understanding of how prospective employees can finally be placed on the brand equity ladder as displayed above.

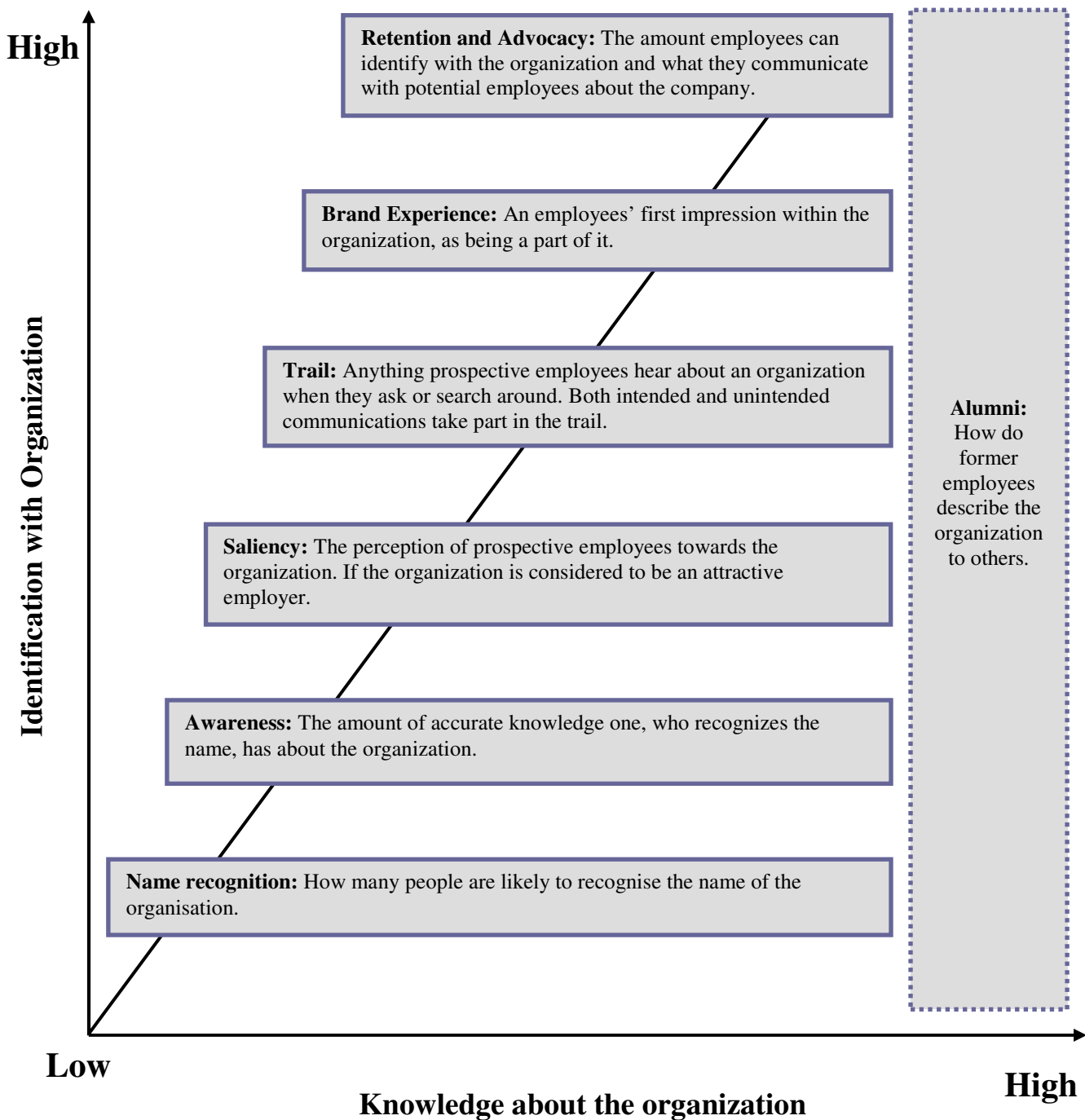
The standard brand relationship model consists out of the elements; basic awareness, progress through trial, repeat purchase, brand loyalty and finally active brand advocacy.<sup>90</sup> In order to make this model more salient for the area of Employer Branding, these elements need to be adapted and two new dimensions need to be added. Considering everything in a consistent picture, the following figure can be derived:

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<sup>88</sup> Herzberg, F. (2003) *One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?*, Harvard Business Review, January 2003, p. 86.

<sup>89</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 59.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.



**Figure 3.8:** The Process of Committed Employees.<sup>91</sup>

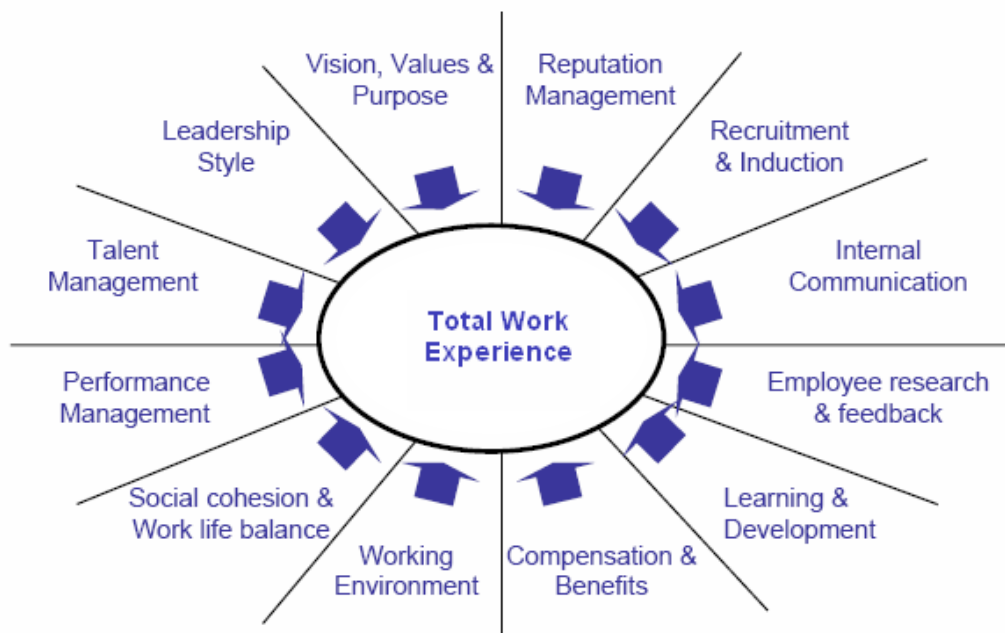
It can be outlined that from step six on, there is an overlap with the ladder displayed in *Figure 3.7*, which provides a more detailed overview. The final stage 'alumni' applies neither to current- nor to prospective employees, but to those that left the company. This is the first time this group is considered as an influencing factor as well. To this end, it is important that once the company realises it is not able to retain an employee, it still intends to let the individual

<sup>91</sup> Adapted from Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 107.

leave with the most positive attitude possible, since the former employee will on the market account for a certain amount of the unintended impulses as introduced before. The box of 'alumni' within the diagram is displayed bigger and in combination with a dotted line, due to the fact that it cannot simply be assumed that they could or still can identify to a high degree with the organization, unless they have a high amount of knowledge about the company. In this context, the lack of social identification might have been the reason that an employee left the organization. Therefore, the group of alumni's are only included to provide a more complete picture of building brand equity, and it is not a desired stage in the process of commitment.

### 3.2.7 Total Work Experience

In order to create the most accurate picture of what *Total Work Experience* for one company specifically contains, organizations could gather data from others (current-, new-, former employees and potential employees that refused a companies job offer) about certain characteristics that enhance the attractiveness of an organization towards employees and applicants with the aim to test a companies own assumptions.<sup>92</sup> However, a more general overview of different factors, which represent the content of the *Total Work Experience* approach and, consequently, influences the experience of the employer brand is illustrated below.



**Figure 3.9:** Total Work Experience<sup>93</sup>

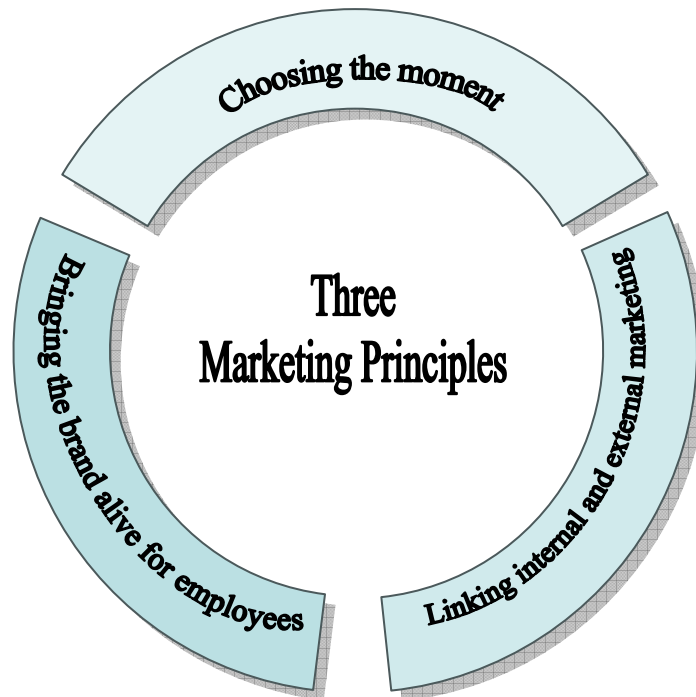
It is important to consider, that the size of each affecting factor in the figure does not indicate the impact, rather it clearly outlines how many different elements influence the employer brand. As mentioned earlier, the value of consistency in communication itself and between the message of a company and management actions becomes clear by taking a closer look at the figure. In order to achieve a consistent *Total Work Experience*, both organizational policy and practice need to reinforce each other.

<sup>92</sup> Dibble, S. (1999) *Keeping your valuable employees, Retention strategies for your organization's most important resource*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., p. 217.

<sup>93</sup> Mosley, R. (2004) *Employer Brand Leadership, A roadmap*, September 2004, p.12 URL: [http://www.web-dms.net/dms/uploaded\\_files/pib/pib.mdb/downloads/Employer%20Brand%20Roadmap.pdf](http://www.web-dms.net/dms/uploaded_files/pib/pib.mdb/downloads/Employer%20Brand%20Roadmap.pdf) [2007-04-03].

Relating back to the field of Marketing, in order to successfully sell a product or service, marketing should be in line with the characteristics of this product or service. Within the organizational boundaries a similar situation holds true.

Mitchell has pointed out *three marketing principles* for selling the brand inside. These elements give an appropriate overview about how to properly manage the employer brand, since it summarizes all current Employer Branding advice available.<sup>94</sup>



**Figure 3.10:** Three Marketing Principles<sup>95</sup>

Concerning the marketing principles that contribute to sell the brand inside, it becomes apparent that bringing the brand alive for employees as well as linking internal and external marketing has to some extent already been covered in the chapter before. Linking internal and external marketing, on the one hand, deals with consistency in the messages a company communicates and results in a credible message for the employees. On the other hand, bringing the brand alive is concerned with the identification of employees with the brand. In addition, this marketing principle will facilitate an emotional connection. Extensive participation, for instance, in the design and roll-out of Employer Branding messages makes use of this principle.

In contrary, choosing the right moment has not been mentioned earlier. It refers to moments of change within the organization that ultimately forms an opportunity to successfully build brand awareness within the firm. From the authors point of view the last point is rather concerned with the question when to work on the employer brand than how, but nevertheless is important to be considered since this affects the timing of management actions.

<sup>94</sup> MacKenzie and Glynn (2001), Govendik (2001), Ruch (2002) and Bergstrom et al. (2002) in Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., p. 281.

<sup>95</sup> Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., p. 281.



### 3.2.8 The Impact of Employer Branding on Employee Satisfaction and Organizational Profitability

The most impressive advertising campaigns, hiring living dolls to provide a marketing message, booking a whole hotel to improve and intensify the relationship with ones business partners or free coffee for customers, it all has its price. What counts, however, is the effect of it. Hence, the effect of the Employer Brand on a company's recruitment and retention strategy and overall business performance will now be discussed.

Being an employer of choice provides companies with a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining employees. Employers of choice have distinctive qualities that influence future employees, for instance, in a way that they accept a job offer and current employees to stay.<sup>96</sup>

Other studies do not only underline a clear contribution of the Employer Branding concept to the recruiting and retaining function of an organization, but also introduce a third aspect. The three benefits identified in a research conducted by Hewitt Associates<sup>97</sup>, The Conference Board<sup>98</sup> and The Economist<sup>99</sup> are generally cited as being enhancing *recruitment, retention and employee engagement and -commitment*. Similar studies, that have explored the impact of being an employer of choice, outline very similar benefits. While these improvements might not necessarily appear to have an impact on organizational performance, there is a broad range of evidence that these three factors can contribute significantly to overall business achievements. An effective employer brand will result in overall lower costs, since recruitment and retention expenses will drop. Engaged and committed employees tend to be more efficient in terms of organizational performance. Furthermore, the employer brand has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction, which finally, in combination with the other points, results in better financial results.<sup>100</sup>

These findings are acknowledged by other research, which besides the savings on recruitment costs and staff turnover costs adds savings on costs associated with sickness-absence.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that a strong employer brand results in both direct- and indirect financial advantages. Finally, other researchers argue that the employer brand furthermore provides a coherent framework for management to simplify and focus priorities.<sup>102</sup> Thus, the concept affects prospective employees, current employees, management and the organizations overall performance.

A case study of the US retailer Sears Roebuck in the late 90s confirmed the benefits outlined above. Apart from that it is one of the most known researches in this area, it includes all possible benefits related to the employer brand.

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<sup>96</sup> Dibble, S. (1999) *Keeping your valuable employees, Retention strategies for your organization's most important resource*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., p. 215.

<sup>97</sup> Hewitt Associates (2000) *Emerging Trends in Internal Branding: Survey Findings (2000/2001)*, in Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 69.

<sup>98</sup> Dell, D. & Ainspan, N. (2001) *Engaging Employees through your Brand*, in Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 69.

<sup>99</sup> The Economist (2003) *Employer Branding Survey*, in Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 69.

<sup>100</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 69.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>102</sup> Ambler, T. & Barrow, S. (1996) *The employer brand*, Journal of Brand Management, Vol. 4 No. 3, in Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., Preface, p. xvi.

What Sears discovered from its survey data from 800 stores was that employee satisfaction accounted for 60 per cent to 80 per cent of customer satisfaction, and that a five-unit increase in employee satisfaction correlated with a 1.3 unit increase in customer satisfaction, which in turn delivered a 0.5 per cent increase in revenue.<sup>103</sup> The link between employee engagement and customer satisfaction has since then been confirmed by a number of further major studies.<sup>104</sup>

A well-known example of this relationship is the service-profit chain in retailing, which is based on the propositions that a compelling place to invest in will derive from a compelling shopping experience, and a compelling shopping experience will, in turn, be driven by employees' experience of a compelling place to work.<sup>105</sup> The service-profit chain emerged first in a 1994 article in the Harvard Business Review written by Heskett et al., and has since then been modified. The key conclusions can be identified as:

- Employee satisfaction contributes to a valuable product or service and results in customer satisfaction.
- Customer satisfaction results into customer loyalty.
- Customer loyalty stimulates profit and growth.<sup>106</sup>

Even though there are a lot of different models, which consider the service-profit chain, some with stages others with interlinked relationships, a fairly simplified figure has been chosen at this stage, since it excludes all irrelevant dimensions. On the following page, this model is modified to fit better in the context of Employer Branding. In addition, the service-profit chain will be taken into consideration when it comes to the construction of the conceptual framework.

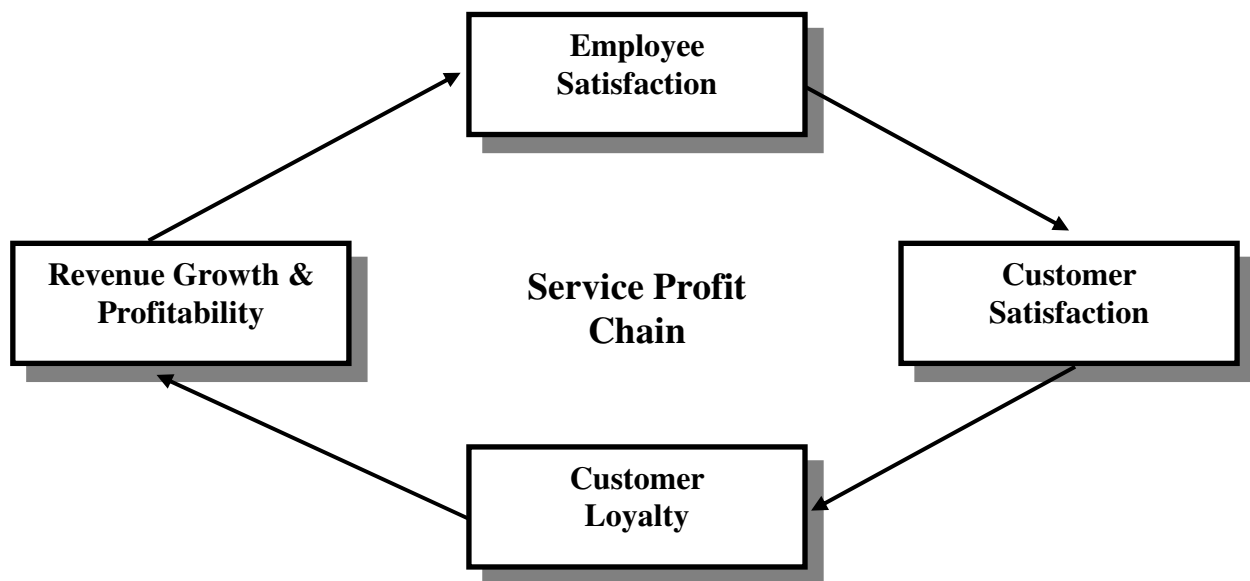
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<sup>103</sup> Rucci, A.J., Kirn, S.P. & Quinn, R.T (1998) *The Employee-Customer-Profit Chain at Sears*, Harvard Business Review, January-February 1998, p. 97.

<sup>104</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., pp. 71/72. See also Harter, J.K. et al., (2002) in Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., p. 28.

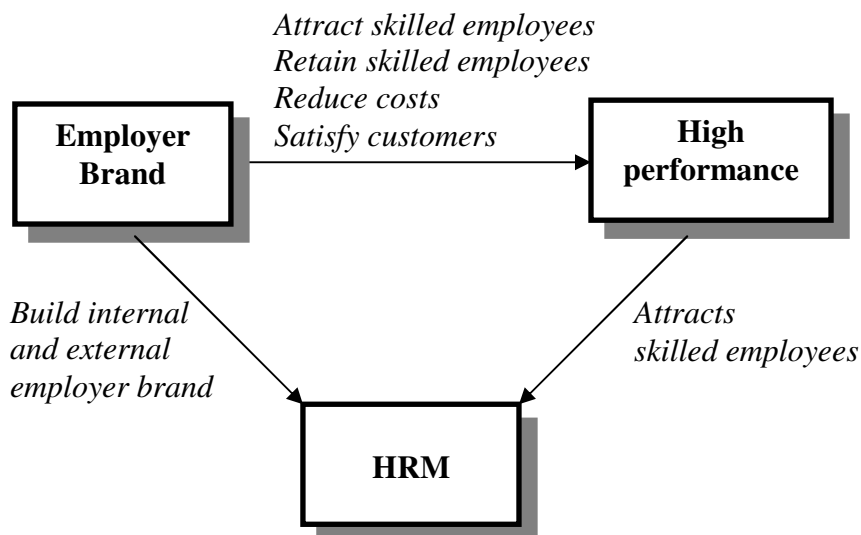
<sup>105</sup> Kaplan, R.S. & Norton, D.P. (2001) *The strategy-focused organization: how balanced scorecard companies thrive in the new business environment*, Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School, cop. 2001, p. 310.

<sup>106</sup> Heskett, J.L. et al., (1994) *Putting the service-profit chain to work*, Harvard Business Review, March-April 1994, p. 166.



**Figure 3.11:** Service-Profit Chain<sup>107</sup>

In combination with the findings that high levels of performance are likely to attract talented human resources in the increasing global competition for talent<sup>108</sup>, an interlinked relationship between causes and effects concerning Employer Branding can be discovered. These thoughts are visualized in the following figure.



**Figure 3.12:** Employer Brand Relationships

<sup>107</sup> Adapted from Heskett, J.L. et al., (1994) *Putting the service-profit chain to work*, Harvard Business Review, March-April 1994, p. 166.

<sup>108</sup> Florida, R.L. (2005) *The flight of the creative class: The new global competition for talent*, in Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., p. 16.

An essential part within this relationship framework is that current employees contribute to the construction of the employer brand. Existing research refers to this as “brand ambassadors”<sup>109</sup>. This acknowledges the potential powerful influence of employees on linking the internal and external interface. Employees are at the heart of delivering the promises of the brand, even though it focuses hereby mainly on the effect on the customers’ perceptions.<sup>110</sup> However, from the authors’ point of view the same implications towards prospective employees will be salient, not for the least reason that customers can be seen as future employees.

In the figure below the contribution of the employer brand towards profitability is summarized.



**Figure 3.13:** Employer Brand Chain<sup>111</sup>

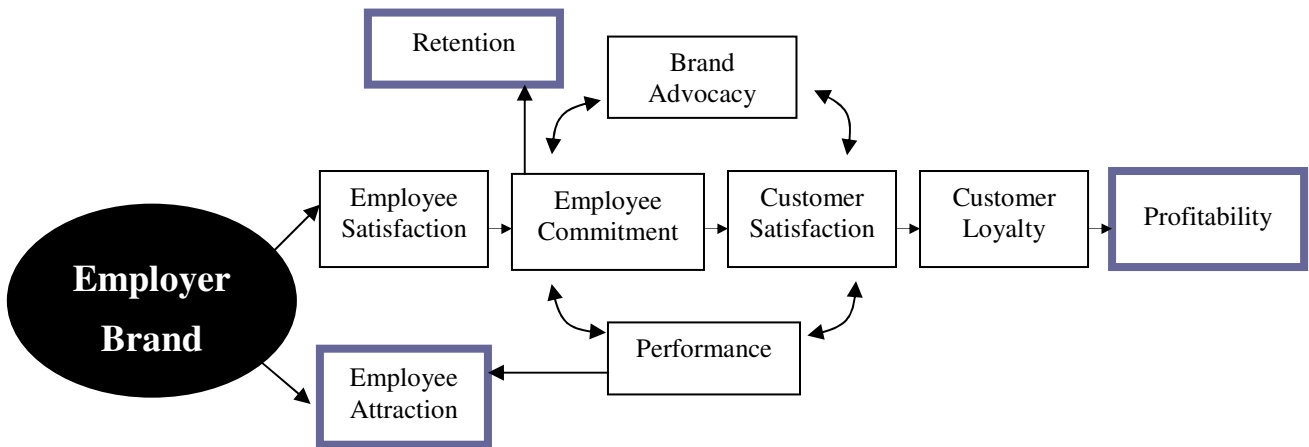
Before referring in more detail to the figure, it is important to mention that profitability does not necessarily need to be seen in terms of numbers, but can also be regarded as a *competitive advantage*. The employer brand attracts people and finally retains them, which results in a high degree of *employee commitment*. By possessing highly committed employees a company can improve its performance. As mentioned before, it is the employees who deliver the true value of a company and communicate satisfaction towards the organization and in the direction of customers. Last, employee commitment creates customer satisfaction. With satisfied customers the organizational performance increases consequently. Undoubtedly, if customers are satisfied they are likely to build up a relationship with the company and become loyal. It is the group of loyal customers who are responsible for the majority of organizational profits.

Each of the three models cover the inside approach, on the one hand, and the outside approach on the other hand. These can be combined for an even clearer understanding of the effects of the concept.

<sup>109</sup> Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., p. 57.

<sup>110</sup> Harris, F. & de Chernatony, L (2001) *Corporate branding and corporate brand performance*, European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 35, Issue 3/4, p. 453.

<sup>111</sup> Mosley, R. (2004) *Employer Brand Leadership, A roadmap*, September 2004, p.15 URL: [http://www.web-dms.net/dms/uploaded\\_files/pib/pib.mdb/downloads/Employer%20Brand%20Roadmap.pdf](http://www.web-dms.net/dms/uploaded_files/pib/pib.mdb/downloads/Employer%20Brand%20Roadmap.pdf) [2007-04-03].



**Figure 3.14:** Employer Brand Model

While concluding, it is important to consider that the model above is only concerned with the benefits implied by the employer brand. A complete framework, which embraces the identification dimensions of *Figure 3.5*, will be added in the *fourth chapter* of this thesis.

### 3.3 Talent-Relationship-Management

As already mentioned in the very beginning of this chapter, the last part of the theoretical framework focuses on the concept of TRM. Before going deeper into the theory, it is important to point out through which recruiting activities TRM is triggered by. After defining the widely used word of talents, *subchapter 3.3.3* introduces the concept with its different stages. Finally, the last part provides a classification of the different TRM elements in which the different instruments will be placed.

#### 3.3.1 The Point of Departure

In *subchapter 3.1.2* the different stages of recruitment has been described. It was outlined that the recruiting strategy can be classified into four different ways. Although the decision for one of the strategies depends on the individual recruiting situation, each decision has a different impact on costs and time. The measures of interest here are *cost-per-hire* and *time-to-hire*. The latter will certainly play a more important role when a position has to be filled as soon as possible. Thus, the organization might take a more active role in the recruitment process and, as for instance, through cooperation's with so called head hunters. In contrary, *cost-per-hire* is a more prevalent measure in HR departments, especially if someone takes into consideration that staffing expenses per hire can vary between 8.000 USD and 25.000 USD depending on the recruitment strategy chosen and the position which has to be filled.<sup>112</sup> The crucial factor of staffing expenses becomes even more obvious considering that many companies have been immersed the last years in downsizing and other cost-cuttings in the sector of HR.<sup>113</sup>

However, in recent years the constraints of *cost-per-hire* and *time-to-hire* has partly been overcome by technological development.<sup>114</sup> As already mentioned earlier, the Internet has enabled HR departments to attack simultaneously time, costs and reach. In contrast, companies facing an increasing amount of applications from which many of the resumes do not meet the minimum qualifications of the job. Nonetheless, sophisticated software tools, so

<sup>112</sup> Stone, J. (1999) *Cutting the cost per IT hire*, Health Management Technology, Vol. 20, Issue 10, p. 22.

<sup>113</sup> Gandossy, R.P. & Kao, T. (2004) *Talent wars: out of mind, out of practice*, Human Resource Planning, p. 15.

<sup>114</sup> Frank, F.D. & Taylor, C.R. (2004) *Talent Management: Trends that will shape the future*, Human Resource Planning, Vol. 27, Issue 1, p. 34.

called *applicant-tracking software*, assist the recruiter in daily work and has helped to partly overcome this problem.<sup>115</sup>

But no matter if a company acquires new personnel over the Internet or through traditional recruiting channels, the situation remains the same: only one individual out of a high number of qualified and skilled applicants will be considered for the job. During the recruitment phase, organizations make contact with a large number of talented applicants. Even though this process is cost and time intensive, the formal relationship and great effort to non-considered candidates becomes worthless after deciding for one individual. This is the *starting point* of the TRM concept. Based on the data gained through online applications, TRM intends to build up a long-term relationship with particular talented candidates in order to consider them for future vacancies.<sup>116</sup> The basic principle of this modern concept is that the effort to sustain a relationship with an existing pool of candidates is lower than the effort to start the recruiting process all over again.<sup>117</sup>

Before providing a deeper understanding of the TRM concept, it is necessary to refer to a greater extent to the term of talents since there is no consistent definition.

### 3.3.2 Definition of Talents

The word talent originally comes from the Latin term *talentum* which stands for gift. It is also used as an idiom for individuals with a special ability or skill. Someone can also be described as talented, when he or she “has the potential or factual ability to perform a skill better than most people”<sup>118</sup>. Even though the term ‘talent’ is prevalent in our everyday language use, there is no single consistent or concise definition when it comes to the field of business studies. In this context, Morton & Ashton outline that many organizations acknowledge that talent will change in definition when strategic priorities change.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, it could depend on the organizational context which qualifications, capabilities and skills are expected or required. Hence, the concise definition and perception of a talented applicant might differ from company to company. However, considering today’s fast changing business environments it is not only important to possess a certain market ability or skill, but also to use and increase this talent in the long-run.

Considering the inconsistency in the definition of the term talent and in order to enhance the understanding, throughout this thesis talents are defined as highly skilled and motivated individuals who possess certain abilities which enables them to perform better than other employees or applicants. Which skills and abilities someone has to possess might depend on the organizational context as mentioned before.

Before continuing with turning to the next section, it is important to provide a coherent pattern that shows the interrelation between the varying terms, which have been used

<sup>115</sup> Cappelli, P. (2001) *Making the best out of on-line recruiting*, Harvard Business Review, Vol. 79, Issue 3, p. 141.

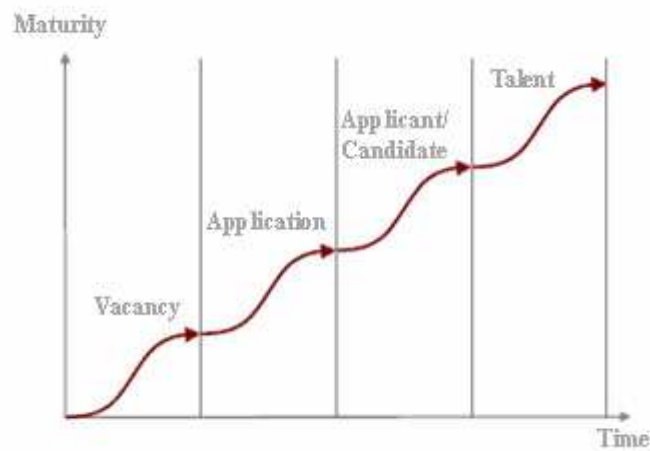
<sup>116</sup> Geke, M. & Eisele, D. (2003) *E-Recruiting und E-Relationship-Management – Aktuelle Best-Practice-Lösungen*, in Konrad, U. & Sarges, W. (editors): *E-Recruitment und E-Assessment*, Hogrefe-Verlag, Göttingen, Bern, Toronto, Seattle 2003, p. 252.

<sup>117</sup> Wild, B. & Heinz, A. (2003) *To „e“ or not to „e“*. *Der Einsatz von E-Recruitment und E-Assessments bei der Siemens AG*, in Konrad & Sarges (editors): *E-Recruitment und E-Assessment*, Hogrefe-Verlag, Göttingen, Bern, Toronto, Seattle 2003, p. 161.

<sup>118</sup> Wiktionary (2007) Talent URL: <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/talent> [2007-03-16].

<sup>119</sup> Morton, C. & Ashton, L. (2005) *Managing talent for competitive advantage*, HR Review, Vol. 4, Issue 5, p. 30.

throughout this study. The following figure illustrates the developing process from an open position or vacancy on to the orientation on talents.



**Figure 3.15:** Development Process of Talents<sup>120</sup>

The figure indicates three transformation stages in relation to the development of the recruiting process and constraints of time. It is clearly shown that an open position attracts a number of applications out of which an organization has to screen potential candidates which are eligible for the job. During course of time and in combination with a developing recruitment process, exceptionally skilled and talented applicants are identified.

However, talent does not need to come imperatively from outside the company. Without question, every organization has its key players on which the company relies heavily. Several studies have shown that top performers produce in value at least 100 to 150 per cent more than the average performer in a similar job.<sup>121</sup> But large compensations are not enough to retain high-performing personnel.<sup>122</sup> It is important to stay in a constant dialogue about development and promoting possibilities in order to keep top performers thrilled and motivated. This can be realized by efficient TRM, which can be extended to internal talents. The distinction between internal and external TRM will be discussed in the next subchapter.

### 3.3.3 The Concept of TRM

Earlier in this chapter, it was outlined that TRM intends to build up a long-term relationship with particular talented candidates in order to consider them for future vacancies. Thus, the strategic goal of TRM is to improve competitiveness of organizations on the labor market, by adopting a relationship management with high-potential candidates both within and outside the organization. In this context, TRM embraces elements and methods to build a long lasting relationship to talents in order to recruit them when new positions in an organization arise.<sup>123</sup>

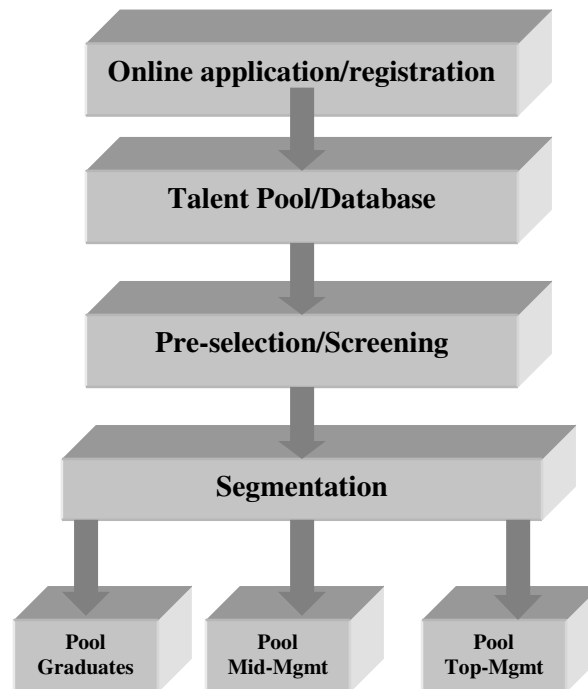
A simplified illustration of a basic TRM model is covered in the following figure.

<sup>120</sup> Adapted from Trost, A. (2006) *Möglichkeiten einer talentorientierten Recruitingstrategie*, p. 4. Working paper URL: [www.arminrost.de](http://www.arminrost.de) [2007-02-19].

<sup>121</sup> Gandossy, R.P. & Kao, T. (2004) *Talent wars: out of mind, out of practice*, Human Resource Planning, p. 18.

<sup>122</sup> Butler, T. & Waldroop, J. (1999) *Job sculpting – The art of retaining the best people*, Harvard Business Review, p. 151.

<sup>123</sup> Von Dewitz, A. (2006) *Die Gestaltung eines leistungsstarken Arbeitsverhältnisses durch "Talent-Relationship-Management". Ein praxisorientiertes Konzept für mittelständische Unternehmen*, Shaker, p. 240.



**Figure 3.16:** Basic TRM Model<sup>124</sup>

Unless there are different ways to apply, in this basic model, the TRM process begins with the online application. The job application can be either based on a certain vacancy, which is presumably posted on the corporate website, or due to one's own initiative. After sending the application, the candidate's data will be saved in a database. At this stage, a screening process will take place in order to identify the applicants with the highest potential. To this end, it is important to consider that the stage of pre-selection comes naturally in the recruiting process no matter if an organization applies TRM or not. Candidates, who meet the high requirements but have not been placed, will be considered for so called *talent pools*, which can be segmented by different criteria as exemplified in the figure above. In this context, talent pools can be seen as a relevant fundament of TRM. One of the main advantages is that profiles of respective candidates can be easily updated. Furthermore, talent pools enable the recruiter to search for individuals with specific competences or characteristics, who match the company's definition of talent.<sup>125</sup>

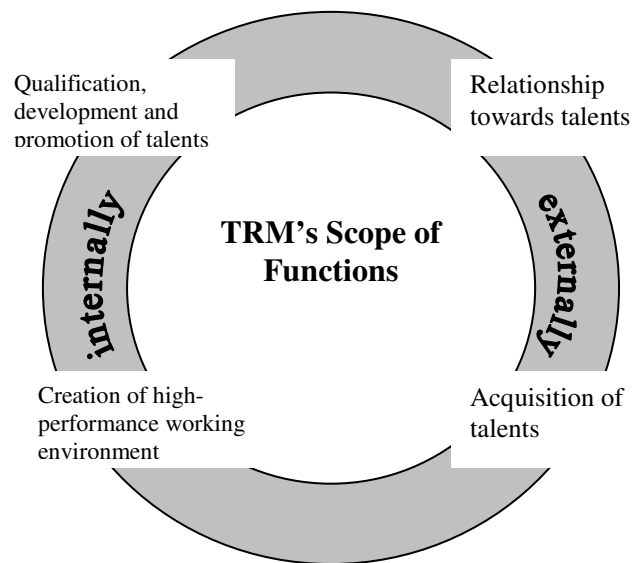
So far, it has been outlined that the main function of TRM can be seen in building a relationship with potential candidates in order to consider them for future vacancies. However, it was mentioned earlier that there is a distinction between internal and external talents. Thus, the scope of functions of the TRM concept can be extended to the qualification, development and promotion of talents as well as to the establishment of a high-performance working environment.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Adapted from Richter, J. & Stähler, G. (2003) *Talente im Visier - Vom traditionellen Recruitment zum Talent Relationship Management*, in Peitz & Pfeiffer (editors), *Personalauswahl international*, p. 170.

<sup>125</sup> Von Dewitz, A. (2006) *Die Gestaltung eines leistungsstarken Arbeitsverhältnisses durch "Talent-Relationship-Management"*. Ein praxisorientiertes Konzept für mittelständische Unternehmen, Shaker, p. 250.

<sup>126</sup> Von Dewitz, A. (2006) *Die Gestaltung eines leistungsstarken Arbeitsverhältnisses durch "Talent-Relationship-Management"*. Ein praxisorientiertes Konzept für mittelständische Unternehmen, Shaker, p. 243.





**Figure 3.17:** Scope of Functions within TRM<sup>127</sup>

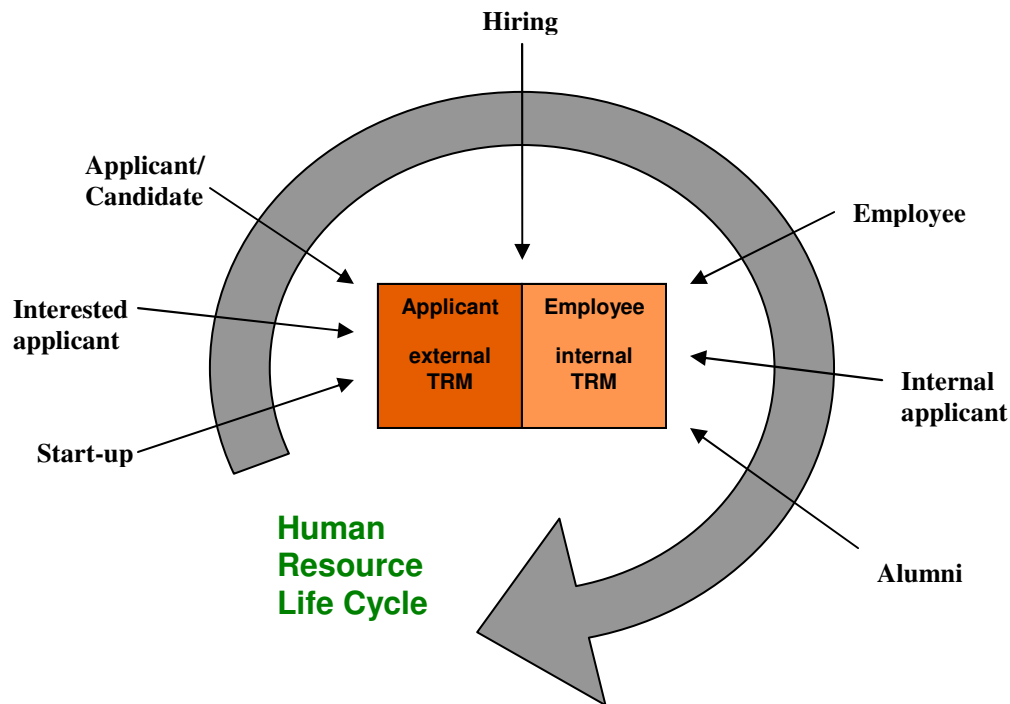
As shown in the drawing, the scope of functions of the TRM concepts can be distinguished between a focus on internal and external talents. Whereas the purpose of the latter one has already been discussed, the former one is concerned with retaining high-performing employees within the organization. In this context, TRM intends to show career paths to talented staff inside the organization as well as to facilitate career aspirations to the largest extent possible.<sup>128</sup>

The fact that strategic talent retention is a challenging issue is outlined by Butler & Waldroop, who state that “hiring good people is tough but keeping them can be even tougher”<sup>129</sup>. Undoubtedly, there are a lot of stories about highly skilled employees who joined the company, adding a lot of value for a couple of years and then departed unexpectedly. By building an internal relationship with highly skilled employees within an organization, TRM can contribute positively to the retention of talented personnel.

<sup>127</sup> Adapted from Von Dewitz, A. (2006) *Die Gestaltung eines leistungsstarken Arbeitsverhältnisses durch "Talent-Relationship-Management". Ein praxisorientiertes Konzept für mittelständische Unternehmen*, Shaker, p. 243.

<sup>128</sup> Schweyer, A. (2004) *Talent Management Systems*, Toronto: Wiley, Cop. 2004, p. 147.

<sup>129</sup> Butler, T. & Waldroop, J. (1999) *Job sculpting – The art of retaining the best people*, Harvard Business Review, p. 145.



**Figure 3.18:** TRM and HR Life Cycle<sup>130</sup>

The figure above relates the TRM concept with the HR life cycle. Obviously external TRM is concerned with the first half of the life cycle, e.g. from the attraction to the hiring of new personnel. In contrary, internal TRM intends to build a relationship with high-performing employees from their employment until they drop out of the organization.

The purpose of the next section is to give an insight into the different elements of a TRM system, which will also serve as a base for the construction of the conceptual framework. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that from now when referring to TRM it focuses on the external side of the approach and, thus, on the group of applicants since this is the group of interest when it comes to the empirical part of the thesis.

### 3.3.4 Elements of a TRM System

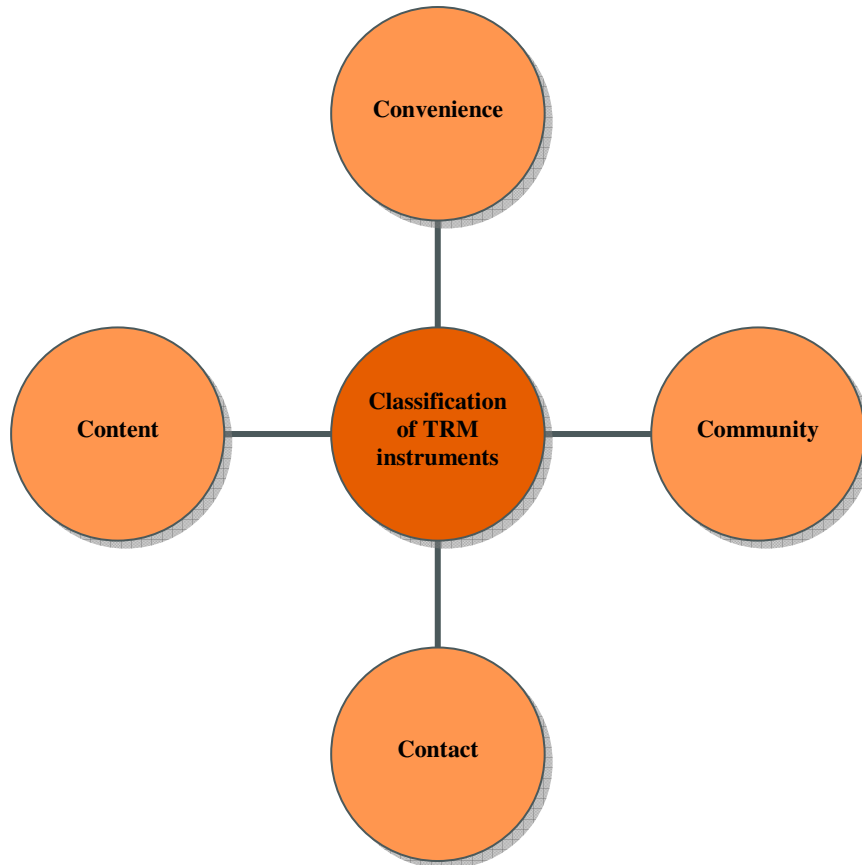
This section, which puts an end to the theoretical framework, is concerned with the different elements which fill the content of the TRM concept. However, it is important to consider that there is no mutual consent about which instruments should be comprised in the TRM approach. Most organizations, which apply the TRM concept, have an own set of tools, which they perceive as most suitable and effective. Hence, it will depend on the organizational context which elements will be used and to which extent.<sup>131</sup> Despite of the fact that it is in particular the organizational context, which determines the use of TRM instruments, it needs to be outlined that it should be of great interest for a company to know how certain elements are perceived as well as which are prioritized among the applicants. This is the point of departure for the applied quantitative study in this master thesis.

Instead of presenting an incoherent list of various TRM elements, it is important to first classify the instruments accordingly. In this master thesis, the classification of Jäger is

<sup>130</sup> Adapted from Jäger, W. (2004) *Talente finden und binden*, Personal No. 2, 2004, p. 12.

<sup>131</sup> Von Dewitz, A. (2006) *Die Gestaltung eines leistungsstarken Arbeitsverhältnisses durch "Talent-Relationship-Management". Ein praxisorientiertes Konzept für mittelständische Unternehmen*, Shaker, p. 249.

applied, who suggests to divide the different relationship instruments into four groups.<sup>132</sup> The decision to classify the instruments into four groups was made regarding the following quantitative study. By taking the aim of the research into consideration, which is to gather data about students' perception of different TRM instruments, it is necessary to classify the respective elements prior to their ranking in order to enhance the level of coherence.



**Figure 3.19:** Classification of TRM Instruments

According to Jäger, the TRM instruments should be classified into the groups of *convenience*, *content*, *community* and *contact*. Based on this classification, a *four-field matrix* can be derived which consist out of nineteen different 'relationship tools', which can be found throughout the literature.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Jäger, W. (2004) *Talente finden und binden*, Personal No. 2, 2004, p. 15.

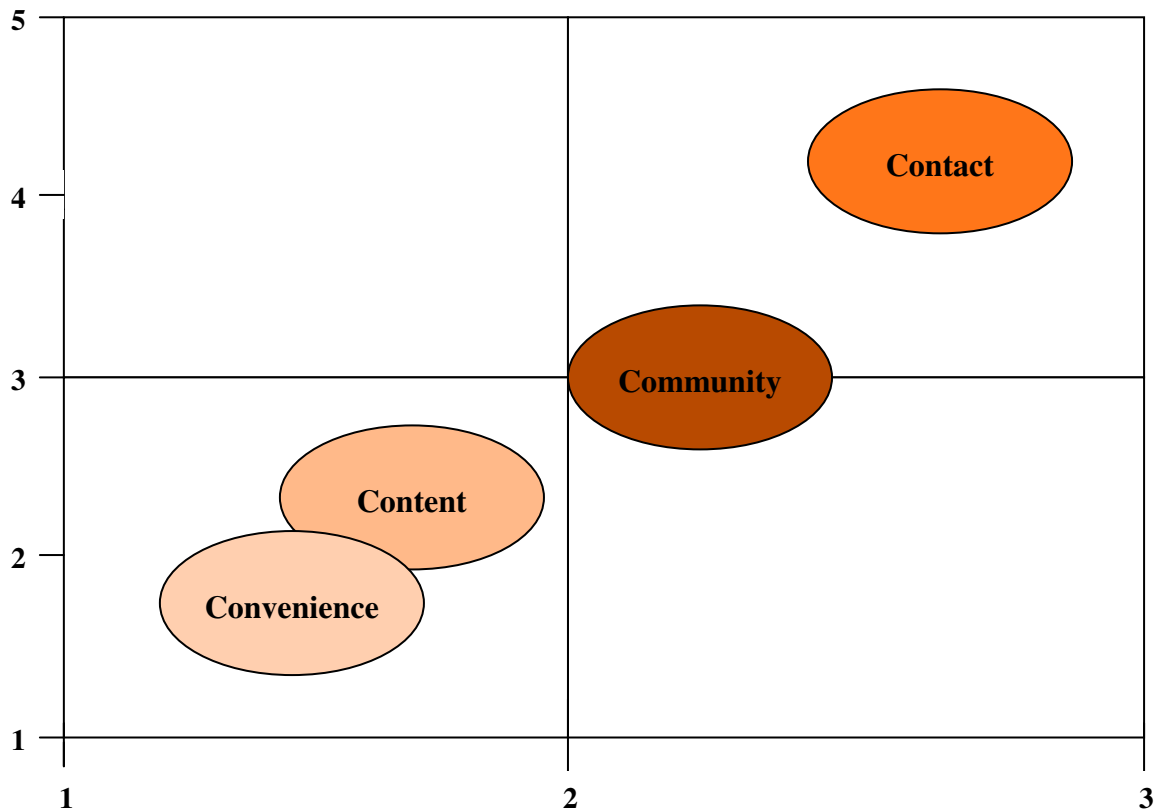
<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 15, Trost, A. (2006) *Talent Management – Kerndisziplinen, Gestaltungsrahmen und strategischer Beitrag zum Unternehmenserfolg*, p. 23, Working paper URL: [www.armintrost.de](http://www.armintrost.de) [2007-02-19], Von Dewitz, A. (2006) *Die Gestaltung eines leistungsstarken Arbeitsverhältnisses durch "Talent-Relationship-Management". Ein praxisorientiertes Konzept für mittelständische Unternehmen*, Shaker, pp. 330-345.

	Content	Convenience	
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Periodical services as birthday or Christmas (e-)cards/emails</li> <li>× Newsletters</li> <li>× Access to exclusive information (organizational intranet, subscription for free search engines)</li> <li>× Information about open job positions</li> <li>× Company magazines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Personalized websites which offer individual tools (e.g. free text messages as a function on the organizational homepage)</li> <li>× Career advice (self-assessment, assistance with Curriculum Vitae)</li> </ul>	Convenience
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Mentoring (sustained relationship between experienced mentor and talent)</li> <li>× Visit to company</li> <li>× Telephone contact</li> <li>× Internship positions exclusively for individuals in talent pool</li> <li>× Talent pool meetings/-parties</li> <li>× Possibility to write thesis on commission within the organization</li> <li>× Access to sponsored company events (culture, sports, etc.)</li> <li>× Invitation to company lectures/workshops/professional conventions</li> <li>× Scholarships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Community functions (discussion forum, career chats with HR department)</li> <li>× Interaction functions (competitions, case studies, surveys)</li> <li>× 'Giveaways' (advertising gifts)</li> </ul>	Community
	Contact	Community	

**Figure 3.20:** Classified TRM Instruments

The four-field matrix presents a complete list of instruments which can be used within the TRM approach. Their classification does not only enhance the understanding, but will also be of importance when it comes to the conceptual framework and empirical study in the next chapters.

As already mentioned, the 'set of tools' which can be applied by an organization will differ from company to company. In this context, it is a question of the organizations' prioritization across talents. In other words, there might be a difference between the level of potential between certain candidates as well as a varying probability that an individual will enter the company in the near future. The following instrument portfolio is derived from the authors' understanding of the stated constraints between priority of candidate and intensity of the instruments.

**Intensity of instrument****Figure 3.21:** Portfolio of Instruments**Priority of candidate**

The figure highlights contact elements as the most intensive instrument, which is applied on candidates with a high priority level. Hence, instruments, which are grouped in this cluster, require a higher amount of organizational resources in terms of time and money. Without question, these elements will play an important role in times with a high demand on talented employees. In contrary, instruments which can be characterized by their convenience, for instance, are characterized by their low intensity and can be used for rather passive candidates in the talent pool. As already mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, a company takes a rather passive position in situations, where a low demand of labor or a high amount of applications for a vacancy is prevalent.

At the end of this section, it is important to highlight one main obstacle the TRM concept has to overcome. If someone recalls the purpose of TRM, namely to build up a long-term relationship with particular talented candidates, the problem might already have become evident. Even though highly skilled applicants got rejected first and an organization decides to keep contact, there is a potential risk that the person will already be working when an open position appears.<sup>134</sup> However, it was mentioned in the introduction chapter that there is a growing propensity to switch jobs more often than, for instance, a decade ago. Therefore, it is not only a task, but also a challenge to find the right composition of TRM instruments in order to keep the talented candidate interested in the idea of working for the particular organization.

<sup>134</sup> Schweyer, A. (2004) *Talent Management Systems*, Toronto: Wiley, Cop. 2004, p. 148.

#### 4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

*In last chapter it was pointed out that the conceptual framework, which is based on the theoretical concepts, will now be developed to guide the following research process. In the analysis part of this thesis, the different dimensions of the framework will then be confirmed or rejected, depending on the gained results of the empirical study. Where applicable, certain parts in combination with its interrelations might be changed with the intention to not only construct the most valid representation of the studied concepts, but also to successfully answer the research question.*

##### 4.1 Development of the Conceptual Framework

The process of building a conceptual framework can be seen as setting out boxes, naming them, and getting more clear about their interrelations.<sup>135</sup> The different theories in the previous chapter can, in this context, be associated with 'boxes' which, when put in relation to each other, form a conceptual framework. Another perspective might be referred to as viewing a conceptual framework as a map of theories and issues relating to the research topic.<sup>136</sup> In this study, the main reason for constructing a conceptual framework can be found in the need of merging different theories and figures from two distinct concepts into one consistent model, which provides guidance through the research process.

Someone might remember that in the course of the Employer Branding part, *two figures* have been presented, which gave an overview about different theories and their relation to each other. The first one (*Figure 3.6*), on the one hand, indicates the development process from an organizational identity towards a person's identity. The process can also be described as external Employer Branding, since it is concerned with the identification of (external) individuals with the employer brand and organizational identity. On the other hand, the second figure (*Figure 3.15*), which was derived in the end of *chapter 3.2*, relates to the positive impact of the employer brand on the organizational performance. In contrary to the first model, this figure stands for a rather internal perspective on Employer Branding. By merging both models together, a more complete picture of the concept with its interrelations can be evoked.

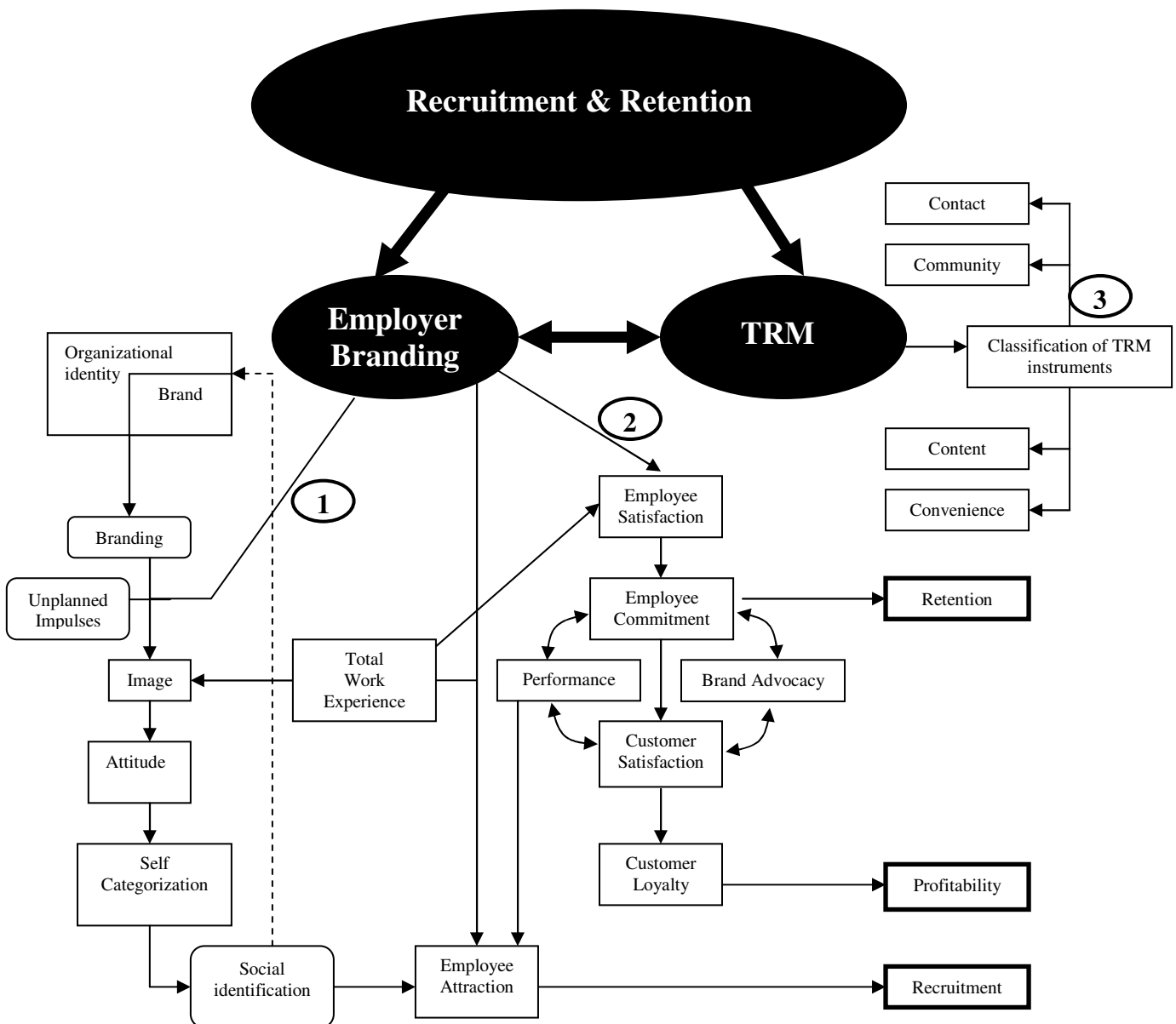
In addition, the developed conceptual framework should also embrace the second focus within this study. Thus, the different TRM instruments, which have been presented in the previous chapter, are taken into consideration. But instead of indicating each instrument individually with regards to a rather unstructured outcome, the aim is to refer to the classified terms.

The following model links internal and external Employer Branding with the concept of TRM:

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<sup>135</sup> Miles, M.B. & Huberman, M.A. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: an expanded sourcebook*, Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications, 2nd ed., p. 18.

<sup>136</sup> Leshem, S. & Trafford, V. (2007) *Overlooking the Conceptual Framework*, Innovations in Education and Teaching International, Vol. 44, No. 1, p. 99.



**Figure 4.1:** Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework provides an overview of the dimensions of interest within this master thesis. Even though the model might look rather complicated at a first glance, it should be clear that it is only a connection of respective theories and figures of the previous chapter.

The three oval circles indicate a triangulation between the HR functions of recruitment and retention and the modern concepts of Employer Branding and TRM. During the last chapter it was outlined how these approaches interrelate and reinforce each other. By starting on the left hand side of the model, the external Employer Branding process is covered. In contrary to the figure provided in the end of *section 3.2.3*, it should become clear that it is not only unplanned impulses, which in combination with the means of branding, evoke a certain image, but that there is also a direct impact from the employer brand. From the authors' opinion it should be the aim of the organizational Employer Branding concept to balance such unplanned impulses. This interrelation is indicated by the encircled *number one*. Another important link can be seen in the connection between an individual's social identification and the

organizational identity implied by the dashed arrow. Social identification takes place if someone's self-concept is in line with the identity of the organization. A positive outcome of this process from the perspective of a company is employee attraction, which in the optimal case, leads to the recruitment of potential employees. A rather centralized position takes the box *Total Work Experience* surrounded by different elements, which influence the perception of the employer brand. This box refers to the initiatives and benefits a company offers and does not only have a direct impact on the organizational image perceived by, for instance, applicants, but also on the level of satisfaction among employees.

This leads to the second part of the conceptual framework, indicated by number two in the model. Since the last part of the Employer Branding chapter has already described the different steps in detail, it is not necessary to refer to each dimension again. What should be outlined at this stage are the two outcomes of the internal employer brand, namely the *retention of employees* as well as an *increased profitability*. Without question, committed employees will, under normal circumstances, hardly consider to leave the company. In parallel, the service profit chain in the last chapter indicated how customer loyalty is linked with revenue growth and profitability.

By moving to the upper right corner, encircled with *number three*, the instruments of TRM are classified into four categories. The classification serves as an essential base for the quantitative study, which has the aim to gain a deeper insight in the perception and prioritization of the different TRM elements among students and graduates. The results should not only answer the research question successfully, but also provide some indication to companies on how the organizational TRM approach should be aligned. Without question, successful and appealing TRM not only has a positive impact on the employer brand and vice versa, but should also be part of the total work experience in a company. This shows an evident link between the two concepts.

#### **4.2 The Design of Interview Questions and its Relation to the Conceptual Framework**

Even though it is the purpose of the *next chapter* to discuss the practical methods of the qualitative study, it is crucial to point out in which way the respective questions of the interview guide are linked to the conceptual framework with its different dimensions in order to gain a better understanding of how possible answers effect the conceptual framework in general and its specific components. The following section refers to the interview questions, which can be found in *Appendix A*.

##### **4.2.1 Scrutinizing Internal Employer Branding**

**Question # 1:** What does your organization value more and why?

- customer satisfaction or
- employee satisfaction

Question 1 intends to assess the prioritization of the interviewed companies in terms of customer- and employee satisfaction. The analysis of the received answers should give an indication of how the internal Employer Branding process is started, e.g. *does customer satisfaction result out of employee satisfaction or vice versa?*



**Question # 2:** How do you achieve loyalty among your employees?

So far it should have become apparent that employee commitment plays an important role within the Employer Branding concept. This question should provide further understanding of what the concept needs to contain to achieve commitment among employees.

**Question # 3:** To which extent do you believe that employee commitment is interrelated with organizational performance and which role does Employer Branding play in this context?

The third question intends to find out the position of performance within Employer Branding and its linkage to employee commitment. Furthermore, it should be scrutinized if the positive relation between performance and employee attraction can be confirmed.

**Question # 4:** Do you see your employees in a function of Brand Ambassadors? How do you assure that your employees live the company's employer brand?

The thought behind this question is to find out to which extent employees can be seen as brand ambassadors and, thus, how brand advocacy arises.

**Question # 5:** How does your company prevent key employees to leave the company by means of Employer Branding?

This question should highlight if there is any interrelation between employee commitment and retention. Even though it was already mentioned that there is a positive correlation between loyalty and employee retention, it is interesting to get a further understanding of which role Employer Branding plays in this context.

#### 4.2.2 Scrutinizing External Employer Branding

**Question # 6:** How does the company assure that there is a balance between the internal and external employer brand?

The sixth question refers not directly to the conceptual framework, but rather to the element of consistency or brand essence, which was covered in *section 3.2.4*. Here, it is interesting to get a deeper insight in how organizations live up to its promises and obligations. The question aims to get an insight into whether companies remain consistent in what they communicate once a hired employee becomes part of the organization, and, thus, relates back to internal Employer Branding.

**Question # 7:** How are current employees/future employees describing your company? How should both describe your company?

The thought behind this question is to get a deeper understanding of what the organizations want to be recognized for and how this differs from the perception of current and prospective employees, e.g. *how is the current and the corporate image synchronized?*

**Question # 8:** Which different elements does your Employer Brand(ing) contain? How do those affect your image?

This question mainly refers to the Total Work Experience and its elements. Here, the intention is to find out which role the comprised instruments are playing. In addition, the aim is to find out if there is a clear link towards a (positive) employer image and employee satisfaction.

**Question # 9:** Unplanned impulses are triggered by the business environment and can influence the applicants' and employees' perception of the company. Does the employer brand play a role in balancing such unplanned impulses?

Here, it is not only questioned which role unplanned impulses play in balancing unplanned incidents, but also how these are counterbalanced by means of Employer Branding.

**Question # 10:** How do you assure that the 'most wanted' candidates can identify with your employer brand?

The last question intends to obtain a further understanding of how companies assure that individuals can identify with its employer brand and how the organizations consequently change its employer brand. In addition, it should be scrutinized to which extent the dashed arrow in the conceptual framework holds true.

## 5. PRACTICAL METHODS

*The purpose of this chapter is to provide a presentation of the practical methods used within this master thesis. Since both quantitative and qualitative research approaches are applied, this chapter is divided into two different parts. The first section is concerned with describing the methods used to collect empirical data by means of a web-based questionnaire. For this reason, the sample procedure and the access to respondents are discussed. In addition, it is important to refer to potential biases and the credibility of the data.*

*In contrary, the aim of the second part is to describe the practical methods of the qualitative approach used in this study. Therefore, choice of companies, access and interview approach are clarified. In parallel to the first part, this section ends with a discussion about credibility criteria and potential biases.*

### 5.1 Data Collection of Quantitative Research Approach

#### 5.1.1 Sampling Procedure

The largest part of discussions concerning sampling comes from researchers who use a quantitative research approach throughout their study. Their major aim is to get a representative sample from a much larger population in order to study the smaller sample not only appropriately, but also to provide accurate generalizations about the larger population.<sup>137</sup> To this end, Ghauri & Grønhaug describe sampling as a procedure that saves time and money by examining a sample instead of the whole population.<sup>138</sup>

Sampling techniques can be divided into two broad categories. Probability samples, on the one hand, enable researchers to collect data in which each unit has a known, non-zero and equal chance of being included in the sample. Furthermore, this procedure allows for assessment of the amount of sampling-error and the extent to which the sample is representative of the population.<sup>139</sup> On the other hand, non-probability samples are based on subjective judgements. In other words, the sample size is rarely determined in advance and the knowledge about the group from which the sample is taken is limited.<sup>140</sup>

The different samples taken in this thesis can be considered as non-probability judgement samples. This type of samples allows the researcher to use judgement to select cases or samples that answer the research question and meet the objective of the study in the best way.<sup>141</sup> In our opinion, a judgement sample is especially useful in the context of this study, since the field of TRM is rather unexplored. As mentioned in the end of the *third chapter*, there is no mutual consent about the prioritization of different TRM instruments among students and graduates. Therefore, we are more interested in sampling a representative group, which can offer an answer to the stated research question. To this end, the research question should be answered from the perspective of graduates and students, as already mentioned earlier, who are likely to already have got in contact with certain TRM instruments. It is within this group of applicants who are the ‘most wanted’ on the labour market and, consequently, where the *battle for talents* is most prevalent. Nonetheless, it is important to consider that although someone has never experienced any TRM activity, it is of great interest for this study to get a deeper insight into their perception and ranking of the different

<sup>137</sup> Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 208.

<sup>138</sup> Ghauri, P. & Grønhaug, K. (2002) *Research Methods in Business Studies*, Prentice Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 112.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., pp. 113/114.

<sup>140</sup> Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 209.

See also Saunders, M. et al. (2000) *Research Methods for Business Students*, p. 170.

<sup>141</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2000) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall, p. 174.

instruments, since they are part of a target group which will be approached by recruiting companies in the near future.

Before turning to the next section, it is important to mention two downsides, which come along with non-probability samples. First, the sampling error can not be assessed, resulting in a limitation of the precision of our estimates. Secondly, non-probability sampling and in particular judgement samples involve personal judgement in the selection process.<sup>142</sup> Hence, there is a risk that the study becomes biased by the role of the researcher. In this context, *section 5.1.4* will elaborate more extensively on the risk of potential biases.

### **Description of Samples**

Besides the requirement of being a student or recent graduate, it was also of interest to include students from other countries into the study, who might have a different perception of TRM and its instruments. Thanks to the high level of internationalization among Master Students at the Umeå School of Business (USB), it was possible to define a target population which would not only enter the application process in the near future, but was also characterized by a high level of diversification in terms of nationality. To this end, the *first sample* (sample M) included all business students at the USB who study on the master level, regardless of age and sex, at the time the study was conducted.<sup>143</sup>

The *second sample* (sample IBP) consisted out of students who still study or have studied in the International Business Program (IBP) at the USB. The reason why this group of students was included in the study is due to the fact that a two months internship period is part of the program. As it was outlined in the theoretical framework, TRM also intends to build a relationship with individuals who have been working in a company for a temporary period, for instance, as an intern. Thus, the consideration of IBP students came naturally throughout the study, since their attitude towards and prioritization of different TRM instruments could be valuable and insightful, taking into account that some of them were likely to still be in contact with their previous employer. However, it is important to mention that only students who have finished their internship between 2005 and today have been approached in order to assure the reliability of the results, taking the topicality of the TRM concept into consideration. Furthermore, there was a high risk that students who finished their internship before 2005 were not using their student E-Mail accounts any longer, which would have had a negative impact on the response rate.

It was mentioned initially that it was of interest to include students from other countries in the study. Considering that the authors of this thesis are from Germany and The Netherlands, it was without question that existing contacts from former studies could be beneficial. To this end, the *third sample* (sample N) embraced students, who are part of the Dutch scholarship program 'VSB'. All students within this program are currently studying at different universities all over the world. Most interestingly, they originate from varying study backgrounds, which allowed a wider perspective of the survey results.

The *fourth sample* (sample G) consisted out of a group of German Alumni's, which were part of the European scholarship program 'Leonardo Da Vinci'. The purpose of this program is to support students financially while they do their internship abroad. In parallel, to the third sample the group is characterized by different study backgrounds. Both German and Dutch scholarship programs have in common that the acceptance into the program is restricted to

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<sup>142</sup> Churchill, G.A. & Iacobucci, D. (2005) *Marketing Research*, Mason, Ohio: Thomson/South-Western, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 326.

<sup>143</sup> For a more detailed description of the respective samples see Figure A1d in Appendix A.

individuals with a sound CV, outstanding study results and extracurricular activities. Thus, it can be assumed that admitted students will belong to the preferred group of applicants, so called *high potentials*, which will be a target of recruiting companies in the near future.

### **Access to Samples and Distribution of Invitation**

In order to access the first and the second sample, respectively *sample M* and *sample IBP*, the program coordinators at USBE were contacted in order to receive a complete E-Mail list of students studying in both programs. In case of the IBP students, a list of students, who studied in the program from 2000 onwards, was provided. As mentioned earlier, only students who finished their internship after 2005 have been included in the sample. In case of *sample M*, the program coordinator redirected us to the student office, which provided us with the E-Mail addresses of those students, who are currently studying in the Master Program. The access to *sample N* was eased due to the fact that one of the authors of this thesis is himself part of the Dutch scholarship program and, thus, possessed a list of all program members. One big advantage of the E-Mail list, which was available for *sample M*, *IBP* and *N*, was that the E-Mail addresses could be directly transferred into the used survey program. This enabled us to track the level of responses individually in the course of the study and to approach those students, who have not responded, or not completely finished the questionnaire, prior to the deadline of the survey. Consequently, a follow up E-Mail was sent to these groups, with a second invitation to participate in the study.

In case of *sample G*, the German program coordinator was contacted and asked if it would be possible to gain access to the E-Mail addresses of Alumni's, who attended the program in the recent years. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to the strict protection of privacy data in Germany. Instead, the coordinator agreed on to act as a gatekeeper and to put the invitation E-Mail forward. However, it was only possible to contact the group of Alumni's once. Without question, it can be assumed that this had a negative impact on the response rate, since no reminder E-Mail could be sent out.

At this point it is important to mention that all individuals in the four samples were contacted through an E-Mail invitation. The cover letter was seen as a main chance to motivate the respondent to complete the questionnaire. Apart from, for example, a general introduction and an explanation of the study's purpose, an http-link was included in the cover letter which directed the participants directly to the online-survey.<sup>144</sup> In order to maximise the response rate confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Furthermore, an additional http-link was included in the end of the invitation letter through which students, who did not want to participate in the study, could decline their participation. Therefore, the follow up E-Mail could be targeted more precisely, since students who declined their participation could be excluded.

### **5.1.2 Construction and Layout of Questionnaire**

The decision for a web-based survey in the form of a self-administered questionnaire was taken early in the thesis process. This can be motivated by the fact that the distribution of this type of surveys is cost efficient and can be sent to a wide geographical area, which is an advantage considering the inclusion of German and Dutch students in the sample, of which the latter are currently studying at universities abroad. In addition, a web-based survey is quicker to administer and to analyze and there is a high level of convenience for respondents,

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<sup>144</sup> See Appendix A for the respective cover letter.

since the questionnaire can be accessed independently of time and location.<sup>145</sup> Most importantly, the use of a web-based questionnaire made the coding, the process of converting answers to questions into numbers, of each question obsolete, which saved a tremendous amount of time. In contrast, the participation in an online-based survey is limited to those who have access to the Internet.<sup>146</sup> However, since the respondents in all of the four samples belong to the age group of Internet users, which show the highest affinity, it can be assumed that access to the Internet is given, if at home or in the university data lab.<sup>147</sup>

When it comes to the construction and layout of a questionnaire, there are a number of principles which are essential to bear in mind. Apart from numerous advices which can be found in methodology textbooks, it is important to develop a flexible, appropriate and attractive survey. This can be achieved by providing a clear introduction to the research area as well as a clear presentation in form of the layout. Furthermore, questions should be in a simple and concise language and it should be ensured that every respondent understands each question in the same manner.<sup>148</sup>

In this context, the first page of the survey gave some general background information about the research as well as indicated that it would take the respondent approximately five minutes to complete the questionnaire. The second and the third page intended to gain information about the students' age, gender, nationality, stage and field of study. Participants who entered the fourth page were provided with a short introduction into the concept of talent pools. Following on a statement, the usefulness of talent pools should be indicated on a *Likert Scale*, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Based on that, the different TRM instruments, which were presented in a four-field matrix in chapter three, had to be scrutinized on their level of interest. In order to gain insight in how to manage the TRM approach, the respondents were asked to rank the different instruments. The last two questions intended to analyze the level to which the participants have already experienced TRM instruments and if companies should extend their TRM approach in the future. In the end of the survey, space was provided for the respondent to leave additional comments or requests.<sup>149</sup>

At this point, it is important to mention that throughout the survey closed questions were applied as a response format. A closed question is characterized by a number of alternative answers, which are provided and from which respondents are to select one or more of the answers.<sup>150</sup> This chosen response format enhances the comparability of answers and it also clarifies the meaning of a question to respondents. In contrary, it is important to consider that there is a danger that the researcher biases the study by assigning the respondents answer to one of the predefined alternatives.<sup>151</sup> This will be further discussed in *section 5.1.4*.

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<sup>145</sup> Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., pp. 283/284. See also Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business research methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, p. 142.

<sup>146</sup> Sax, L.J. et al. (2003) *Assessing Response Rates and Nonresponse Bias in Web and Paper Survey*, Research in Higher Education, Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 410.

<sup>147</sup> Couper, M.P. et al. (2007) *Noncoverage and nonresponse in an Internet survey*, Social Science Research, Vol. 36, Issue 1, p. 132.

<sup>148</sup> Ghauri, P. & Grønhaug, K. (2002) *Research Methods in Business Studies*, Prentice Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 98. See also Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business research methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, p. 147.

<sup>149</sup> Screenshots of the complete survey can be found in Appendix A.

<sup>150</sup> De Vaus, D. (2004) *Survey in Social Research*, Routledge, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 99.

<sup>151</sup> Baker, M.J. (2003) *Data Collection – Questionnaire Design*, The Marketing Review, 2003, No. 3, p. 355.

### 5.1.3 Pilot Test and Data Collection

The online-based questionnaire was hosted on [surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).<sup>152</sup> Besides the low subscription fee, the survey was easy to administrate and parts and questions could be changed immediately. This was of particular importance after the results of the pilot study were analyzed and indicated some changes. Pilot testing does not only ensure that the survey questions are understood in the right way, it also plays a role in ensuring that the research instruments functions and the results of the study have the desired format.<sup>153</sup> For the purpose of the survey, it was crucial that respondents would understand the intended meaning of the questions. It was also important that the instructions given, were neither too extensive nor too short. There is a widespread view, that long surveys raise the burden on respondents and lead to increased reluctance to participate and, thus, to non-response.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, it had to be ensured that the provided response sets, as for instance the ranking of different TRM instruments, had an appropriate length and did not lead to a high level of non-responses.

The pilot study was carried out among ten individuals out of *sample M*, and ten out of *sample G*, on the weekend before the final version of the survey was sent out. Whereas the results of *sample M* was representative for the English version of the survey, including *sample IBP* and *N*, results of *sample G* provided valuable feedback for the German version. Those, who were approached for the pilot study, were fellow students willing to participate. The questions, the respondents were asked after the completion of the survey, were orientated on the suggestions of Aaker et al. as well as de Vaus, who recommend evaluating four elements carefully.<sup>155</sup> First, it was interesting to know if the questions seem to fit together and if the transitions were smooth. Second and third, if the instructions and time given were appropriate. Fourth, if the respondents were interested in providing answers or if they, for instance, got bored. Besides 'minor' comments about spelling mistakes and the provided instructions, it became clear, that the ranking of question no. 10 took too much time, was too complicated and would lead to non-reliable results. Therefore, this question was restructured and divided into two parts, while the ranking system changed from a drop-down menu to a matrix question type, where only one answer per row was possible.

After having assured that all comments have been considered and changes have been made, the final version of the survey was generated. Through the http-link, which was included in the E-Mail invitation, the target population could choose an appropriate time to fill out the survey. *Sample M*, *IBP* and *N* were made available for a total of 17 days, whereas *sample G* received its invitation two days later, since the link for the survey had to be distributed by the person in the German scholarship office.

In this context, it is important to mention that the opinion about the duration of data collection in web-based questionnaires differs from author to author. Whereas Aaker et al. suggests an average period of two months, Stewart argues that a time span between two weeks and one month is in general suitable.<sup>156</sup> Without question, surveys which are done in a short period of time run the risk of a low response rate. Nonetheless, since it was possible to track down the responses of most of the participants, there was a good chance to increase the response rate within the 17 and respectively 15 days during the time the survey was accessible.

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<sup>152</sup> [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

<sup>153</sup> Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business research methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, p. 170.

<sup>154</sup> De Vaus, D. (2004) *Survey in Social Research*, Routledge, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 112.

<sup>155</sup> Aaker, D.A., Kumar, V. & Day, G.S. (2004) *Marketing Research*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 8<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 330. See also De Vaus, D. (2004) *Survey in Social Research*, Routledge, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 116.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 236. See also Stewart, S. (2003)  *Casting the net: using the internet for survey research*, British Journal of Midwifery, Vol. 11, No. 9, September 2003, p. 543.

Apart from the differing point of views about the duration of data collection, there is also a divergence opinion about the importance of timing when it comes to web-based surveys. To this end, Faught and colleagues found in their empirical study that Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning are the 'best time' to send invitations for Internet surveys.<sup>157</sup> By having these findings in mind, we sent out the invitation E-Mail on a Tuesday afternoon.

In an effort to maximise the response rate, non-respondents, who could be identified through the survey program, were followed up by a reminder E-Mail nine days before the deadline of the questionnaire was reached.<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, it was possible to view the E-Mail addresses of those students who had not finished the survey completely. Hence, an E-Mail with a request to finish the survey was sent out at the same date as the reminder E-Mails.

#### 5.1.4 Potential Biases

In the course of this master thesis, it already has been outlined that there is a danger of language and response biases. Furthermore, there is a risk that a researcher biases a non-probability sample with his personal judgment. This underlines that there is an evident risk, that research can be biased in several ways. Thus, it is crucial that sources of biases are discussed within this chapter in order to point out potential weaknesses of this research approach.

##### Language Bias

Taking into consideration that the larger part of individuals within *sample M*, *IBP* and *N* has another language than English as their mother tongue, there is an evident risk of language biases. In particular when it comes to the different TRM instruments, there is a legitimate risk that respondents might sometimes have missed the appropriate expression or meaning. We tried to prevent this as good as possible, by citing examples for each TRM element in order to enhance the understanding. Nonetheless, by taking into account that most of the respondents have been studying courses taught in English for at least one year, English was the most appropriate language for the survey.

However, this did not hold true for *sample G*, where we were uncertain about the language abilities of each participant. In order to prevent an increased risk of languages biases, a German version of the survey was generated. Even though it can not be guaranteed that the appropriate definition of every word has been found, when translating from English to German, the caused bias is only a small amount of the language bias which might have arisen with an English version of the survey.

##### Response and Response Style Bias

In the previous section it already was mentioned that a closed question format can result in *response biases* caused by assigning the respondents answer to one of the predefined alternatives. To this end, it is important to mention that an effort was made to keep this effect as low as possible by using a *Likert Scale* or questions which required ranking. However, careful question design can help to minimise response biases.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, a considerable effort was spent on designing the questions by having sources of possible response biases in mind. An additional response bias, which is worth mentioning here, is the *length and complexity* of the survey. There is a risk that respondents could lose the interest, which could result in answering the questions in a routine manner or even in exiting the questionnaire.

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<sup>157</sup> Faught, K.S., Whitten, D. & Green, K.W. (2004) *Doing Survey Research On The Internet: Yes, Timing Does Matter*, Journal of Computer Information Systems, p. 26.

<sup>158</sup> See Appendix A for the respective follow-up cover letter.

<sup>159</sup> Baker, M.J. (2003) *Data Collection – Questionnaire Design*, The Marketing Review, 2003, No. 3, p. 354.



Unfortunately, there was no option to save the provided answers and to continue later. Nonetheless, it was possible to approach respondents, who did not complete the survey, for a second time. In addition, the results of the pilot study delivered some valuable insights in how to restructure certain questions and answer sets.

When it comes to *likert-type rating scales*, which has been used throughout the survey, there is a potential risk that answers get biased due to the *response style* of the respondents. In his study, Greenleaf indicates two different response styles that operate in many surveys. The first one, also referred to as *yeasaying/naysaying*, reflects the tendency of participants who agree or disagree with statements independent of the specific content. The second one, also known as *standard deviation*, describes the tendency “to use a wide or narrow range of response intervals about the individual’s mean response”<sup>160</sup>. By being aware of this potential bias, all questions within the survey which had the characteristics of a *likert-style rating scale* had additional *Neither agree nor disagree*, *Neutral* or *Undecided* options to choose from. In an effort to prevent response style related biases, possible outliers that could result out of *yeasaying/naysaying* will be scrutinized in the data preparation phase (*chapter 6.3*).

### Non-response Bias

A bias exists when respondents in a survey are different from those who did not respond in terms of attitudinal or demographic variables. In other words, *non-response bias* is caused when not all individuals in the sample are willing or able to complete the questionnaire.<sup>161</sup> It is the aim of *chapter 6.2* to scrutinize missing data in more detail.

#### 5.1.5 Credibility Criteria

After having discussed the sample procedure as well as referred to potential biases, it is crucial to highlight the credibility criteria of the quantitative research approach. In this context, *validity* and *reliability* are central issues in all measurement. Nonetheless, it is important to consider that perfect reliability and validity is virtually impossible to achieve. It is rather the ideals which are strived for.<sup>162</sup>

### Validity

According to Saunders et al. “validity is concerned whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about”<sup>163</sup>. There are several types of *measurement validity*, while two of them are of particular interest here.

### Construct Validity

Construct validity is achieved when a defined concept or construct shows that the measurement logically connects the empirical phenomenon to the concept.<sup>164</sup> This can be assessed in several ways. One way is *face validity*, which assesses if a measure reflects the content of the concept in question.<sup>165</sup> The four-field matrix of TRM instruments, presented in chapter three, facilitated the construction of the questions as well as the predefined answer alternatives in the online questionnaire. Since the matrix contained those TRM elements

<sup>160</sup> Greenleaf, E.A. (1992) Improving Rating Scale Measures by Detecting and Correcting Bias Components in Some Response Styles, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 29, Issue 2, p. 176.

<sup>161</sup> Sax, L.J. et al. (2003) *Assessing Response Rates and Nonresponse Bias in Web and Paper Survey*, *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 411.

<sup>162</sup> Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 177.

<sup>163</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2007), *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall 2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p. 150

<sup>164</sup> Aaker, D.A., Kumar, V. & Day, G.S. (2004) *Marketing Research*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 8<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 303.

<sup>165</sup> Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business research methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, p. 77.

which could be found throughout the literature, it can be assumed that all known aspects of the concept have been measured and, thus, a high degree of face validity has been achieved.

### **External Validity**

In contrary, *external validity* does not relate to the study itself, but to which extent the results can be generalized to particular persons and settings as well as across types of persons and settings.<sup>166</sup> By taking into consideration that the 151 respondents originated not only from nineteen different countries, but also from seven fields of study on varying study levels, it can be assumed that this study has a high degree of external validity. Therefore, it should be possible to generalize the study results beyond the specific research context to other groups, which have the characteristic of entering the job market in the near future.

### **Reliability**

The extent to which results are both consistent over time as well as an accurate representation of the total population is referred to as *reliability*. If the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable.<sup>167</sup>

In order to achieve reliability, a measure should deliver the same answer if the study is conducted at a different point in time. In this context stability reliability means that the same results are obtained each time. There are several ways to improve the reliability such as the use of a pilot study.<sup>168</sup> It was mentioned earlier, that a pilot test was carried out in order to ensure that the questions in the survey are understood and interpreted in the right way. Since comments have been considered and changes have consequently been made, we are convinced that the results are reliable.

#### **5.1.6 Practical Usefulness**

The practical usefulness of the gained results can be seen from two different perspectives. The first perspective is seen by companies which carry out the concept of TRM. In order to build up a successful relationship with future and current employees, it is crucial to have some knowledge about the target groups. The most important one is, without question, students and graduates who will enter the job market in the near future. In this thesis, the constraints on the labour market which lead to a so called *war for talents* have already been outlined several times. The group of students, graduates and alumni's considered in this study provide a better understanding of the prioritisation of the different TRM instruments. Based on the empirical results gained from students, with different backgrounds, from different countries and differing international and professional experiences, organizational HR departments can allocate their resources most effectively while developing strategic plans in order to recruit and retain highly skilled and motivated individuals.

The second perspective though is seen by applicants and students themselves. A certain part of them has already experienced the one or the other TRM instruments without perceiving it as such. Thus, it might be of interest to gain a deeper insight in the concept of TRM and its interrelation with HRM and Employer Branding. During the 17 days the survey was open for participation, there was a wide interest in the results of the study from the side of respondents. From our opinion, this is an indication of the relevance of the results for individuals who will enter the application process in the near future.

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<sup>166</sup> Ghauri, P. & Grønhaug, K. (2002) *Research Methods in Business Studies*, Prentice Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 72.

<sup>167</sup> Joppe, M. (2000) in Golafshani, N. (2003) *Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research*, The Quality Report, Vol. 8, Number 4, December 2003, p. 598.

<sup>168</sup> Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 180.

## 5.2 Practical Method of Qualitative Research Approach

The second part of this chapter is concerned with the qualitative research approach of this master thesis. Even though there are other ways of collecting qualitative data, we are convinced that qualitative interviews with different companies are the most appropriate approach for finding an answer to the research question what an effective Employer Branding strategy need to contain and how should the concept be managed in order to attract, recruit and retain a high potential workforce.

### 5.2.1 Choice of Companies and Access to Respondents

While being students we have been asked several times to participate in studies which researched the perception and prioritisation of different employer brands among students. If someone takes the results of these questionnaires into consideration, it is mainly large organizations which appear in the group of employers of choice. Thus, it can be assumed that these companies have not only managed to achieve a strong and successful employer brand, but also have the most experience with this concept. This has prompted us to consider larger organizations rather than small or middle-sized companies. In addition, we based our choice of companies on the results of the *Swedish Universum Employer Branding survey* of the year 2006. *Universum* is a global leader in the field of Employer Branding with the aim to help its clients to have a strong appeal on its current and future ideal employees.<sup>169</sup> To this end, the chosen companies had to appear in the ranking among *business, engineering or IT students*. Furthermore, it has been of interest to include organizations in our study which operate in different industries in order to get a wider perspective when it comes to the analysis of the results as well as to draw comparisons between the varying sectors. However, it also has to be taken into account that the focus on four companies meant that not all industries could be considered.

The initial contact was made by approaching different companies on the *Uniaden career fair* at the *University of Umeå* in January 2007. With the research question and objective in mind, we talked to a total of ten organizations. In most of the cases the companies were represented by their employees who work in the field of HR and, therefore, could provide us either with the contact details of the person in charge of Employer Branding or with their own business card. The idea behind approaching a larger number of companies was to have a bigger pool of different organizations we could finally choose from. This appeared to be in particular helpful, since two companies declined our interview request after the first contact was made. By taking the constraints of industry sector and employer brand ranking into consideration, *Volvo, Ernst & Young, ABB* and *Swedbank* were finally chosen as adequate interview partners.<sup>170</sup>

After having established an initial contact with a number of organizations in January, we called the contact persons approximately two months later in order to get an overview about which companies are willing to participate in our study. In the beginning of the phone call, it was mentioned that we made an initial contact on the career fair in Umeå. In addition, the purpose and process of the planned interview was presented to the contact person. In two cases the contact person felt that he or she was not the right person to talk to or that there was a colleague who was more specialized on the issue of Employer Branding. In these cases we were transferred to the right person, where we could present the purpose of our study and ask if there would be any willingness to participate.

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<sup>169</sup> Universum Corporate Webpage URL: <http://www.universumeurope.com/home.aspx> [2007-04-23].

<sup>170</sup> See A2c in Appendix A for a detailed presentation of the participating companies.

Without question, there are several organizational concerns which have to be overcome before a respondent might grant access. To this end, issues of time or resources, sensitivity of data and confidentiality are important to take into account.<sup>171</sup> An interview which would take too long would have a negative impact on the respondents' willingness to participate. In contrary, a too short time span would have made it impossible to consider all interview questions. Therefore, an interview length of thirty minutes was thought to be adequate for both sides.

After the contact persons agreed on their participation in the study, a cover letter was sent out. Apart from our expressed appreciation for the interest in our research, it contained a promise that the results are treated with utmost confidentiality in terms of the anonymity of the organization and the individual participant. Furthermore, an outline of the telephone interview structure and questions was attached. Since we were aware of the limited time and busy schedule of the respondents, the choice for a suitable date and time was left on the side of the interviewee.

### 5.2.2 Interview Approach

In this section, the applied interview approach, the structure of the interviews as well as the processing of primary data is discussed.

#### Way of Conduction

When it comes to qualitative interviews, Ghauri & Grønhaug makes a distinction between three different forms of interviews.<sup>172</sup> Apart from interviews by mail, we could decide between interviews which are conducted by phone and personal face-to-face interviews. The latter type of interviews has the advantage that the researcher is enabled to follow the respondents' interpretation, which is supported by facial expressions. There is a greater effectiveness with complex issues, since complicated questions or answers, for instance, can be prevented by clearing up inconsistencies through follow up questions in the interview.<sup>173</sup>

Even though we are aware of the advantages of face-to-face interviews, the only viable option for us has been to conduct the *interviews by telephone*. Due to the fact that the organizations in our sample are situated in geographically diverse locations, it would have been impossible in terms of time and money to visit each company for the purpose of a face-to-face interview. It was already outlined in *section 5.2.1*, that companies which are successfully applying the Employer Branding approach are mainly large organizations. Furthermore, the choice of companies was restricted since we based the selection on the Employer Branding ranking provided by *Universum Communications*.

Due to the fact that telephone interviews lack face-to-face non-verbal cues, it is important to be aware of the situation that someone has to rely entirely on verbal messages and cues. This is eased, when the researcher has fairly specific questions in mind as for instance through a semi-structured interview schedule.<sup>174</sup> Apart from the downsides which come along with telephone interviews, it is important to note there are also advantages, for instance, through a greater cost-efficiency and faster results.<sup>175</sup> The next section will discuss the structure of the interview in more detail.

<sup>171</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2000) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall, p. 123.

<sup>172</sup> Ghauri, P. & Grønhaug, K. (2002) *Research Methods in Business Studies*, Prentice Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 101.

<sup>173</sup> Shuy, R.W. (2001) in Gubrium, J. F. & Holstein, J. A. (2001) *Handbook of Interview Research, Context & Method*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks p. 542. See also Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003), *Business research methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, p. 355.

<sup>174</sup> Berg, B.L. (2004) *Qualitative Research Methods*, Pearson Educations, 5th ed., p. 94.

<sup>175</sup> Shuy, R.W. (2001) in Gubrium, J. F. & Holstein, J. A. (2001) *Handbook of Interview Research, Context & Method*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks p. 540.

### Structure of the Interview

Simultaneously to the typology of interviews, there is also a difference in terms of structure. To this end, Saunders et al. distinguishes between structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews.<sup>176</sup> In the qualitative part of this master thesis semi-structured interviews are used. Within this type of interviews the researcher has a list of questions on a fairly specific topic, which is often referred to as an interview guide.<sup>177</sup>

The *interview guide*<sup>178</sup> enabled us to follow a consistent process, especially when it came to the introduction part in the beginning of the phone interview. Even though our aim was to start off the interview in a standardized way, it is characteristic for a *semi-structured* interview approach to remain flexible throughout the interview.<sup>179</sup> Hence, the questions did not follow implicitly the way it was outlined in the interview guide and further it was possible to ask follow up questions when necessary.

### Processing of Primary Data

Undoubtedly, every individual has a different approach of questioning or to react on certain situations within an interview. Therefore, we decided that only one of us should conduct the interviews, whereas the other one would be concerned with taking notes. From our point of view, it was important to rely on one interviewer throughout the interviews in order to improve the quality of data in terms of reliability and to avoid potential biases between interviewer and interviewee.<sup>180</sup>

For calling the participating companies, we used the Internet telephone tool *Skype*<sup>181</sup>, which enabled us to record the phone call directly to the hard disk. Furthermore, it was possible that, while the interviewer called the respondents, a second person, who was geographically independent, could listen to the interview at the same time to make notes and to record the phone call. By asking every participant in the beginning of each interview if the phone call could be recorded, the question of confidentiality automatically came up. Since every participating company will receive a copy of the final version of the master thesis, it was important to assure that empirical findings cannot be traced back to an organization. In addition, by granting confidentiality it was intended to gain more useful information from the respondents, since they are not as self-conscious or alarmed due to the fact that their words are recorded.<sup>182</sup>

It is important to mention that after the conduction of the interview, the data was transcribed on the same day.<sup>183</sup> Within a transcription, researchers intend to find the best balance between *what* is said and *how* it is said.<sup>184</sup> One disadvantage of transcription is that it is very time consuming, which becomes clear by taking into consideration that one of our telephone interviews, which took 45 minutes, equalled ten pages of transcription. In addition, some authors suggest sending the full transcript back to the interviewee for comments. Without question, there is a risk that a certain meaning has been misunderstood or it is not clear what

<sup>176</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2000) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall, p. 243.

<sup>177</sup> Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business research methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, p. 343.

<sup>178</sup> See section A2b in Appendix A.

<sup>179</sup> Berg, B.L. (2004) *Qualitative Research Methods*, Pearson Educations, 5th ed., p. 81.

<sup>180</sup> Saunders, M. et al. (2000) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Prentice Hall, p. 251.

<sup>181</sup> www.skype.com

<sup>182</sup> Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business research methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, p. 353.

<sup>183</sup> The transcripts are available online. A link can be found in the Bibliography part.

<sup>184</sup> Gubrium, J. F. & Holstein, J. A. (2001) *Handbook of Interview Research, Context & Method*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks p. 633.

the respondent really wanted to say.<sup>185</sup> Due to the length of the transcript in combination with the constraints of time both for the interviewee and for us, we chose not to do so. Instead, each of us transcribed the complete interview in order to compare the transcription in the end. In cases where the text was different, the interview in form of an audio file was scrutinized for a second time.

### 5.2.3 Credibility Criteria

In the end of the second part of this chapter, it is important to refer to the credibility criteria of the qualitative research approach. In contrary to *section 5.1.5* which was concerned with the reliability and validity of the quantitative measurement, it should be mentioned that the principles of credibility criteria are not of major preoccupation among qualitative researchers and are therefore applied differently.<sup>186</sup>

#### Validity

Within qualitative studies *validity* can also be referred to as truthfulness. This means that qualitative researchers are more interested in a fair and honest and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of an individual rather than matching an abstract concept to empirical data.<sup>187</sup> To this end, *external validity* refers to the extent to which findings can be generalized across social settings. As already mentioned, it was our intention to include only those companies in the study, which belong to the employers of choice in Sweden. Thus, the interviews were not only conducted among large organizations which are very successful with Employer Branding, but also with a person in the company who works with the concept on a day-to-day base. Although it is arguable to which extent the results can be generalized to other companies and industry sectors, from our point of view a deeper understanding of the Employer Branding approach from leading organizations in this field could be gained. In addition, due to the anonymization of the findings, a high level of validity in terms of truthfulness could be achieved. This can be underlined by the fact that we received additional internal documents, which were concerned with company specific strategic aspects of Employer Branding by assuring that these will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

#### Reliability

Qualitative researchers aim to be consistent in how observations are made over time, which is similar to the idea of stability reliability discussed in *section 5.1.5*. Without question, there is a likelihood that another interviewee in the chosen organizations would have responded differently to certain questions. This holds in particular true for answers which are based on personal opinions rather than related to knowledge about the concept of Employer Branding. Nonetheless, we consider the *reliability* of the gained information as high since the respondents were not only chosen after internal recommendations, but also were the ones who were specialized on the approach of Employer Branding and, thus, provided valuable expertise.

#### Language Bias

In parallel to the methodology part in *chapter two* and the related section in *5.1.4*, it is important to refer at this stage to potential *language biases* in this research approach. It is important to consider that the respondents has been interviewed in a language differing from their mother tongue, by researchers with deviant native tongues in comparison to the language in which this research is conducted. Even though, every interviewee has been Swedish, none

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<sup>185</sup> Ghauri, P. & Grønhaug, K. (2002) *Research Methods in Business Studies*, Prentice Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 108.

<sup>186</sup> Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2003) *Business research methods*, Oxford University Press 2003, p. 286.

<sup>187</sup> Neuman, W.L. & Kreuger, L.W. (2003) *Social Work – Research Methods*, Pearson Education, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 184.

of them declined our request to conduct the interview in English. Furthermore, each respondent had a good proficiency of the English language. Nonetheless, there is a risk that language biases occur, especially when it comes to rather technical terms. While conducting the interviews, it became apparent that some interviewees sometimes missed the appropriate expression. Neither can we guarantee that the appropriate definition of every word has been found while transcribing the interview. Nonetheless, it was intended to diminish potential language biases as good as possible by re-listening to the recorded interviews as well as by comparing each other's transcriptions.

#### **5.2.4 Practical Usefulness**

As it was outlined in *chapter three*, the theoretical foundation of Employer Branding is rather undeveloped. To this end, the profound literature review, in combination with our understanding of how a successful employer brand should be set up, resulted in the construction of a conceptual framework, which can be divided into an internal and external perspective of Employer Branding. In addition, the interviews with four different companies contributed to the generation of knowledge of how the concept of Employer Branding is carried out in practice. Hence, the varying elements which are part of the conceptual framework could be confirmed or rejected, depending on the analysis of the qualitative data in *chapter seven*. The empirical results are useful for companies in order to get a more complete picture about the modern concept of Employer Branding. Furthermore and in combination with the survey results of students' perceptions about the different TRM instruments, organizations can not only strengthen their employer brand, but also enhance their recruitment and retention strategies by these two interrelated and reinforcing concepts. Apart from the more practical considerations, future research can use the results of this study to construct a more complete and valid conceptual framework, which can be generalized when applied to other industries

## 6. DATA PREPARATION

*This chapter is intended to provide a description of the methods which have been used for the preparation of the quantitative data. Before the empirical results of the web-based survey will be presented and analyzed in the next chapter, it is important to assess the response rate of the questionnaire. An additional crucial part is to scrutinize missing data as well as to identify possible outliers.*

### 6.1 Assessment of Response and Non-response Rate

In the last chapter it was already pointed out that a downside of questionnaires is the considerable amount of time, which is spent on the coding of questions and possible answers. Fortunately, the survey program that we used made it possible to code the respective data automatically, which made the manual coding unnecessary. The next step in the data preparation was, apart from the conversion of the data into the *SPSS program*, the assessment of the response and non-response rates. At the date on which the survey was closed, 195 respondents had participated compared to a total sample size of 518 individuals by taking *sample M*, *IBP*, *N* and *G* into consideration. In addition, in two cases within *sample IBP* and ten cases within *sample N* the provided E-Mail addresses were unreachable. This left 63 cases in *sample M*, 7 in *sample IBP*, 87 in *sample N* and 32 cases in *sample G* for further analysis.

Within quantitative studies it is common to indicate the response rate of each sample. To this end, de Vaus refers to the calculation of the response rate in the following way:<sup>188</sup>

$$\text{Response Rate} = \frac{\text{total number of respondents}}{\text{N in sample} - (\text{ineligible} + \text{unreachable})} \times 100$$

For this study, the valid cases of *sample M* represented a response rate of 49,6 per cent, *sample IBP* of 24,1 per cent, *sample N* of 42,9 per cent, while *sample G* represented a response rate of 21,7 per cent. Considering that the response rate on web surveys is significantly lower than on comparable modes, as for instance postal surveys<sup>189</sup>, a response rate of nearly 50 per cent in *sample M* and *N* is very satisfying. The lower response rate of *sample IBP* and *G* can be explained in the following way. On the one hand, it was not possible to track the responses of individuals in *sample G* due to the fact that the invitation E-Mail was sent out via the Program Coordinator. Consequently, no follow up E-Mail could be sent which might have increased the response rate. Furthermore and in parallel to *sample IBP*, it has to be assumed that a number of E-Mail addresses were not used anymore or at least not accessed regularly by the respondents. This could be due to the fact that it has been a while since the respective students finished their studies or left the scholarship program.

### 6.2 Scrutinizing Missing Data

When it comes to web-based surveys, which have the characteristic of being self-administered, there is a potential risk that respondents answer indicated questions only partly or provide too little useful information. This is often referred to as incomplete or *missing data*.<sup>190</sup> In addition, Hair et al. highlights that researchers must understand the process which

<sup>188</sup> De Vaus, D. (2004) *Survey in Social Research*, Routledge, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. 2004. p. 127.

<sup>189</sup> Couper, M.P. et al. (2007) *Noncoverage and nonresponse in an Internet survey*, Social Science Research, Vol. 36, Issue 1, p. 134. See also Shannon, D.M. & Bradshaw, C.C. (2002) *A comparison of Response Rate, Response Time, and Costs of Mail and Electronic Surveys*, Journal of Experimental Education, Vol. 70, Issue 2, p. 184.

<sup>190</sup> Wang, L. & Fan, X. (2004) *Missing Data in Disguise and Implications for Survey Data Analysis*, Field Methods, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 332/333.



led to the missing data in order to select the appropriate course of action.<sup>191</sup> In order to clarify the process, which resulted in missing data, it is important to mention that each question in the online survey required a respond from the respondent. In case someone would have not answered all indicated questions, respondents were not able to advance to the next question or following page. Thus, all respondents that have finished the survey also provided a complete set of data. To this end, missing data occurred only in these situations in which respondents exit the questionnaire without finishing it. At this stage, it is important to distinguish between two types of missing data. Ignorable missing data, on the one hand, means that specific remedies for missing data is not needed. On the other hand, non-ignorable missing data can be further divided into known and unknown data. The latter one is of particular interest in this context, since they are most often directly related to the respondent and to questions which are, for instance, refused to be answered by the respondent.<sup>192</sup>

The major part of missing data in the survey are related to questions where respondents were asked to rate different TRM instruments on a *Likert Scale* of one to five. By taking into consideration that the main purpose of the survey was to gain a deeper insight into how students and graduates perceive and rate varying TRM elements, it would not have been feasible to ignore missing data in this section. Furthermore, it would have been difficult to anticipate or even substitute missing data. To return to the differentiation made above, the cases of missing data in the survey have shown the characteristics of unknown non-ignorable missing data. Even though there are a variety of methods for dealing with this kind of missing values, the option to delete those cases has been considered as the most appropriate one. However, it is important to take into account that this method, also often referred to as *listwise deletion*, can lead to a considerable loss of valuable data. Nevertheless, an amount of 36 deleted cases out of 195 responses in favour of an increased data quality can be considered as acceptable in this study.

### 6.3 Identification of Outliers

Outliers can be defined as “observations so different in magnitude from the rest of the data” that they are often treated by analysts as special cases.<sup>193</sup> They can be either beneficial or problematic. Whereas the first characteristic of outliers provide valuable information about certain characteristics of the population, the latter one is not representative of the population and can seriously distort statistical tests. Hence, outliers should be either included or excluded based on the evaluation of the effects of identified outliers.<sup>194</sup>

One evaluation tool is the so called *boxplots method*, which represents the distribution of a variable.<sup>195</sup> In this study, *boxplots* were generated on each individual TRM instrument, which had to be rated on a *Likert Scale*. The idea was to identify outliers in comparison to how other respondents valued particular TRM elements.

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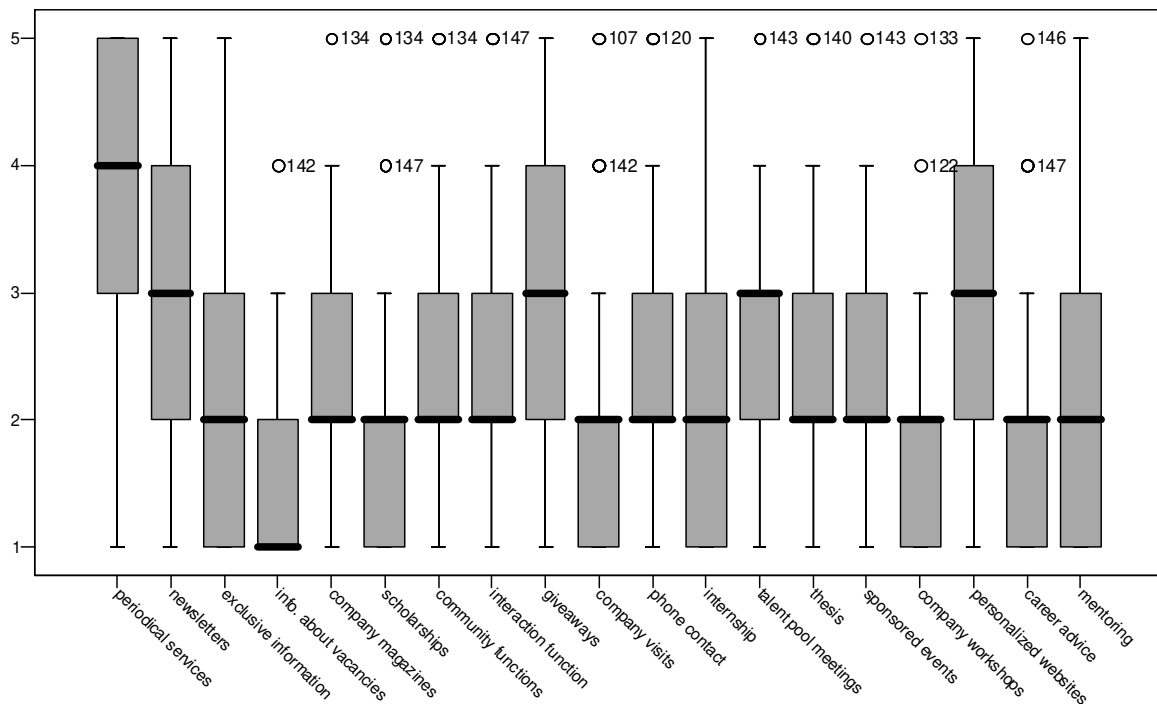
<sup>191</sup> Hair, J.F. et al. (2006) *Multivariate Data Analysis*, Pearson Prentice Hall, p. 49.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>193</sup> Churchill, G.A. & Iacobucci, D. (2005) *Marketing Research*, Mason, Ohio: Thomson/South-Western, 9th ed. 2005, p. 414.

<sup>194</sup> Hair, J.F. et al., (2006) *Multivariate Data Analysis*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, Pearson Education: New Jersey, p. 73

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.



**Figure 6.1:** Outlier Identification

The figure indicates a number of single cases which appear to be outliers. However, by taking a closer look at the variables, the outliers could be rather classified as beneficial, since none of them appeared to be an outlier on each individual item. Thus, these variables remained included.

Another way of using the *boxplots method* was applied to compare the *boxplots* of a *single Likert Scale* item with the respondents' rating of each TRM instrument on a scale of one to five. In contrary to the previous evaluation, this method related the respondents' perception of each TRM instrument to the overall opinion of the TRM concept. To this end, it was assumed that respondents who rated certain TRM elements high would eventually take a position in favour of a further extension of the TRM approach, e.g. question twelve. By applying this approach, one case continuously appeared throughout the analysis. A closer look revealed that the respondent perceived the major part of the TRM instruments relatively low in comparison with agreeing strongly with the extension of the TRM approach. However, since the ranking corresponded with the previous questions, the variable was finally not excluded.

## 7. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

*In this chapter the empirical findings are presented and discussed followed by the authors' analysis. In parallel to chapter five, there is a division in two major parts. First, the results of the quantitative research approach concerning TRM are covered, whereas the second part is concerned with the empirical findings of the conducted interviews about Employer Branding. Each section will end with a thorough analysis of the presented findings. This will not only create a solid foundation for answering the two research questions, but also build a bridge between this chapter and the theoretical framework.*

### 7.1 Presentation and discussion of the results of the perception of different TRM instruments

Whereas the previous chapter was concerned with the preparation of the gained data by means of missing data and outlier identification, the remaining 151 valid cases are now analyzed through various methods of *frequency* and *bivariate data analysis*. In an effort to remain consistent and in order to provide the best overview, the empirical findings of the questionnaire are presented and analyzed for each sample. In the end, the total sample will be taken into consideration and a number of statistical methods will be used to highlight significant differences among the groups and to derive practical implications.

Before proceeding further, it is important to mention that *sample M* and *IBP* has been joined, since the latter one, with its seven valid responses, has finally been too small in size in order to be representative enough for the purpose of this study. Initially, *sample IBP* was included with the intention to embrace students who did an obligatory internship in the last year of their studies and, therefore, might have already experienced any TRM activities before or after their internship was completed. Instead of deleting the sample due to its low response rate, it has to be outlined that the combination of both samples came naturally since they showed similar characteristics in terms of nationality, field of studies, stage of studies and the affiliation to the same department or Business School.

The following table shows the distribution of the samples in different groups.

Group	Sample	Valid Responses	Share on total sample
Group 1	Sample M + IBP	55	36,4 per cent
Group 2	Sample N	74	49,0 per cent
Group 3	Sample G	22	14,6 per cent

**Table 7.1:** Distribution of samples among group 1 – 3

As already mentioned earlier, the presentation of the findings followed by their analysis will proceed sequentially by starting with Group 1 in the next section.

#### 7.1.1 Empirical Findings and Analysis of Group 1 (sample M + IBP)

The table above has already indicated that Group 1 includes the results of the *Master Students at USBE* (sample M) as well as students of the *International Business Program* (sample IBP). With 55 valid responses and 36 per cent of the total sample, this group takes the second largest part.

### Demographic Results

Before turning to the presentation of the respondents' perception of different TRM instruments, it is essential to refer to the demographic composition of this group.<sup>196</sup> By taking the gender into consideration, there is a slightly larger number of males (58 per cent) than females (42 per cent). Regarding the respondents' age, the age groups 21 – 23 and 24 – 26 account for the largest part in the group, with respectively 28 per cent and 44 per cent.

Since both samples within Group 1 are taken among Business students, it is self-explanatory that all respondents in this group attend Business related studies. In addition, 95 per cent of the responses communicate that studies are taken on a postgraduate level which corresponds with the characteristic of being a master student. The remaining two respondents who indicate to study on an undergraduate level as well as one alumni belong to *sample IBP*.

Instead of assessing the demographic results now here in detail, it should be mentioned that this is done in the respective part of *chapter 7.1.4*, where comparisons will be drawn between the demographic composition and the perception of TRM instruments.

### Opinion about Talent Pools

By providing some information regarding the concept of talent pools, respondents were asked whether they believe they could benefit from the existence of talent pools. As mentioned in chapter three, these pools can be described as a relevant fundament of TRM. In addition, talent pools enable the recruiter not only to easily update the profile of the candidate, but also to search for individual competences or characteristics.<sup>197</sup> Due to the significant role, talent pools play within TRM, it has been of interest to find out more about the respondents' opinion towards this important element. To this end, a positive viewpoint of talent pools is likely to correlate with a rather positive standpoint towards the entire TRM concept.

Within Group 1, almost 70 per cent of the respondents clearly agree with the statement in favour of talent pools, while 20 per cent neither agree nor disagree.<sup>198</sup> This shows a clear positive stance in favour of talent pools and their function within TRM.

### Perception of different TRM instruments

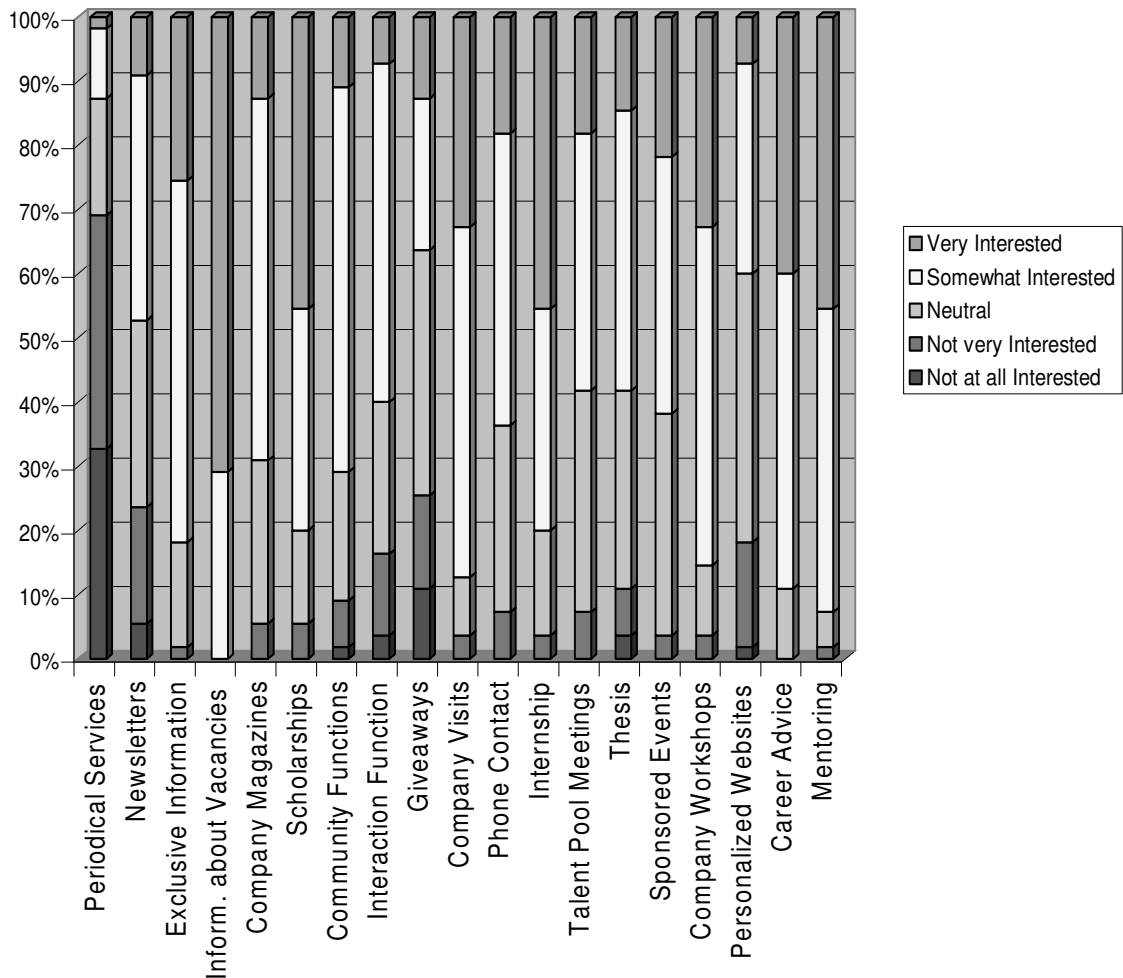
In order to create a consistent picture about students' and graduates' opinion of the TRM concept in combination with its elements, respondents were asked to rate 19 different communication instruments on a scale from one to five, ranging from very interested to not at all interested. To this end, the intention was to derive a clear and comparable figure which included all items, instead of presenting the findings of each instrument individually. The following illustration indicates the valuation of Group 1 in a so called stacked bar chart. At this point, it is important to mention that only those scales are visible that has been chosen by the respondents. The length of the bars corresponds with the relative number of respondents who decided for a certain scale.

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<sup>196</sup> An overview of the demographic results of Group 1 can be found in Appendix B.

<sup>197</sup> Von Dewitz, A. (2006) *Die Gestaltung eines leistungsstarken Arbeitsverhältnisses durch "Talent-Relationship-Management"*. Ein praxisorientiertes Konzept für mittelständische Unternehmen, Shaker, p. 250.

<sup>198</sup> See Figure C1b in Appendix C.



**Figure 7.1:** Perception of TRM Instruments in Group 1

By comparing the nineteen different bar charts, it can be outlined that the instruments of ‘Exclusive Information’, ‘Information about Vacancies’, ‘Career Advice’ and ‘Mentoring’ are among the most valued ones according to the opinion of the respondents, when taking the sum of very interested as well as somewhat interested scales into consideration. Nonetheless, the most outstanding one is the function to receive information about open job positions. More than 70 per cent of the respondents perceive this TRM instrument as very interesting, while the remaining 30 per cent are somewhat interested in it. In addition, it can be assumed that there is a large interest in ‘advice’ oriented instruments, since both ‘Career Advice’ and ‘Mentoring’ show a similar pattern in terms of the first and second highest scale and can therefore be seen as relatively interesting for this group.

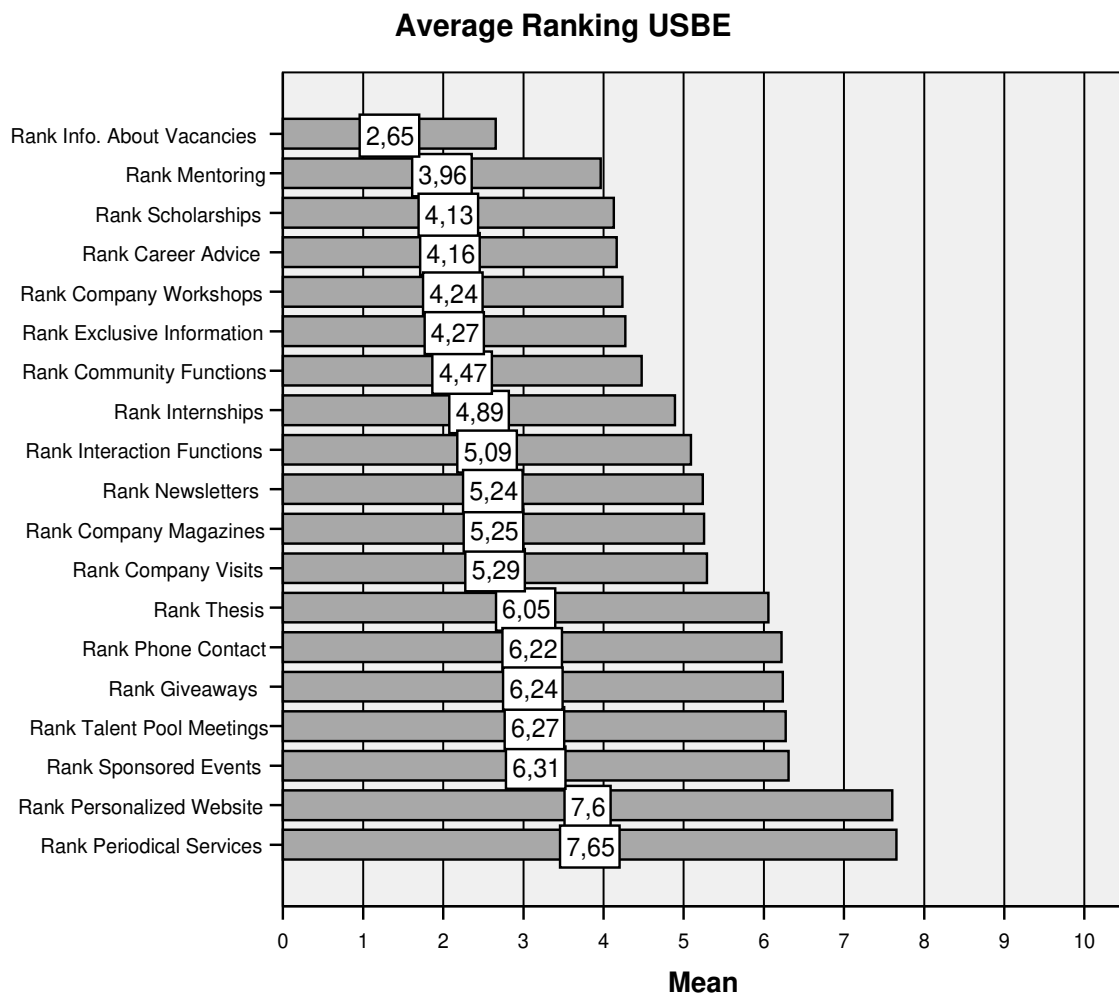
In contrary, ‘Periodical Services’ as for instance birthday cards are relatively low perceived within Group 1. Here, almost 70 per cent is either not interested or not at all interested. Furthermore, an increased number of respondents show little interest in regular ‘Newsletters’, ‘Personal Websites’ and ‘Giveaways’ in comparison to the remaining instruments.

The findings provided a first assessment of the TRM instruments. It is the aim of the next section to present the results of the respondents’ classification of the respective items.

### Ranking of TRM instruments

Apart from the valuation of each individual instrument, respondents were also asked to compare the different items with each other and rank them accordingly. In parallel to the

figure provided above, the aim was to present an illustration which contained the ranking results of Group 1. For the following figure it is important to bear in mind that the lower the average score, the higher the rank given by the respondents, since ten was the lowest rank and one the highest.



**Figure 7.2:** Average Rank of TRM Instruments in Group 1

The figure points out that ‘Information about Vacancies’ is by far the highest ranked instrument in Group 1, which corresponds with the findings of the last section. Following, there are a number of different TRM elements which show a slightly higher ranking in comparison to the other items. In this context and in parallel to the findings of the last paragraph, ‘Mentoring’, ‘Career Advice’, ‘Company Workshops’ and ‘Scholarships’ are in the group of those instruments which show a higher average rank.

In contrary, ‘Personalized Websites’ and ‘Periodical Services’ are among the lowest classified instruments. Whereas respondents in Group 1 showed already a low valuation of the latter item in the previous section, it is surprising that at least 20 per cent of the responses indicated an interest in the first one.

### **Experience with TRM instruments**

In order to get an overview to which extent the respondents had previous experience with the TRM approach, they were asked to indicate their level of experience on a five-point scale ranging from very often to never. The intention behind this question was to assess the level to which the TRM approach has already been applied among this group. In relation to this, the

results might also provide an idea of how far developed the concept is. It can be furthermore assumed to which extent the valuation and ranking of the respective instruments were based on the respondents' experience.

One third of the respondents in Group 1 indicate that they sometimes have experienced TRM instruments. While 25 per cent show a rather indifferent or neutral opinion, over 40 per cent have either little or no experience at all.<sup>199</sup> Thus, it can be assumed that at least a larger part within Group 1 based their answers on ideas and future requests rather than own experience. Nonetheless, it is important to consider that it is one of the objectives of this study to get a deeper understanding of the perceptions of individuals which have so far not get in contact with any TRM instruments in order to derive implications for the future development and adjustment of the TRM concept. Furthermore, with almost half of the respondents who show little or no experience, it can be outlined that the TRM approach has hardly been applied among Group 1. This might also draw conclusions to the stage of development of this concept.

### **TRM extension**

Based on the previous questions about the respondents' experience with TRM related instruments, the statement was provided that companies should further extend their TRM approach in the future. The intention of this question was to find out if respondents are satisfied with the current effort of companies in terms of TRM. However, out of the results of the previous question, which indicated a barely developed approach, it could be expected that there is a rather positive opinion in favour of the extension of the concept.

The results reveal that half of Group 1 agreed on the extension of TRM, while one-fourth showed an even stronger agreement with the statement and, thus, confirms the above stated assumption. The remaining respondents were still undecided (25 per cent), whereas one individual disagreed.<sup>200</sup>

### **7.1.2 Empirical Findings and Analysis of Group 2 (sample N)**

Group 2 comprises the results of the Dutch VSB Scholarship Program (*sample N*). With 74 valid responses, this group takes the largest part in terms of size in the total sample.

### **Demographic Results**

In contrary to Group 1, the division between male and female is with 50 per cent perfectly in balance. Regarding their age, the scales 21 – 23 and 24 – 26 account for the majority with respectively 41 per cent and 49 per cent. The fact that no respondent in this group is over 32, corresponds to the requirements of the scholarship program that allows only students up to the age of 29.<sup>201</sup>

In addition, three out of ten respondents in Group 2 attend a Business and Economics related education. However, the largest group is represented by 'others' (46 per cent), which accounts for fields of study different from the seven selectable ones in the survey.<sup>202</sup> Due to the fact that the indications provided by the respondents were too widespread, it would neither have been comparable nor representative to include minor fields of study in the findings, since they are only studied by a few individuals. Apart from that, around four per cent of the respondents study either Engineering Science, Law, Natural Science or within Teacher Education.

<sup>199</sup> See Figure C2b in Appendix C.

<sup>200</sup> See Figure C3b in Appendix C.

<sup>201</sup> See Figure B1a in Appendix B.

<sup>202</sup> For an overview of the field of studies see Table B5a in Appendix B.

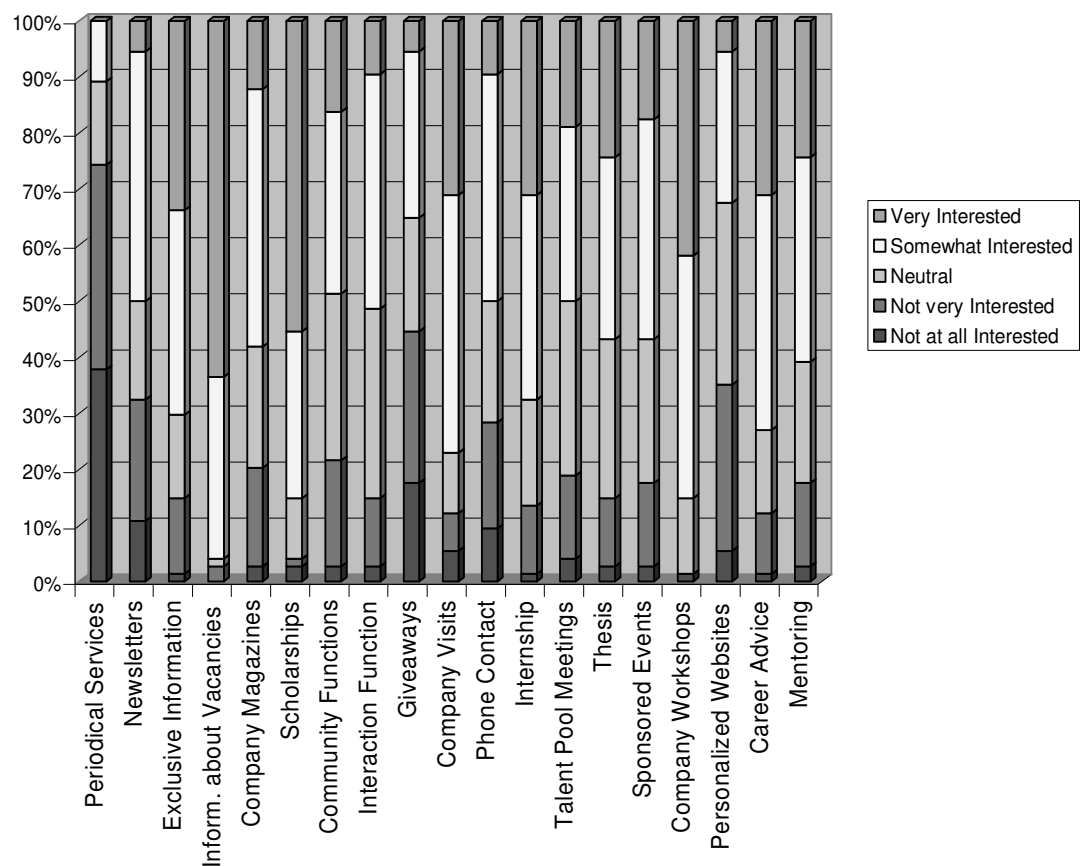
Within their respective studies, seven per cent of the respondents are studying on an undergraduate level, while almost eighty per cent attend studies on a postgraduate level. The smallest two groups are PhD's, which account for nine per cent, and alumni's with four per cent.<sup>203</sup>

### Opinion about Talent Pools

Seven out of ten respondents within Group 2 agree with the statement, that the existence of talent pools is beneficial, while 20 per cent show a more neutral opinion.<sup>204</sup> It can therefore be concluded, that a very large number of respondents have a positive attitude towards the existence of talent pools in combination with their benefits.

### Perception of different TRM instruments

The following figure indicates the valuation of Group 2 in a so called stacked bar chart. As already mentioned in subchapter 7.1.1, only those scales are visible that have been chosen by the respondents.



**Figure 7.3:** Perception of TRM instruments in Group 2

The figure illustrates that the highest interest within Group 2 is on the instrument 'Information about Vacancies'. More than 60 per cent of the group is very interested in this instrument, while another almost 30 per cent is somewhat interested. In addition, 'Scholarships' appear to be highly appreciated among the respondents as well. To this end, every second respondent is very interested in this instrument. This might be influenced by the fact that the entire group holds a scholarship itself. The third highest valued instrument is 'Company Workshops'.

<sup>203</sup> An overview of the demographic results of Group 2 can be found in Appendix B.

<sup>204</sup> See Figure C1b in Appendix C.



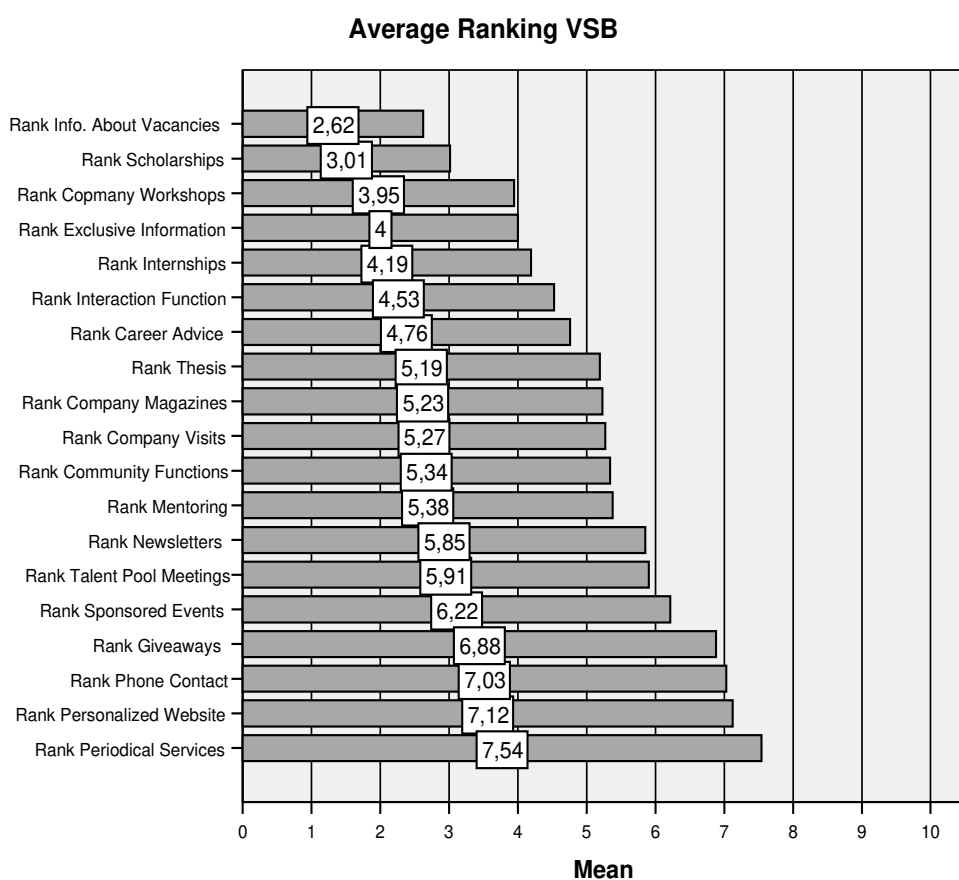
More than 40 per cent is very interested in this instrument, while another 40 per cent is somewhat interested.

Other instruments worth mentioning here are ‘Exclusive Information’ and ‘Company Visits’. Both show a comparable pattern in terms of the first and second highest scale. In other words, seven out of ten respondents are either very interested or somewhat interested in one or both of these instruments. In contrary, ‘Periodical Services’ is relatively low perceived within Group 2. Here, 70 per cent is either not interested or not at all interested. Furthermore, an increased number of respondents show little interest in regular ‘Newsletters’, ‘Personal Websites’ and ‘Giveaways’. Nonetheless, this is balanced by a slightly higher amount of respondents who perceive these instruments as more interesting. From the authors’ opinion, it appears that lower valued elements are missing a certain level of exclusiveness. This might be reinforced by the fact that the group of students is confronted nowadays with an uncountable number of similar services as newsletters or personal websites and, thus, the valuation of these instruments is rather low.

The findings of Group 2 within this question show a related pattern in comparison to Group 1. Respondents in both groups value ‘Exclusive Information’ highest as well as ‘Periodical Services’ and ‘Personal Websites’ among others lowest. However, it is the aim of *chapter 7.1.4.* to compare the different groups in more detail.

### Ranking of TRM instruments

Similar to the previous chapter, the following figure indicates the results of the ranking of each individual instrument on a scale of one to ten.



**Figure 7.4:** Average Ranks of TRM Instruments in Group 2

The figure clearly shows that ‘Information about Vacancies’ received the highest rank within this group, followed by ‘Scholarships’ on the second place. Furthermore and in parallel to the

last section, 'Company Workshops' and 'Exclusive Information' are relatively high ranked. Whereas respondents valued the instrument of 'Internships' somewhere in between neutral and somewhat interested, within the ranking it is rather prioritized in comparison to most of the other elements.

In contrast, a lower ranking pattern can be outlined among the instruments of 'Periodical Services', 'Personalized Websites', 'Phone Contact' as well as 'Giveaways'. In general, it can be assumed that there is little interest for instruments that relate to the transfer of information different than face-to-face. Most interestingly, over 50 per cent and almost 70 per cent of the respondents in Group 2 communicated to be either very interested or somewhat interested in the element of 'Phone Contact' and 'Personal Websites', while both instruments ended up in the group of lowest ranked items. Therefore, it can be argued that the elements are interesting to the major part of the group, but relatively uninteresting in comparison with other instruments. In particular outstanding is the element of 'Periodical Services', since it is not only ranked lowest, but also shows the highest percentage of respondents within this group which are not at all interested or not very interested. Thus, it can be considered as an inappropriate instrument within TRM among individuals with the characteristics of Group 2.

### **Experience with TRM instruments**

The majority of respondents, 30 per cent and 25 per cent respectively, within Group 2 have no or little experience with this approach, while less than five per cent answered to have experienced it very often.<sup>205</sup> Taking the findings of this question into consideration, it becomes apparent that the larger part of individuals in Group 2 has little to no former experience with the concept of TRM, which shows similarities to the findings of Group 1.

### **TRM extension**

Taking a closer look at the results of this question, which confronted respondents with the statement that companies should further extend their TRM approach in the future, it becomes apparent that the large majority in Group 2 agrees on the extension of the TRM approach. In other words, 70 per cent within this group either strongly agree or agree with the statement. In contrary, one-fourth of the valid responses indicate a rather indifferent position.<sup>206</sup>

This shows a favourable stance towards the extension of the TRM approach.

### **7.1.3 Empirical Findings and Analysis of Group 3 (sample G)**

This subchapter is concerned with the presentation of the findings among respondents within Group 3, which consists out of alumni's of the Leonardo da Vinci Scholarship Program (*sample G*). This group accounts for 15 per cent of total responses and is at the same time the smallest of the three groups.

### **Demographics**

The division in terms of gender of the third group is with 63 per cent for male and 36 per cent of female respondents the most unequally distributed group. Regarding their age, there is a rather balanced representation of all different age groups, whereas 24 – 26 years old (36 per cent) and 27 – 29 years old (41 per cent) respondents form the majority.<sup>207</sup>

Furthermore, the largest part of individuals in Group 3 study in the field of Engineering Science (41 per cent), while 18 per cent of the respondents study Business and Economics. In

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<sup>205</sup> See Figure C2b in Appendix C.

<sup>206</sup> See Figure C3b in Appendix C.

<sup>207</sup> For a complete overview of all age groups see Figure B1a in Appendix B.

contrast, the two fields of study Computer Science as well as Natural Science form together 14 per cent of all responses in this group, which can be seen as a rather poor representation in comparison to other fields.

In addition, almost 70 per cent of the respondents in Group 3 have finished their studies and can be consequently classified as alumni's, which is the highest representation in comparison with Group 1 and Group 2. This shows that respondents in Group 3 received their scholarship for their practice period for some years ago, which might also justify the lower response rate by taking the validity of the E-Mail addresses into account. However, the major part of the remaining respondents (27 per cent) study on a postgraduate level.

### **Opinion about Talent Pools**

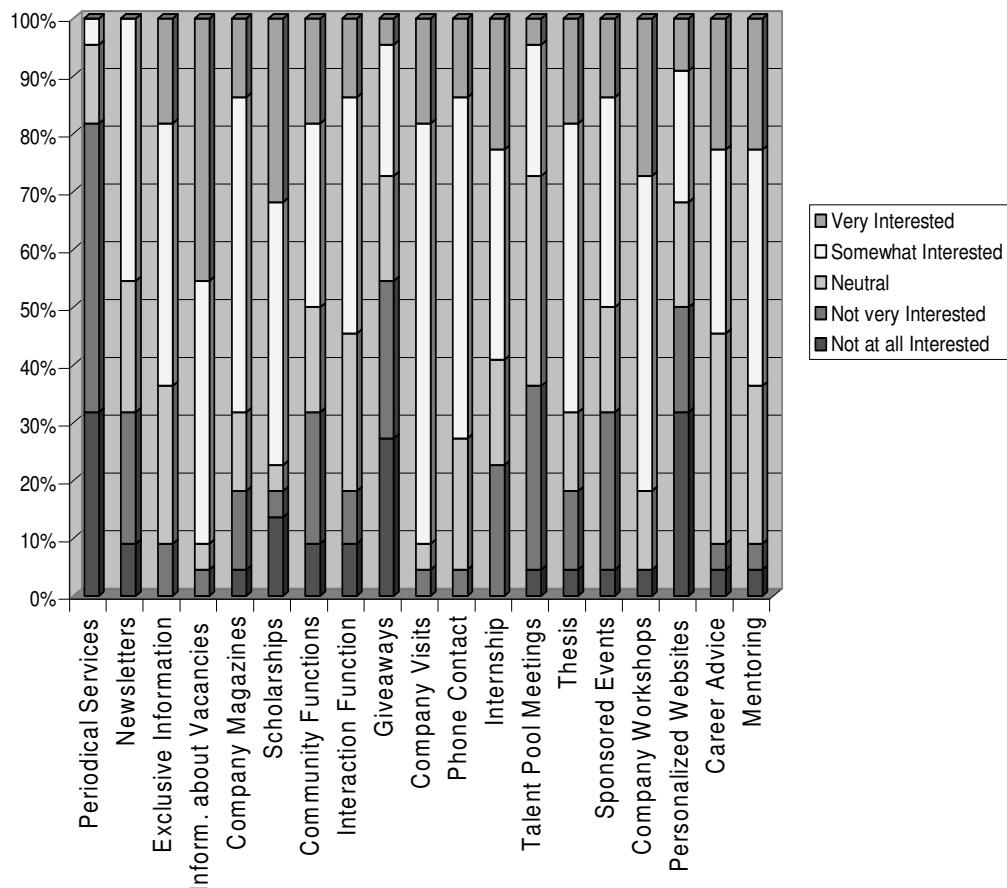
Within Group 3 almost 70 per cent agreed with the statement that the existence of talent pools is beneficial, while none strongly agree. Remaining respondents showed a rather neutral position and chose the scale of neither agree nor disagree.<sup>208</sup> Thus, the answers of this question are unlike the previous groups, more concentrated, but show an overall less positive opinion of talent pools. The rather concentrated pattern on only two scales, agree and neutral respectively, might be due to the 22 valid responses, which appears low in comparison with the other groups.

### **Perception of different TRM instruments**

In parallel to the previous subchapters 7.1.1. and 7.1.2, each stacked bar in the figure below includes only those scales that were chosen by the respondents. By taking this into account, it becomes clear that the highest scale 'very interested' is, for instance, not chosen for the instruments of 'Periodical Services' or 'Newsletter'. In contrary, the lowest scale of 'not at all interested' is not represented among 'Exclusive Information', 'Information about Vacancies', 'Company Visits', 'Phone Contact' and 'Internship', which evokes the impression that these instruments are more appreciated or at least are correlated with a less strong negative attitude from the side of respondents.

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<sup>208</sup> See Figure C1b in Appendix C.



**Figure 7.5:** Perception of TRM Instruments in Group 3

Apart from the first indications made above, the highest interest among respondents in Group 3 is on ‘Information about Vacancies’. In total, nine out of ten responses communicate an interest in this instrument. In addition, ‘Company Visits’ shows an equally high amount of respondents who are interested in this element, even though the distribution of responses between the scale ‘very interested’ and ‘somewhat interested’ is unlike the previous instrument in favour of the second highest scale ‘somewhat interested’. The third highest valued instrument is ‘Company Workshops’ in which 27 per cent of the respondents are ‘very interested’ and another 55 per cent ‘somewhat interested’.

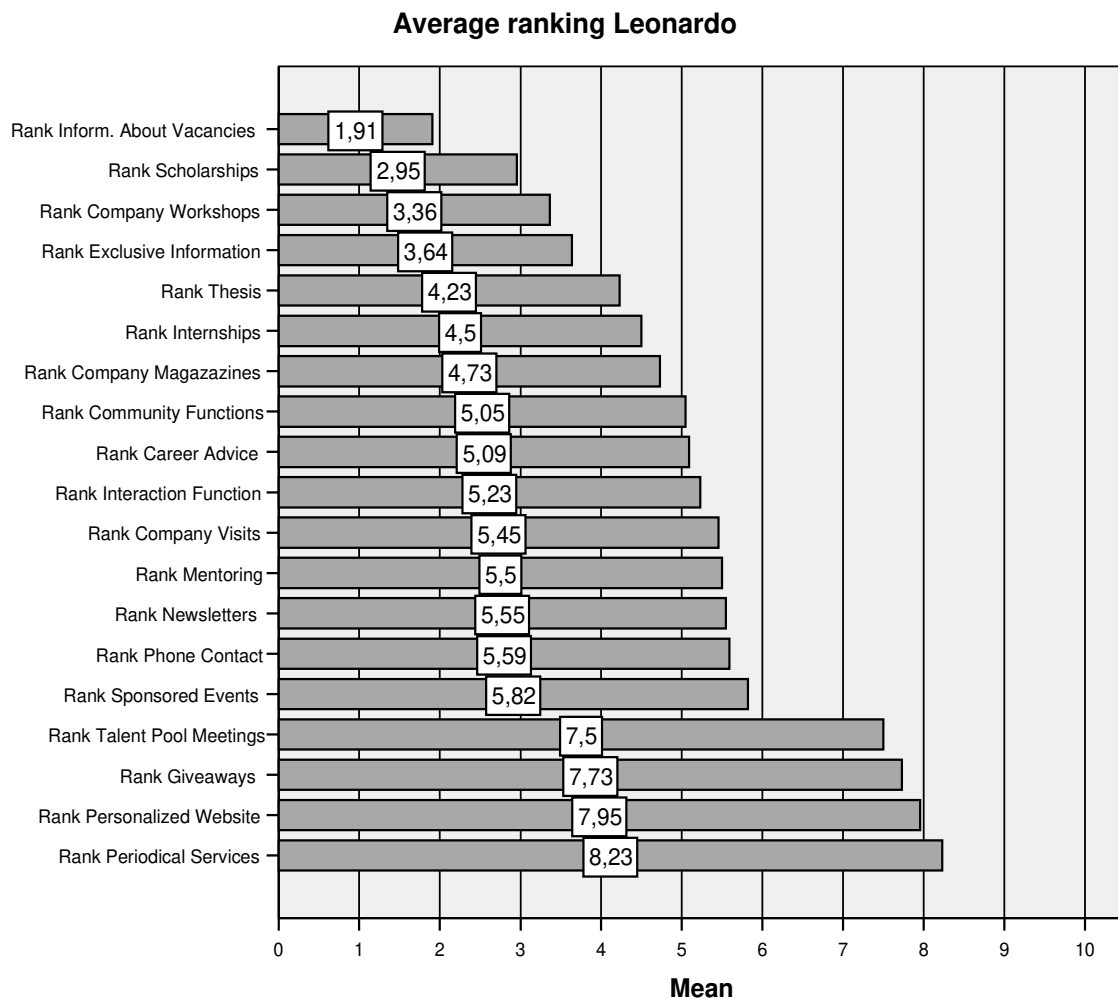
Furthermore, there are three instruments worth mentioning here, which are rather negative perceived by the respondents in Group 3. Whereas 80 per cent are either not very interested or not at all interested in ‘Periodical Services’, over half of the respondents show the same negative perception of ‘Giveaways’ and ‘Personal Websites’.

Instead of showing a clear positive or negative pattern, the TRM instruments of ‘Talent Pool Meetings’ as well as ‘Career Advice’ are with one third of the total responses rather neutrally valued. Nevertheless, the latter one shows, with 55 per cent that are either interested or very interested, a higher level of interest among the remaining respondents, while only one third of the remaining respondents indicate that they are either very interested or interested in ‘Career Advice’.

In an effort to avoid referring to the different perception in detail again, it can be pointed out that the valuation of the instruments shows similar characteristics in comparison to Group 1 and Group 2. This will be more thoroughly discussed in *subchapter 7.1.4*.

### Ranking of TRM instruments

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the respondents' prioritization of the varying TRM instruments in Group 3, they were asked to compare the different items with each other and rank them accordingly.



**Figure 7.6:** Average Ranks of TRM Instruments in Group 3

The figure shows clearly that 'Information about Vacancies' received the highest ranking in Group 3, followed by 'Scholarships' with an average rank of three. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that there is also a tendency towards a prioritization of 'Company Workshops' and 'Exclusive Information'. Most interestingly, the same pattern is prevalent among individuals in Group 2.

In contrast, the lowest ranked instruments and, thus, those with the highest average number, are 'Periodical Services', 'Personalized Websites' and 'Giveaways'. Similar to the highest ranked instruments, there is also a consistent pattern with the lowest ranked TRM instruments of Group 1 and Group 2. Apart from 'Phone Contact', which is in Group 3 positioned rather in the middle, the three instruments can be considered as inappropriate TRM instruments within this group.

### Experience with TRM instruments

The larger part of respondents within this group has either no or little experience with the TRM approach. Six out of ten respondents indicate that they have never been in contact with this approach before, while less than 20 per cent of the respondents experienced sometimes

the concept in terms of its instruments. The findings show considerable less experience than the previous group, although the results of the valuation as well the ranking of the instruments is to a larger extent corresponding to each other.<sup>209</sup>

It becomes apparent that there have hardly been any TRM activities among this group. Therefore, it can be argued that the respondents' answers are based on imaginations and own demands.

Without anticipating any implications for future research, it could be interesting to prove in future studies to which extent respondents remain consistent with their choices once they get it contact with one of the TRM instruments.

### **TRM extension**

Despite of a rather low level of previous experience with the respective instruments, respondents in Group 3 show a clear tendency in favour of an extension of the TRM approach.<sup>210</sup> Six out of ten respondents either strongly agree (ten per cent) or agree (50 per cent) with the statement. In contrary, around one third of the responses show a rather indifferent opinion towards the extension of the organizational TRM approach. This can probably be referred to the lack of experience with the different instruments, as mentioned in the last paragraph.

### **7.1.4 Empirical Findings and Analysis of Total Sample**

After having presented the empirical findings followed by a thorough analysis of Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3, the same procedure is now applied on the total sample.<sup>211</sup> However, the focus of this part lies on pointing out differences not only between each group, but also in terms of demographics. This provides interesting insights and will also play a main role in deriving practical implications for the development and adjustment of the TRM approach. An additional main outcome of this section is to build a bridge to *subchapter 7.1.5*, in where the findings of the ranking in this chapter are considered in a four-field matrix. It is important to consider that the sections *Opinion about Talent Pools*, *Experience with TRM instruments* as well as *TRM extension* are excluded, since their results do not contribute to the main focus of this part.

### **Demographics**

By taking the results of the total sample into consideration, it can be outlined there is a balanced ratio between male and female respondents. Regarding their age, almost half of the responses relate to the age group of 24 – 26, which corresponds to the average age of students who attend their studies on a postgraduate level (77 per cent in the total sample). However, a considerable amount of respondents (one third) indicate to belong to the age group of 21 – 23, while 16 per cent are between 27 and 29 years old.<sup>212</sup>

In the previous subchapters it was consciously avoided to refer to the origin of the respondents in each sample, since apart from the more diversified *sample M*, *sample N + G* consisted mostly out of a single nationality group. Thus, there is an obvious majority of

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<sup>209</sup> See Figure C2a in Appendix C.

<sup>210</sup> See Figure C3a in Appendix C.

<sup>211</sup> For the interested reader, it is important to mention that the total results on the perception of the different TRM instruments as well as its ranking can be found in Appendix D and E.

<sup>212</sup> See Table/Figure B1a in Appendix B.

Swedish, Dutch and German respondents. Nonetheless, nine European, four Asian, one South American and two African countries are represented in the total sample.<sup>213</sup>

Regarding the respondents' field of studies, more than half of them studies in Business and Economic related areas, while the third largest part attends studies in Engineering Science with 8 per cent respectively. The second largest part also indicated as 'others', however, was too diversified in terms of field of studies than to include each study area individually.<sup>214</sup> In addition and as already pointed out above, the major part of respondents in the total sample studies on a postgraduate level. Remaining individuals in this group attend studies on an undergraduate level (5 per cent), doing their Ph.D. (5 per cent) or have already graduated (12 per cent).<sup>215</sup>

By taking the demographic results of the total sample into consideration, it can be seen as advantageous that there is nearly a balance between male and female respondents, since this will increase the comparability of the results. A positive outcome is also the diversification of the age group, which will allow interesting comparisons between the perceptions of certain TRM instruments among varying age groups. The fact that the majority of respondents study currently on a postgraduate level enhances the representativeness of the results, since it can be assumed that this group enters the job market in the near future, which makes the findings of their valuation in particular valuable for companies.

### **Perception of different TRM instruments**

In contrast to the previous sections, the aim of this subchapter is to compare the three different groups towards each other in order to derive practical implications, which will not only enrich the scarce theory in this area, but also guide companies on their way to find the right balance in their portfolio of TRM instruments. To this end, the empirical findings of Group 1 to Group 3 are not only compared in terms of differing samples, but also by means of age, gender, field of studies and stage of studies.

To start with the comparison of each individual group, the three different figures about the perception of TRM instruments (figure 7.1, figure 7.3 and figure 7.5) were included into one illustration.<sup>216</sup> By taking a closer look at the perception of the instruments, it becomes clear that the majority of elements are varying to a greater or lesser extent among the different groups. In contrary, 'Periodical Services', 'Newsletters', 'Exclusive Information', 'Interaction Function', 'Thesis' as well as 'Workshops' show a similar pattern in what respondents' value. Even though the consideration of the respondents' perceptions into one figure allows to draw comparisons between the chosen scales of each group, it is difficult to assess to which extent they are differing from each other.

In an effort to achieve a clearer picture of possible differences between the groups, *bivariate analysis methods* were used, which allow determining whether the differences between the distributions of two variables are statistically significant.<sup>217</sup> In this context, it was of interest to compare the means of three or more unrelated samples. In other words, the group's attribute of department/scholarship should be related to the nineteen different TRM instruments. For the exploration of differences between more than two groups simultaneously

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<sup>213</sup> See Table B3a in Appendix B.

<sup>214</sup> See Table/Figure B5a in Appendix B.

<sup>215</sup> See Table B6a in Appendix B.

<sup>216</sup> See Figure D1b in Appendix D.

<sup>217</sup> Bryman, C. & Duncan, C. (2005) *Quantitative data analysis with SPSS 12 and 13: a guide for social scientists*, London: Routledge, p. 142.

*analysis of variance (ANOVA)* is frequently used. This type of *bivariate analysis* has been chosen since each test is conducted with a 95 % reliability. In other words, if three groups can be compared at once, the reliability remains on the same level, rather than multiplying the reliability measures of each distinct test which would result, for instance, for two tests in  $0,95 \times 0,95 = 0,9025$ .<sup>218</sup>

The measure of interest here is the statistical significance. It delivers an answer to the question if there really is a correlation between two variables in the population. The statistical significance is a probability that ranges from 0 to 1. The lower the value, the less the chance that a correlation is produced by sampling error. A low significance reflects therefore a real correlation in the sample.<sup>219</sup> The criterion or cut-off point is usually set a level of 0.05.<sup>220</sup> By having this in mind, the output of the *one-way ANOVA test* was explored for significantly statistical differences, which were smaller than five times out of hundred or  $< 0.05$ . Table F4a in Appendix F includes all TRM elements which show a significant difference in the respective instruments between Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3. Thus, seven different instruments could be outlined which are characterized by a statistically significant relationship. However, it is important to take into account that this test only indicates whether there is a significant difference between one or more of the groups. It does not say anything about the fact to which extent each group values a certain instrument.

In order to determine where eventual differences between the groups lie, *univariate analysis* has been applied, which is appropriate “when there are several measurements of each of the  $n$  sample objects, but each variable is analysed in isolation”.<sup>221</sup>

As already mentioned above, seven instruments could be outlined with a statistical significant relationship.<sup>222</sup> To start with the first one, ‘Information about Vacancies’ was valued most among Group 1 (USBE) with estimated marginal mean of 1,3, while lowest among Group 3 (Leonardo) with 1,7. The estimated marginal mean of Group 2 lies close to Group 1 with 1,4.

The instrument of ‘Phone Contacts’ is valued highest by Group 3, with an estimated marginal mean close to 2,2. In contrary, Group 2 is least interested (2,8) in this instrument compared with the other groups. Group 1 values this instrument fairly similar to Group 3, but tends to be slightly more neutral though. In addition, Group 1 is most interested in the ‘Internship’ instrument of all the three groups with a score of less than 1,8. The second Group’s interest in this instrument relates to a score of almost 2,2, while Group 3 shows with 2,4 a rather more indifferent opinion.

The following three instruments of ‘Talent Pool Meetings’, ‘Scholarship’ and ‘Career Advice’ show a similar pattern in comparison to the previous one. Thus, Group 1 is most interested in these TRM elements, followed by Group 2 and Group 3 which are more neutral. The last instrument of ‘Mentoring’ deviates considerably from the pattern above. Whereas Group 1 remains most interested with an estimated marginal mean of 1,6, both Group 2 as well as Group 3 are less interested with a score close to 2,4 and 2,2 respectively. These findings will

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<sup>218</sup> Ghauri, P. & Grønhaug, K. (2002) *Research methods in business studies*, Pearson education: Harlow, pp. 148/149.

<sup>219</sup> De Vaus, D. (2004) *Surveys in social research*. Routledge, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, pp. 263/264.

<sup>220</sup> Bryman, C. & Duncan, C. (2005) *Quantitative data analysis with SPSS 12 and 13: a guide for social scientists*, London: Routledge, p. 130.

<sup>221</sup> Aaker, D.A., Kumar, V. & Day, G.S. (2004) *Marketing Research*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 8<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 445.

<sup>222</sup> The graphical outcomes of this test are presented in Figure F4a - F4g in Appendix F.



also be resembled in *table 7.2* where the instrument ‘Mentoring’ accounts for the largest gap between the different groups.

Apart from comparing the respective groups with each other, the consideration of demographical data as a factor in the *ANOVA test* can provide further implications of how to manage and adjust the TRM concept. In terms of the age of the respondents, there is a statistical significant relationship between age groups and the instrument of ‘Scholarship’ as well as the opinion about the extension of the TRM approach. To start with the possibility to receive a scholarship by means of TRM, the valuation is highest within the age groups of 21 – 23 and 24 – 26. With an increase in age, the appreciation of this function decreases down to a more neutral perception among the age group older than 33.<sup>223</sup> Furthermore, the age group 21 – 23 values the extension of the TRM concept most, with an estimated marginal mean of two. The agreement with the statement diminishes as older the respondents are to a rather neutral opinion, while respondents older than 33 value the concept slightly higher again.<sup>224</sup> Taking the deviations in terms of age into account, it can be argued that younger respondents (not older than 26) value financial support by means of a scholarship higher, while older, financially more independent respondents perceive this TRM instrument lower. A similar argumentation can be applied to the second finding. There is a higher interest in the extension of the TRM concept among the younger respondents in comparison to the age group 30 – 32.

An additional comparison can be drawn among the respondents’ gender. Thus, male and female individuals in the total sample have a significant different valuation of the instruments ‘Newsletters’ and ‘Telephone Contact’.<sup>225</sup> A closer examination clarifies that female respondents value both ‘Newsletters’ and ‘Phone Contacts’ higher than their male counterpart do. Whereas men give the first instrument an estimated marginal mean of 3,1, e.g. towards a neutral opinion, women have an average score close to 2,5. A similar pattern can be discovered for the latter instrument, which is valued close to 2,7 for male and close to 2,3 for female respondents. Even though the indicated gap between male and female perception of these two instruments is very interesting, it should be kept in mind that both groups rate these two elements rather neutrally and, thus, it is questionable to which extent both are of practical interest.

An interesting comparison can also be made among the respondents’ field of study and their valuation of the respective instruments. Unfortunately, the representation of the different fields of study in terms of responses was only acceptable in the fields of Business and Economics as well as Engineering Science. Thus, the remaining six groups had to be merged into the group ‘others’. Even though a *bivariate analysis* of these three groups provides an interesting inside, it would have been desirable to have several fields of study to compare the TRM instruments with. However, the one-way *ANOVA test* revealed seven instruments which showed statistical significant relationships. Among those were ‘Periodical Services’, ‘Information about Vacancies’, ‘Company Magazines’, ‘Talent Pool Meetings’ and ‘Career Advice’.<sup>226</sup> All five of them showed a similar pattern in the valuation of the different instruments. While ‘others’ valued the instruments lowest, there was an increase in terms of perception from Engineering Science respondents to Business and Economics related students. In contrary, ‘Scholarship’ is lowest perceived in the field of Engineering Science (2,5), while ‘others’ and Business and Economics show with 1,6 and 1,8 a higher valuation. ‘Company Visits’ and ‘Telephone Contact’ is highest perceived among Engineering Science

<sup>223</sup> See Figure F1a in Appendix F.

<sup>224</sup> See Figure F1b in Appendix F.

<sup>225</sup> See Table F2a in Appendix F.

<sup>226</sup> See Table F3a in Appendix F.

respondents, while the group of ‘others’ valued it significantly lower. By taking these results into account, companies could target and align their TRM instruments more efficiently according to each field of study.

The last *one-way ANOVA* test was carried out to determine whether the differences between the distributions of the stage of studies and the TRM instruments are statistically significant. The only significant difference was concerned with the instrument ‘Exclusive Information’. Respondents in their undergraduate studies are with an estimated marginal mean of 3,3 least interested in this instrument. In contrary, respondents who attend studies on a postgraduate level as well as Ph.D.’s and alumni’s are more interested with a score of 2.<sup>227</sup> It seems that respondents in a later stage of their studies value ‘Exclusive Information’ as for instance an organizational intranet function or a subscription for free search engines more than their counterparts on an undergraduate level. A more representative number of respondents on this stage of studies might have revealed further differences.

### Ranking of TRM instruments

In an effort to ease the comparability between the groups, the results of the average ranking, which were presented in the last sections for each group, are now summarized in the following table.

Ranking	Ranking Group 1	Ranking Group 2	Ranking Group 3
1	Inform. about Vacancies (2,62)	Inform. about Vacancies (2,62)	Inform. about Vacancies (1,91)
2	Mentoring (3,96)	Scholarships (3,01)	Scholarships (2,65)
3	Scholarships (4,13)	Company Workshop (3,95)	Company Workshop (3,36)
4	Career Advice (4,16)	Exclusive Information (4,00)	Exclusive Information (3,64)
5	Company Workshop (4,24)	Internship (4,19)	Thesis (4,23)
6	Exclusive Information (4,27)	Interaction Function (4,53)	Internship (4,5)
7	Community Function (4,47)	Career Advice (4,76)	Company Magazine (4,73)
8	Internship (4,89)	Thesis (5,19)	Community Function (5,05)
9	Interaction Function (5,09)	Company Magazine (5,23)	Career Advice (5,09)
10	Newsletter (5,24)	Company Visits (5,27)	Interaction Function (5,23)
11	Company Magazine (5,25)	Community Function (5,34)	Company Visits (5,45)
12	Company Visits (5,29)	Mentoring (5,38)	Mentoring (5,5)
13	Thesis (6,05)	Newsletter (5,85)	Newsletter (5,55)
14	Phone Contact (6,22)	Talent Pool Meetings (5,91)	Phone Contact (5,59)
15	Giveaways (6,24)	Sponsored Events (6,22)	Sponsored Events (5,82)
16	Talent Pool Meetings (6,27)	Giveaways (6,88)	Talent Pool Meetings (7,5)
17	Sponsored Events (6,31)	Phone Contact (7,03)	Giveaways (7,73)
18	Personalized Websites (7,60)	Personalized Websites (7,12)	Personalized Websites (7,95)
19	Periodical Services (7,65)	Periodical Services (7,54)	Periodical Services (8,23)

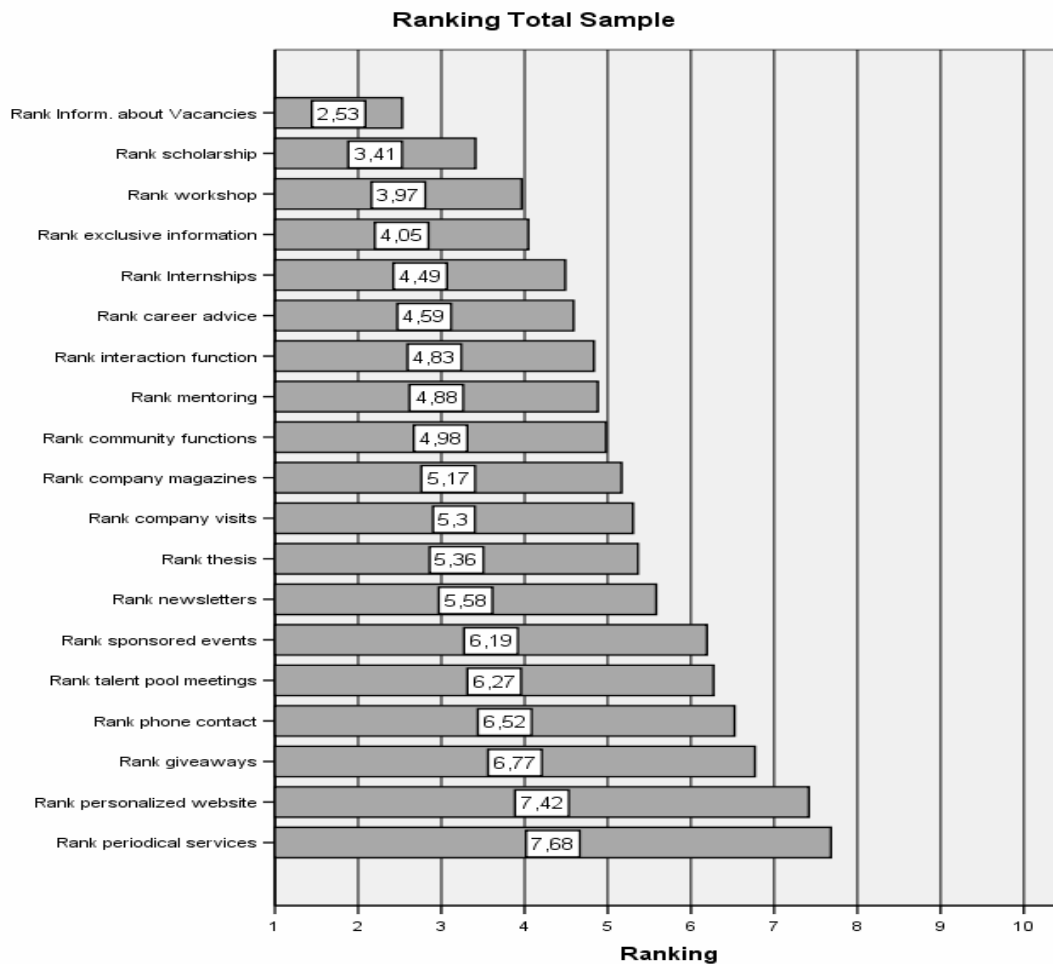
**Table 7.2:** Average Ranks of TRM Instruments of Group 1 – Group 3

The table shows that ‘Information about Vacancies’ is the highest ranked instrument among all three groups, followed by ‘Scholarships’ and ‘Company Workshops’ which are also characterized by a high ranking pattern. The numerical differences among the instruments are in the total sample relatively small, which implies that all instruments expect comparable interest. Most interestingly, ‘Mentoring’ is placed on rank two in Group 2, whereas it is below average in Group 2 and Group 3. Apart from that, there is a rather consistent dispersion of the different instruments in the ranking list. This also holds true for the lower ranked instruments.

<sup>227</sup> See Figure F5a in Appendix F.

Here, ‘Periodical Services’, ‘Personalized Websites’ and ‘Giveaways’ are among others relatively low classified.

The following figure considers the average ranking of each group by calculating the mean value of the respondents’ ranking in the total sample.



**Figure 7.7:** Average Ranks of TRM Instruments in Total Sample

The figure illustrates the average ranks of TRM instruments in ascending order according to the 151 respondents in the total sample. The mean values are calculated by taking the sum of each average rank divided by the total amount of responses. The findings in this figure correspond to the ranking of *table 7.2* Apart from the instrument of ‘Mentoring’ which differs significantly among Group 1 – Group 3, as already mentioned, it appears that Group 3 is most consistent in ranking the different TRM elements, while Group 1 is more diversified in the classification of the elements.

In the following part, the four-field matrix, presented in chapter three, is taken up again and modified in the light of the results of this chapter.

### 7.1.5 Classification of TRM Instruments in four-field Matrix and Summary of the Findings

The four-field matrix of the theoretical chapter was classified into the groups of *convenience*, *content*, *community* and *contact*. Each field contained TRM instruments which were found as

a result of the literature review.<sup>228</sup> The aim of this part is to present the TRM instruments according to their ranking in combination with a short summary of the results of the previous sections.

It is important to mention that the number in front of each TRM instruments indicates the total rank of each element in the total sample.

	Content	Convenience	
Content	1. Information about Vacancies (2,53) 4. Access to Exclusive Information (4,05) 10. Company Magazine (5,17) 13. Newsletters (5,58) 19. Periodical Services (7,68)	6. Career Advice (4,59) 18. Personalized Websites (7,42)	Convenience
Contact	2. Scholarships (3,41) 3. Invitation to Company Lectures/ Workshops/Professional Conventions (3,97) 5. Internship Positions (4,49) 8. Mentoring (4,88) 11. Visit to Company (5,3) 12. Possibility to write Thesis on Commission within the Organization (5,36) 14. Access to Sponsored Company Events (6,19) 15. Talent Pool Meetings/-Parties (6,27) 16. Telephone Contact (6,52)	7. Interaction Functions (4,83) 9. Community Functions (4,98) 17. 'Giveaways' (6,77)	Community
	Contact	Community	

**Figure 7.8:** Modified Matrix of TRM instruments

The figure reflects the ranking results of the total sample in a matrix. The classification enables organizations to find an appropriate 'set of TRM tools', which can be used under consideration of the organizational context and the level of prioritization across talented applicants, as mentioned and illustrated in *chapter 3.3.4*. According to that, companies might choose in situations with a rather low prioritization of candidates among convenience and content related TRM instruments. In this context, 'Information about Vacancies' as well as 'Access to Exclusive Information', for example, can be seen as efficient instruments, since they are ranked highest among the respondents.

<sup>228</sup> Jäger, W. (2004) *Talente finden und binden*, Personal No. 2, 2004, p. 15, Trost, A. (2006) *Talent Management – Kerndisziplinen, Gestaltungsrahmen und strategischer Beitrag zum Unternehmenserfolg*, p. 23, Working paper URL [www.arminrost.de](http://www.arminrost.de) [2007-02-19], Von Dewitz, A. (2006) *Die Gestaltung eines leistungsstarken Arbeitsverhältnisses durch "Talent-Relationship-Management". Ein praxisorientiertes Konzept für mittelständische Unternehmen*, Shaker, pp. 330-345.

However, it is essential to take into account that the findings presented in the four-field matrix are derived from the total sample. In order to achieve a more accurate and effective strategic orientation of the TRM approach, the findings of the *ANOVA test* should be considered, since they can provide further implications of how to manage and to adjust the TRM concept. Here, comparisons of the statistical significant relationships in terms of gender, age, stage of studies and field of studies are of particular interest.

## 7.2 Empirical Findings and Analysis of the Study on Employer Branding

After having finalized the presentation and analysis of the study concerned with TRM, it is the aim of chapter 7.2 to present the interpretation and critical analysis of the empirical findings gained through four interviews with large organizations, which are very successful in the field of Employer Branding. Apart from interview transcripts, internal documents provided by the interviewees as well as published communication material from the participating organizations are used throughout this part. The outline of this chapter is orientated on the order in which the questions have been asked in the interviews. In addition, the analysis of the results is facilitated by linkages and comparisons to the respective theoretical part. In the end, the conceptual framework will be adjusted, depending on the findings of this chapter.

### 7.2.1 Employee Satisfaction vs. Customer Satisfaction

*“Everything clearly starts with our employees”*

vs.

*“Customer satisfaction is number one”*

There seems to be no consistency in the valuation of the importance of employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. The “chicken and the egg story” has always been a matter of different insights, which holds true in this particular situation as well. On the one hand, Company X argues that customer satisfaction has the highest priority. “If our customers are not satisfied, they won’t buy our products and then our company won’t exist”. This can be interpreted as; you cannot have satisfied employees before you have satisfied customers. In this context, it is important to mention that the company works with a certain guideline, which describes that the business is concentrated on creating customer satisfaction. On the other hand, Company Y outlines that everything starts with employee satisfaction, since the company is convinced about the fact that satisfied employees perform better and result in customer satisfaction. This thought is embedded in the organizational strategy. Interestingly enough, Ms. Y points out that satisfied employees attract interesting new assignments, and interesting assignments attract interesting new employees. It becomes apparent that this is perceived as a circle. This relates to the constellation in the conceptual theoretical framework presented in *chapter four*. While there is an indicated relation between employee commitment (mature form of employee satisfaction) and performance (interesting new assignments can be perceived as the performance of the company), there is also a relation between performance and employee attraction.

However, it seems that the prioritisation of either employee or customer satisfaction is depending on the industry sector. Whereas Company Y operates in the service sector, Company X can be considered as a producing company. Therefore, it can be argued that, employees are even a bigger asset when it comes to services rather than products. In contrary, Company Z, which focuses both on products and services, could not indicate a clear preference for either employee- or customer satisfaction. As Ms. Z circumscribes it, “(...) it really depends on each individual division within the organization”. Furthermore, Ms. Z

outlined that although some units argue that they are working with employee satisfaction, this might only be the issue on paper.

Company Q, which operates in the service industry, has no clear preference between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. This is related to the governance model, which is built on the relation between profit, customers and co-workers. To this end, Ms. Q emphasizes: “we don’t put any of these before the other”. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that without satisfied employees, you don’t get a satisfied customer. This shows similarities with the response of Ms. Y mentioned above.

The theory that satisfied employees will finally create satisfied customers resulting in better financial results, as presented in *chapter three*, seems to in particular hold true in service industries.<sup>229</sup> However, the empirical findings do not allow a proper estimation of the importance of employee satisfaction in comparison to customer satisfaction when it comes to either service or product industries. Differences might exist due to different companies or sectors as well. Therefore, it is rather an assumption than a valid conclusion.

### 7.2.2 Loyalty through Employer Branding

*“We are always trying to become better. I think that makes them loyal.”*

Unless the companies have different ways of preferring their employees or customers, the methods to retain them appear to be practically the same. First of all, it appears that the four companies intend to retain their workforce by providing development opportunities. While Company Y and Q work with so called development programs as well as development discussions twice a year, Company Z has extensive internal development opportunities, between different companies of the holding.

Furthermore, the interviewees describe the process of achieving loyalty by keeping them involved in the company, actively carrying out their culture and letting employees’ experience that they are a part of it by taking their input in terms of concerns and requests serious. As Company Y’s global review report outlines, “the culture is the key and this is what sets us apart. When you offer your people a compelling and unique culture, in an organization that puts its people first – and that is strongly value based - you begin to create a place that people are proud to belong to”<sup>230</sup>.

To this end, Ms. Y outlines that the aim is to bring forward their leaders, so everybody knows them and is aware of what they stand for. This is supported by a global survey, which is conducted every other year. The results are important for the development as well as bringing the company forward. “Our employees have the power to influence their everyday working situation.” In contrary, Company X uses an internal document, which is concerned with the values and the corporate culture, to make their employees feel connected to the company.

Apart from these comparable instruments, which are applied among Company X and Z, they are still differentiating from each other in the way loyalty is achieved by means of Employer Branding. To this end, Company X identifies a relationship between motivated employees and their retention. As Ms. X circumscribes it works in both ways; motivated employees are likely

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<sup>229</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 69.

<sup>230</sup> Company Y (2007) *Global Review 2006*, p. 5.

to get loyal, whereas loyal employees are likely to be motivated. In contrast, Company Z believes that employees are likely to stay with the organization because of its solid reputation.

Based on the instruments focused on creating loyal employees, the linking arrow in the conceptual theoretical framework between employee satisfaction and employee commitment can be verified. It can be assumed that satisfaction will rise due to actively involving the employees. In contrast, an arrow in the opposite direction, ranging from employee commitment to employee satisfaction, cannot be added since there is no empirical evidence for this interrelation. The same holds true for commitment through a solid reputation of the company.

However, these insights do provide a better understanding how the overall Employer Branding concept can be carried out since, as introduced in the theoretical part of the thesis, the employer brand equity is described as a desired outcome of the Employer Branding activities.

Concerning the similarities in the approach towards committed employees of the companies, current employees might react differently to similar recruitment efforts of organizations due to the underlying employer brand equity, which differs from company to company.<sup>231</sup> On which rung of the employer brand commitment ladder employees are cannot simply be influenced by pay and benefits as mentioned in the theoretical part. The companies seem, with their focus on development opportunities, to acknowledge the theory of Herzberg, that only interesting, challenging work can do that.<sup>232</sup>

### 7.2.3 Interrelation between Employee Commitment and Organizational Performance

*“(...) it’s not only important to make the employees feel at home at the company and feel that this is a company with good values, it is also very important when you look at our services that we bring to the market (...)”*

All interviewees give an approving answer towards the question, whether there is an interrelation between employee commitment and organizational performance. There is a pattern in their responses that focuses on the way the company works and how a central goal is achieved. In this context, the company’s mission, culture and values which reinforce the strategic alignment seem to play a major role. The respondents argue that committed employees are likely to identify with the organizational culture and values and, thus, support strategic goals, which increases the organizational performance.

In addition, Ms. Z mentions that Company Z looks for interesting employees within the organization and it is made sure that they will be (re)placed in a position where they can be most committed in order to contribute to organizational performance.

This confirms the theory, that engaged and committed employees tend to be more efficient in terms of organizational performance. Furthermore, the employer brand has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction, which creates better financial results.<sup>233</sup> As Ms. X

<sup>231</sup> Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) *Conceptualising and researching employer branding*, Career Development International, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 504.

<sup>232</sup> Herzberg, F. (2003) *One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?*, Harvard Business Review, January 2003, Vol. 81, Issue 1, p. 86.

<sup>233</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 69.

outlines: “loyal employees have the result that it will bring us better performance and that we will perform better and in the end giving more value to the customers and shareholders.” Indirect financial results, however, and thus improving the organizational performance as well as savings on costs associated with sickness-absence<sup>234</sup> were not mentioned by any of the interviewees. This might be explained by the fact that organizational performance is not directly associated with, for instance, indirect financial results.

#### 7.2.4 Employees as Brand Ambassadors

*“All our employees communicate our brand all the time.”*

All interviewees believe that their employers regard their employees as brand ambassadors. Company Z, for instance, offers training for its managers, which focuses on being proud of the company you work for and about communicating that outside the walls of the company itself. Furthermore, motivated employees are sent out to student fairs as ambassadors, which can be considered as active brand advocacy. Whereas Company Z focuses on its managers, Company Y and Q have an introduction program to familiarize new employees with the culture and values in order to carry out a valid message to the external world. Concerning Company Y, apart from highlighting its culture and values for newcomers, it makes use of development programs as well. Interestingly, all internal education programs focus on the company’s culture and values, especially for those who will take a position as a (future) leader. The alignment of a company’s employees with its culture, mission and values can also be accomplished through internal documents, as outlined by Company X “(...) it shows what we stand for and what we want to achieve”. The document has the aim to assure that every employee lives up to the ideas and content, but also to form brand ambassadors, who communicate a consistent and valid message outside the company.

To summarize, the entire group of interviewees outline that their employer considers their employees as brand ambassadors and argue that they can fulfill such a role by being familiar with the culture and values of the respective organization. This is achieved by providing educational development programs, which in particular focus on (future) managers.

By taking that into account, the potential role of employees in linking the internal and external interface is acknowledged as presented in *chapter three*.<sup>235</sup> There is, however, no empirical evidence for the relationship between brand advocacy and customer satisfaction. Nevertheless it can be argued that this relationship holds true, which is underlined by Ms. X’s statement: “if you don’t have a satisfied employee you don’t get a satisfied customer”. In other words, an employee who can highly identify with his work and feels proud of being a member of the organization has a larger influence on achieving customer satisfaction than vice versa. In this context, the link between brand advocacy and customer satisfaction is thought to be proven.

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<sup>234</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 83.

<sup>235</sup> Harris, F. & de Chernatony, L (2001) *Corporate branding and corporate brand performance*, European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 35, Issue 3/4, p. 453. See also Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., p. 57.



### 7.2.5 Retention of Key-Employees through Employer Branding

“(...) *this is a company they want to stay with.*”

The retention of key-employees is assured by means of development opportunities according to the four interviewees. The possibility to grow within the company or to switch function is regarded as the major element within the Employer Branding strategy to prevent key-employees from leaving. Company Z, for instance, ascertains actively that people do not get too limited in their position, by approaching them after they have been working in one function for more than three years. The company distinguishes between different retention instruments, whereby the ones focusing on key-employees concern a mentor program and the raise of salaries. Furthermore, the company makes use of a ‘leadership challenge program’ that concentrates on changing the culture within the company in a positive direction, so that employees are less likely to leave.

Company Y outlines their focus on letting the employee feel at home within the company as well as to let them feel proud of being part of the organization, which was already mentioned in *section 7.2.2*. To this end, Ms. Y stresses that a lot of humor is used as a way of speech, “to signal that this is a company, where it’s possible to bring forward your own ideas”. The instrument of pride is confirmed by Ms. Z’s argumentation that in some way employees will be committed due to the solid reputation of the company.

The empirical findings presented above confirm that customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty as indicated in the *service-profit chain* of *chapter three*<sup>236</sup>. This also corresponds with the highest rung of the employer brand commitment ladder<sup>237</sup>, which states that employees regard the brand as a partner and are devoted to it. Making the employee feel at home and humor are the best examples for that. Furthermore, the empirical findings are supported by *Figure 3.8*, which illustrates the process of committed employees in the theoretical chapter.<sup>238</sup> Thus, retention takes place in situations where employees have a high knowledge about the organization, to which culture and value programs contribute, and where they can identify with the organization, as for instance through feeling of pride.

### 7.2.6 Balance between Internal and External Employer Brand

“*We don’t try to communicate more glamorous values than we have. We try to communicate the true story about our company.*”

The importance of communicating true values, both internally and externally, was outlined among all interviewees. It seems that there is a wide understanding of balancing the internal and external employer brand in order to achieve a level of consistency between both sides. As Ms. Y outlines: “We are aware of that there shouldn’t be a sort of a gap. (...) We don’t want to give hired students a picture what is far away from reality.” The importance of *brand essence*, which is concerned with the communication of the same message between the customer brand and the employer brand, was outlined in *chapter 3.2.4*.<sup>239</sup> It is crucial to

<sup>236</sup> Heskett, J.L. et al. (1994) *Putting the service-profit chain to work*, Harvard Business Review, March-April 1994, p. 166.

<sup>237</sup> See Figure 3.7 in chapter three.

<sup>238</sup> Barrow, S. & Mosley R. (2006) *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 107.

<sup>239</sup> Mosley, R. (2004) *Employer Brand Leadership, A roadmap*, September 2004, p. 9 URL: [http://www.web-dms.net/dms/uploaded\\_files/pib/pib.mdb/downloads/Employer%20Brand%20Roadmap.pdf](http://www.web-dms.net/dms/uploaded_files/pib/pib.mdb/downloads/Employer%20Brand%20Roadmap.pdf) [2007-04-03].

maintain the validity of the consistency element between the internal and external employer brand in order to avoid a so called identity crisis. Undoubtedly, there is a general awareness among the interviewee's that a consistent, adequate and honest Employer Branding messages is needed.

*“We make sure that our employer brand corresponds with the reality, because our employer brand is mostly based on the reputation.”*

The way a balance is achieved differs from company to company. Company Y and Q, on the one hand, carry out surveys on a yearly base to determine if the internal perception of the corporate image corresponds with the external picture. On the other hand, Company Z conducts interviews among its employees to find out what they think about the organization. Brochures and advertising material are additionally used. The consequence, which would result out of an unbalance between the internal and external employer brand, is underlined by Company X. The organization is aware of the fact that employees will start looking for a new employer, when the initial brand promise of their current employer has not been delivered. In addition, it is pointed out that the communication of a message is automatically related to a promise of what the brand stands for. If the receiver of the message starts working at the company, he or she will soon realize that the reality does not match what the firm communicated. As outlined above, this will not only influence the perception of the employer brand negatively, but will most certainly result in a change of employer as well.<sup>240</sup> In his studies, Robinson et al. found that in a situation, where employee's believe that the employer does not live up to its obligations, there is a positive correlation with reduced job satisfaction, intentions to quit and decreased organizational trust as well as job performance.<sup>241</sup>

What remains difficult is the communication of the internal brand outside the company, as described by Company Z. To this end, future employees might see the organization in a different way than it wants to be perceived. Thus, there is an ongoing challenge of getting better in terms of communication with the aim to close the gap between internal and external employer brand.

### **7.2.7 Current vs. Desired Corporate Image**

*“I would say that the internal and external picture is very well synchronized”*

This section is closely related with the previous part. The described balance or unbalance is often a result of a difference between the current and the desired corporate image. The current corporate image, on the one hand, reflects the perception of internal employees and external future employees towards the company. On the other hand, the desired corporate image is what an organization wants to be recognized for. Company's Q vision, for instance, is to be regarded as the most attractive employer in its sector.<sup>242</sup> However, it can be risky and expensive for an organization to take the present employees' picture of the company for granted, while assuming that the most skilled and motivated individuals want to work there. It is simply as Company X describes it, “(...) by making sure that we live up to what we stand for, the image of the company and reality becomes one. This is when we succeed with our

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<sup>240</sup> Company X (2006) *Internal document about Employer Branding*, pp. 4/5.

<sup>241</sup> Robinson et al., S.L. (1994) *Changing obligations and the psychological contract: A longitudinal study*, Academy of Management Journal, Feb 1994, Vol. 37 Issue 1, pp. 141/142. See also Robinson, S.L. (1996) *Trust and breach of the psychological contract*, Administrative Science Quarterly, Dec96, Vol. 41 Issue 4, pp. 575-579.

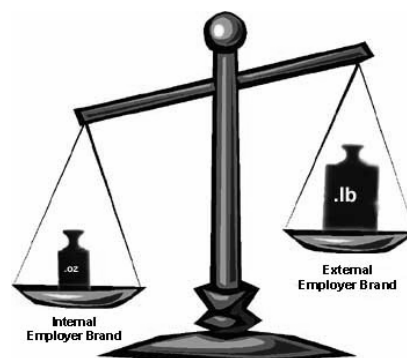
<sup>242</sup> Company Q (2007) *Public Document*, p. 1.

Employer Branding concept.”<sup>243</sup> For Company Y, for instance, the intended image should be externally recognized by “the possibility to grow within the organization, to bring forward your own ideas, to work abroad as well as to enjoy the working day”. In contrary, Company Z builds the desired corporate image around three messages. It is all about the communication of international possibilities, professional challenges as well as the work and development of leading-edge technology. It becomes apparent that the desired image, a company wants to be recognized for, is not only build around the corporate culture and core values, but is also strongly connected with it.

*“If the values are not related to our employer brand then it doesn’t work. (...) our employer brand is the same as our values.”*

The actual position of an organization in terms of its internal and external image and, thus, the gap towards the desired perception is found out through surveys inside and outside the company. Whereas questionnaires among students indicate how different organizations are perceived and which values are associated with them, internal surveys compare to which extent employees are sharing the same picture. Based on the results, companies’ can take actions in order to synchronize the internal and external brand.

The synchronization process can be better exemplified by relating to the conceptual framework in *chapter four*. While the internal brand relates to number two in the figure on the right, the external brand is indicated by a one in the model on the left. As it was mentioned above, it is about balancing and synchronizing both sides in order to assure that the employer brand promises are fulfilled. This process can be exemplified by the illustration below.



**Figure 7.9:** Balancing the Internal and External Employer Brand

The figure should clarify the continuous effort of finding a balance between the internal and external employer brand. Without that, the employer brand would loose its credibility.

### 7.2.8 Total Work Experience and its Effect on the Corporate Image

*“What we say externally is what we provide internally”*

In *subchapter 3.2.7* the *Total Work Experience* has been referred to as a composition of different factors that enhance the attractiveness of an employer towards employees and applicants.<sup>244</sup> *Figure 3.9* indicates that the *Total Work Experience* can consist out of a plurality of different elements. Whereas some factors and initiatives are similar, it seems that

<sup>243</sup> Company X (2006) *Internal document about Employer Branding*, p. 6.

<sup>244</sup> Dibble, S. (1999) *Keeping your valuable employees, Retention strategies for your organization’s most important resource*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., p. 217.

it is crucial for organizations to offer something unique and differentiated in order to not only attract the best people, but also to retain them once they are hired.<sup>245</sup> This can, for example, be achieved by offering operational excellence or leadership development programs that are also focused on increasing the number of women in leadership positions.<sup>246</sup> That tangible benefits, such as remuneration, are playing in this context a minor role is underlined by Company X.<sup>247</sup> This corresponds also with Butler's, Waldroop's as well as Herzberg's view that pay is by far not the most important criteria in influencing an employee's experience towards their work.<sup>248</sup>

However, in parallel to the two previous paragraphs, the importance of reaching a level of consistency becomes apparent. As Ms. Y describes it, "(...) we need to make sure that, what we say externally is what we provide internally". Thus, it is essential that organizational policies are not only in line with the practice, but that they are also reinforced by each other. To this end, Mitchell refers to three marketing principles to sell the brand inside.<sup>249</sup> By focusing on the second principle, which is concerned with linking external and internal marketing, the link to the level of consistency becomes clear. In addition, when it comes to the *Total Work Experience*, it is stressed that it is here in particular important to work closely together with the HR department. Otherwise, there is a risk that something is communicated what finally does not hold true for the company. That this would have a negative impact on the corporate image is pointed out by Ms. Z, who underlines that "... it will be a bad reputation for us when they go out to their friends".

By taking the findings into consideration, it can be concluded that the *Total Work Experience* has a positive effect on the overall corporate image. It is the instruments of the employer brand by means of for instance talent management, personal development or visions and values which attracts potential candidates and keeps current employees satisfied. Nonetheless, it is crucial to communicate the truth outside the company. An unbalanced Employer Branding would not only influence the corporate image negatively, but also diminish the satisfaction among the employees.

Before turning to the next section, it is essential to shortly reflect upon the difficulties of pushing certain messages outside the company, which was already brought up in *section 7.2.6*.

*"(...) it's important for us to be a more attractive company for women, but it's very hard for us to communicate that in a positive way, because not all women within our company think that we are a good employer for them."*

Company Z describes this obstacle as "(...) having some difficulties to really communicate what we have". This is in particular referred to organizational issues, where companies have not achieved excellence yet. This might explain why Company Q and Y, for instance, excludes areas in their external communication towards potential employees, where there is a possibility to get even better. In other words, certain areas are not included in the

<sup>245</sup> Company X (2006) *Internal document about Employer Branding*, p. 5.

<sup>246</sup> Company Z (2006) *Operational Report*, p. 28.

<sup>247</sup> Company X (2006) *Internal document about Employer Branding*, p. 4.

<sup>248</sup> Butler & Waldroop (1999) *Job sculpting – The art of retaining the best people*, Harvard Business Review, p. 145. See also Herzberg, F. (2003) *One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?*, Harvard Business Review, January 2003, p. 86.

<sup>249</sup> MacKenzie and Glynn (2001) Govendik (2001) Ruch (2002) and Bergstrom et al. (2002) in Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., p. 281

communicated employer brand until they are good enough. Without question, this strategy might be in favour of a more credible and consistent employer brand.

### 7.2.9 Employer Branding and the Balance of Unplanned Impulses

*“Employer Branding works on beforehand in order to prevent unplanned impulses”*

In *chapter three*, unplanned impulses have been introduced in combination with branding. It is the interrelation of both which finally creates a certain corporate image. Unplanned impulses refer to any incidents in the business environment of an organization, which would have an impact on the reputation of a company.<sup>250</sup> To this end, Ms. Q believes that the company’s employer brand is equal with the organizational values. “if you feel confident with the company values, I think that can help you and support you in how to react when something unplanned happens”. From the authors’ opinion it seems that the concept of Employer Branding would be used in such a situation to represent a ‘strong company’ rather than vulnerability.

The remaining interviewees describe a rather consistent way on how unplanned impulses are balanced by means of Employer Branding. Company Y and Company Z state that Employer Branding plays an important role on beforehand in combination with a so called *code of conduct*, which is concerned with ethical and moral issues. The document has to be signed by current as well as future employees. “It is part of the employer brand to talk about the ethics framework and the correct way to act in our business”. This holds in particular true for Company Z’s business, which was negatively influenced by a number of scandals in the last decade. Here, the code of conduct, as an instrument of the employer brand, has increased the sense of personal responsibility and accountability in recent years.<sup>251</sup>

The extent to which Employer Branding is used in order to counterbalance unplanned impulses also depends on the prerequisites under which the day-to-day business takes place. It appears that a company, which offers services rather than products, has to focus much more on the concept of Employer Branding. While a producing organization can balance unplanned impulses through their trustworthy products in combination with a strong brand, in a service minded business “it is all the about how the employees act towards the customers”. Any scandals could have a disastrous outcome. This emphasizes the role of Employer Branding as a prevention tool.

In addition, there is an agreement on how to act in situations of unplanned impulses. Ms. Y circumscribes it as “(...) looking at it seriously (...) so you couldn’t just stick your head in the sand”. In parallel, Ms. Z points out that it is important that to know as much as possible about it as well as not to hide it. Another way of dealing with this is not to let them occur at all. “And if small things appear (...) we try to fix them as fast as possible”.

The findings have shown that unplanned impulses play a major role in influencing the creation of a corporate image. However, it cannot be assumed that an impact always has to be negative. There are countless examples, such as the development of a groundbreaking technology, which would reinforce the corporate image in interrelation with the employer brand. However, in reverse situations, it seems that Employer Branding is rather applied for prevention rather than improving the image after an incident took place.

<sup>250</sup> Gregory, J. R. & Wiechmann, J. G. (1998) *Marketing corporate image, The company as your number one product*. Chicago: NTC Business Books, pp. 64/65.

<sup>251</sup> Company Z (2006) *Operational Report*, p. 27.

### 7.2.10 Towards an Identification of the Employer Brand

“(...) many students decide in very early years what companies that are considered to be attractive.”<sup>252</sup>

By taking this quotation into consideration, one of the major aims, when it comes to the acquisition of the most motivated and skilled employees is to assure an identification towards the employer brand. In this context, organizational identity refers broadly to what members perceive, feel and think about their organization. As it was already stated in *chapter three*, it can be seen as a commonly-shared understanding of the company’s distinctive values and characteristics.<sup>253</sup> In an effort to enable an early identification with the employer brand, Ms. X describes this process as “(...) having some ideas of what they want to do and to adjust towards that”. However, it is not about focussing totally on the needs of future employees. It can be rather circumscribed as “meeting somewhere in between”.

That there are fundamental differences between the generations of future employees is highlighted by Company Y. “(...) if you look at those that are born in the 70s (...) that was the generation that had certain demands and certain dreams and if you look at the generation born in the 80s they have in turn different dreams, different wishes for the future”. The consideration of those demands and wishes and, consequently, the adjustment of the external employer brand message can lead to self-categorization. This was referred to as the first stage within developing a *social identity* and is concerned with the wish to belong or not to belong to different salient groups.<sup>254</sup> The process of *social identification* finally takes place when the *self-concept* is in line with or belongs to a social group one aspires. However, it appears to be important to consider that there is a certain cultural framework which cannot be changed. If a company would adapt too much in favour of an identification of future employees with the employer brand, there is a risk that a sudden change in the internal employer brand would unbalance the current employees’ identification with the own organization.

“(...) the best students are those that are fitting into our culture.”

To summarize, it seems that the interviewed companies put a lot of effort behind finding out what future employees expect from their employers. While this knowledge is used to place the company as early as possible as an attractive place to work in the minds of for instance students, it becomes apparent that the extent an organization can adapt towards an identification of the most-wanted students with the employer brand is limited. Instead, “the most-wanted candidates are the ones, which feel that the company’s business is the right business for them”. Thus, it will be a more a question of identifying with the organizational values as well as fitting into their culture rather than having outstanding grades and a sound resume.

### 7.2.11 Summary of Findings and Modification of Conceptual Framework

To start with the companies’ prioritization of customer- or employee satisfaction, the empirical findings did not show any consistence and, thus, did not allow any generalizations which also would hold true for other organizations. Nonetheless, a pattern could be identified, which correlated with the companies’ field of business. In addition, all four interviewees

<sup>252</sup> Company X (2006) *Internal document about Employer Branding*, p. 8.

<sup>253</sup> Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M. (1997) *Relations between organizational culture, identity and image*, European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 31, No. 5/6, p. 357.

<sup>254</sup> Hetrick, S. & Martin, G. (2006) *Corporate Reputations, Branding and People Management, A Strategic Approach to HR*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., pp. 136.

agreed on the fact that without satisfied employees, it will be hard to satisfy any customers. By taking into consideration that a high level of satisfaction among the personnel is achieved by the elements of the *Total Work Experience*, it is without question that Employer Branding plays a key role here.

Furthermore, similarities could be outlined in the way the four interviewed companies achieve loyalty among their employees. In this context, it appears that the instruments of the employer brand as, for instance, talent management or organizational learning are mainly applied. In addition, the company's culture as well as its values seems to be interrelated with an increasing level of loyalty among employees. Thus, the arrow in the conceptual framework between employee satisfaction and employee commitment can be confirmed. As it was already mentioned, it can be assumed that the level of satisfaction will increase, due to an active involvement and consideration of the personnel. To which extent committed employees lead to a higher level of employee satisfaction can within this study not be proven.

In addition, it can be claimed that there is an interrelation between employee commitment and organizational performance. The empirical findings indicate that committed employees are likely to identify with the organizational culture and values as well as to support the strategic goals and, consequently, organizational performance increases. Furthermore, speaking about performance, it is without question that satisfied employees attract interesting new assignments, and interesting assignments attract new employees. Therefore, the relations between performance and employee attraction as well as between employee commitment and performance can be confirmed.

The employer brand model presented in *chapter three*<sup>255</sup>, showed a relationship between employee commitment and the role as brand ambassadors. This link is clearly proven by taking the findings of *question four* into account. In this context, pride in combination with being a member of a company seems to play a major role. Without question, employees who act as brand ambassadors in form of role models can also increase the level of satisfaction among their colleagues. By communicating that outside the organization active brand advocacy takes place, which also has a direct impact on customer satisfaction. An employee who can highly identify with his work and feels proud of being a member of the organization has a larger influence on achieving customer satisfaction than the other way around.

Concerning the question of how key employees are prevented to leave the company, it can be assumed that the possibility to grow within the company or to switch function can be considered as a valuable Employer Branding strategy. In addition, retention is achieved by providing employees with organizational knowledge about the culture and company's values as well as to ensure a high identification with their working place through pride.

One of the main goals of Employer Branding appears to be concerned with achieving a level of consistency. All respondents showed an awareness of having a consistent, adequate and honest Employer Branding message. In addition, there was a similar perception of potential risks when it comes to an unbalance between the internal and the external message. The importance of the level of consistency was also reflected in the findings of the seventh question. The employer brand succeeds when the current and the desired image becomes one, as one of the interviewees described it. In an effort to illustrate this process, the former rectangle of image in the conceptual framework has been divided into current and desired

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<sup>255</sup> See Figure 3.14 in chapter three.

corporate image in order to give consideration to the companies' endeavour of synchronizing both sides.

A positive effect on the overall corporate image could be outlined by means of *Total Work Experience*. The comprised instruments are playing not only an important role in becoming an appealing place to work for future employees, but also in satisfying current employees. Thus, the linkage between these elements in the conceptual framework can be proven. Furthermore, the varying elements of the *Total Work Experience* lead also to employee commitment and, consequently, to an increased retention of key personnel. Therefore, an additional link between *Total Work Experience*, *Employee Commitment* and *Retention* can be added in the model.

In addition, Employer Branding plays an important role on beforehand when it comes to unplanned impulses. This function in preventing and balancing unplanned incidents can be associated with a '*pulling effect*'. Depending on the scenario, unplanned impulses are 'pulled out' as good as possible in order to prevent a negative impact on the corporate image.

In order to assure social identification of potential employees with the employer brand of a company, the interviewees described different ways of how a deeper understanding of the applicants' expectations is gained. Nonetheless, the adaptation of the employer brand towards future employees is limited. This can be explained by the fact that a sudden change in the internal employer brand would unbalance the current employees' identification with the own organization. Instead, an applicant has to identify with the culture and company's values, which form together the unique organizational identity.

By taking the summary of the findings into consideration, the conceptual framework of *chapter four* can be modified. It is important to mention that elements displayed in gray indicate modifications in comparison to the former model.



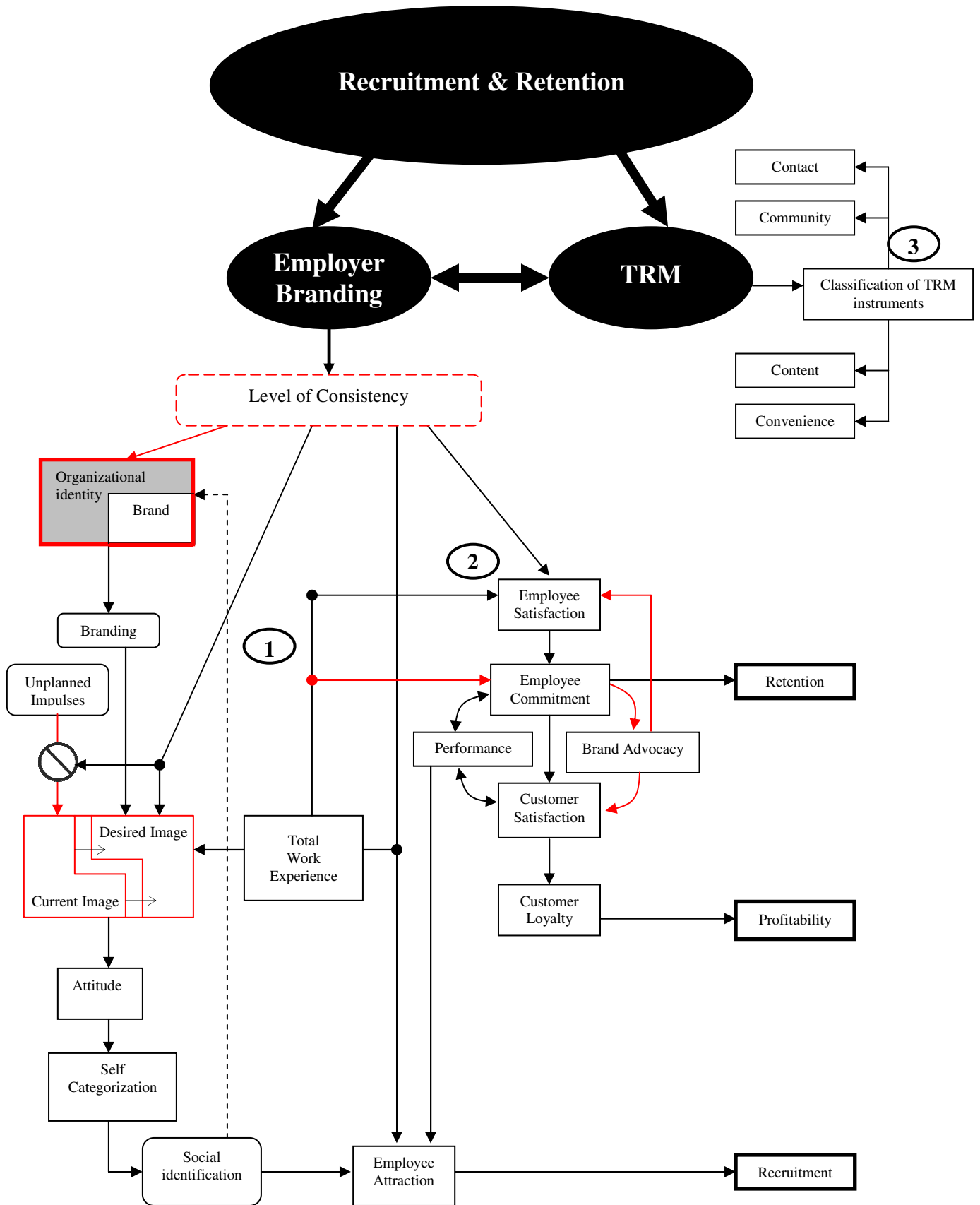


Figure 7.10: Modified Conceptual Framework

Hopefully the modifications done in the model are obvious, however, in order to avoid any misinterpretations, the major changes in the figure will now be referred to in order to facilitate its understanding. To start with the added level of consistency between the internal and external employer brand, from the authors' point of view it became evident how important a balance between these two parts is. This can also be associated with a scale, which has the aim to find a balance between both sides, as illustrated in *Figure 7.9*.

Second, the bold frame around organizational identity on the upper left hand side indicates the described limited 'space' of changing or adapting the employer brand towards the expectations of future employees. Third, the 'sign' between unplanned impulses and the corporate image reflects the described 'pulling' or prevention function of the Employer Branding concept. Finally, the division of the image rectangle indicates the companies' endeavour of synchronizing current and desired image.

It is the aim of the *next chapter* to answer the stated research question and to come to a conclusion by taking the key findings of this chapter into consideration.

## 8. CONCLUSION

*In this chapter, conclusions are drawn from the empirical findings and the analysis of the previous chapter in order to answer the research questions. This is combined with managerial implications, since the managerial element is already included in the research question. Finally, some suggestions for future research are presented.*

### 8.1 Conclusion and Managerial Implications

This master thesis has introduced the approaches of Employer Branding and TRM as two fairly new concepts of the HRM arena, which have the aim to support companies effectively in their endeavour to approach, acquire and retain the most talented employees. To this end, the first underlying research question, which was concerned with the Employer Branding approach was the following:

*What does an effective Employer Branding strategy need to contain and how should the concept be managed in order to attract, recruit and retain a high potential workforce?*

The extensive literature review of *chapter three*, which resulted in the construction of the conceptual framework, has provided an insight in the internal and external determinants, which together form an appealing employer brand. By taking the empirical findings into consideration, it got evident that it depends on the organizational context if there is a focus in favour of customer- or employee satisfaction. Nonetheless, from the authors' opinion the internal employer brand process should start with satisfied employees, since this is clearly interrelated with loyalty and brand advocacy. In the same way companies expect their employees to live the employer brand outside the organization, employees can expect from their employer to be put in the first place. The goal to obtain satisfied customers will then be a naturally outcome of committed personnel, which feels proud to work for the organization. However, highly committed employees need to be enabled to speak in favour of the company in order to let brand advocacy have the biggest effect. Thus, they should play a more active role in company visits and student fairs, where they not only act as brand ambassadors, but also provide a true picture of the corporate culture and values.

In addition, it seems that there is a continuous organizational effort to achieve a level of consistency between the internal and external employer brand. An effective and consistent employer brand message is accomplished when the current and the desired corporate image becomes one. Thus, there should not only be a focus on diminishing the gap between both sides, but it is also crucial to assure that true external communication takes place. This can be achieved by an ongoing evaluation of the external and internal perception of the corporate image. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that the orientation of the Employer Branding strategy might depend on the respective target groups. Whereas throughout this study the perspective of students and graduates has been in focus, it can be assumed that there is a different valuation and communication among other groups. However, the given space for adaptation of the Employer Brand towards future employees appears to be limited.

In today's business environment, companies encounter many obstacles which could affect the corporate image negatively. Employer Branding plays an important role on beforehand when it comes to these unplanned impulses. Nevertheless, it is essential that employees at all levels are aware of the culture, norms and values of the organization in order to facilitate the 'pulling effect' of the employer brand. These educational activities can be part of the *Total Work Experience*, which plays an important role in achieving a high level of satisfaction among the employees as well as to transform the organization into an appealing place to work for.

The second underlying research question was concerned with the TRM approach and its instruments.

*How can the TRM approach be successfully managed and which instruments are essential to sustain a pool of highly skilled and motivated candidates over a long period of time?*

The presentation of the empirical findings in the previous chapter, obtained from a survey among 151 respondents, has provided an answer to the question of which instruments are required for a successful adjustment of the TRM approach. To this end, a comparison of the results among the three groups has shown a rather consistent pattern in the perception and ranking of the instruments. In addition, the *bivariate analysis* of the data has highlighted differences among the results in terms of age, field of study, gender and stage of study. Without question, this can provide further implications of how to manage and adjust the TRM concept. In an effort to classify the 19 instruments in a more consistent way, a four-field matrix was derived, which arranged the elements according to their characteristics. Under consideration of the organizational context and the level of prioritization across talented applicants, the four-field matrix should help organizations in their endeavour to find a more appropriate 'set of TRM tools'. In this context, it appears that the instruments 'Information about vacancies', 'Scholarship', 'Company Workshops' as well as 'Exclusive Information' are among the most valued ones. These instruments show a certain level of more value in comparison with, for instance, 'Periodical Services', 'Personalized Websites' or 'Giveaways', which most respondents do not perceive as interesting. This sensation might be associated with the abundance of these instruments in every day life. Thus, it can be argued that the focus should rather lie on offering something extraordinary, which also matches with the perceptions of the target group. Here, the comparisons in terms of the respondents' demographical data and their valuation of certain instruments should deliver a more explicit picture.

However, instead of seeing the provided ranking as a universal solution to the question which instruments are ranked highest, it is rather the organizational context and the combination of some of the elements which will help to build a long term relationship with talented candidates. Undoubtedly, success in the '*battle for talents*' can be achieved by differentiating the organization from others on the labour market. An innovative TRM strategy, which comprises a good composition of instruments, will not only lead to a competitive and promising talent pool, but also to a positive perception of the employer brand, which also attracts the attention of other talented candidates.

By taking into consideration that more than half of the respondents state that they have never or rarely experienced any TRM instruments in combination with over two thirds of them, which show a clear opinion in favour of an extension of the concept, it should be reason enough for companies to intensify their effort towards the TRM approach. A place among the most innovative and appealing employers on the labor market would be ensured.

Before dealing with the topic of future research, it is important to take the limited applicability of both concepts for small and medium sized enterprises (SME) into account. A closer look at the results of Employer Branding surveys reveals only large organizations in the rankings. Even though it cannot be claimed that it is all about size, it is without question that a huge organization can provide more resources for the strategic development of the corporate employer brand than smaller ones. In this context, it seems questionable to which extent SME are able to compete with larger companies on the labor market for talented applicants. This

holds also true for the application of the TRM concept. Whereas major companies can invest a considerable amount of money in sophisticated E-Recruitment systems, which already include the administration of talent pools, SME will most likely not have the resources for an adequate dedication towards TRM.

### **8.2 Future Research**

While working on the master thesis, a number of ideas concerning future research occurred to us. To start with, the conceptual framework can be seen as a map of theories and issues relating to the research topic. In other words, it is a composition of theories, which appeared to be of interest for this study. Thus, no matter how solid the conceptual framework is, there is always a risk that true empirical aspects have been omitted from this thesis. It could therefore be of interest to conduct a quantitative study among a larger number of organizations to get a more complete picture of the determinants of the Employer Branding concept.

Furthermore, it could be interesting to scrutinize the employer brand of companies which operate in ethical sensitive businesses, as for instance organizations in the tobacco industry. Here, the research purpose could focus on comparison and identifications of possible dissimilarities. In addition, organizations that operate on a Business to Business level rather than Business to Customers might be less known and, therefore, the requirements for the Employer Branding concept might be higher.

Concerning TRM, future research could focus on the perception and prioritization of the different instruments of respondents, who have a greater experience with this approach. Thereby, it could be interesting to draw comparisons between the empirical findings of this thesis and future research in order to determine differences in the respondents' valuation after they have got in contact with certain instruments.

A final suggestion is concerned with taking another perspective than those of students and graduates. Hence, it could be interesting to embrace other target groups both for the concept of Employer Branding as well as TRM.

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**Link to Transcripts of the Telephone Interviews:**

[http://docs.google.com/View?docid=df5whrfv\\_4grvd4z](http://docs.google.com/View?docid=df5whrfv_4grvd4z)

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## Appendix A – Invitation Letters and Interview Guide

### A1a – Invitation letter survey

# Talent-Relationship-Management Questionnaire

**University of Umeå**  
Umeå School of Business  
Samhällsvetarhuset  
901 87 Umeå  
Sweden

E-mail: [ansmak04@student.umu.se](mailto:ansmak04@student.umu.se)  
[roj0001@student.umu.se](mailto:roj0001@student.umu.se)

03<sup>rd</sup> April 2007

Dear fellow students,

We are two Master Students at the Business School of Umeå, Sweden. At the moment we are writing on our Master Thesis which investigates the concept of Talent-Relationship-Management. One important part of the thesis is a web-based questionnaire. The aim of the survey is to gather data about students' perception of different Talent-Relationship-Management elements. We are hoping that you can help us by giving us five minutes of your time to answer the survey. Your responses are important in understanding patterns between different instruments as well as to derive managerial implications out of it.

The questionnaire should take you less than five minutes to complete. Please answer the questions in the space provided. If you wish to add further comments, please feel free to do so in the end of the survey. The information you provide will be treated with strict confidence since the questionnaire is anonymous.

To start the questionnaire, please click on the link provided below. Your web browser will forward you automatically to the beginning of the survey.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=592723602515>

We hope that you will find completing this short questionnaire enjoyable, since most of you have already got in contact with some of the instruments which are part of the Talent-Relationship-Management approach. Please complete the questionnaire latest by the **20<sup>th</sup> of April 2007**. If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact us via email.

Thank you for your help.

Andreas & Robin

**A1b – Follow up E-Mail Survey**

**Talent-Relationship-Management  
Questionnaire – Follow up E-Mail**

**University of Umeå**  
Umeå School of Business  
Samhällsvetarhuset  
901 87 Umeå  
Sweden

E-mail: [ansmak04@student.umu.se](mailto:ansmak04@student.umu.se)  
[roj0001@student.umu.se](mailto:roj0001@student.umu.se)

11th April 2007

Dear fellow students,

About a week ago you received an E-Mail from us with the request to help us fill in a survey about Talent-Relationship-Management for our Master Thesis.

We have not received your answer yet. The E-Mail might have ended up hidden together with the Easter eggs... We therefore send you this reminder E-Mail with the link to the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=592723602515>

For the credibility of our data, it is important to achieve a certain response rate. Your contribution will be of great value for us and will, furthermore, contribute to a deeper understanding of the different instruments of Talent-Relationship-Management.

We kindly ask you to reconsider giving us five minutes of your time to fill in the questionnaire and at the same time widening your knowledge about Talent-Relationship-Management. You might benefit from it in the future when you are yourself part of an application process.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=592723602515>

Thank you!

Andreas & Robin  
Master students at USBE

If you after all decide not to participate in our research you can remove yourself out of the E-Mail list by clicking on the following link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=5360215>

## A1c – Screenshots of web-based questionnaire

### Talent-Relationship-Management Survey

#### 1. Introduction

The aim of this survey is to gather data about the perception of graduates concerning the use of Talent-Relationship-Management. It contains a variety of questions about your study background and your opinion about different Talent-Relationship-Management elements.

The aim of the Talent-Relationship-Management concept is to build up a long-term relationship with particular talented candidates in order to consider them for future vacancies.

The completion of the 13 questions should take you 5 minutes.

Click "Next" to get started with the survey.

#### 2. Demographics

Please specify your age group, your gender and your country of origin.

\* 1. What is your age?

\* 2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

\* 3. What is your country of origin?

#### 3. Background of your studies

Please provide us with some information about your background of study.

\* 4. To which program/department are you belonging to or have you belonged to?

Umeå School of Business

VSB Scholarship Program

Leonardo da Vinci Stipendien Programm

\* 5. What is your field of studies?

Business and Economics

Computer Science/Technology

Engineering Science

Law

- Medicine
  - Natural Sciences
  - Teacher Education
  - Other (please specify)
- 

**\* 6. What is the status of your current studies?**

- Undergraduate Studies (e.g. on Bachelor level)
  - Postgraduate Studies (e.g. on Master level)
  - Ph.D.
  - Alumni (Graduates)
  - Other (please specify)
- 

**4. Talent Pools and Talent-Relationship-Management**

**The concept of Talent Pools:**

- 1. Applicants that are not considered for a job or those who are leaving the company after a temporary internship**
- 2. Profiles of talented candidates will be saved in so called talent pools**
- 3. Talent pools serve as a database for recruiting purposes for future vacancies**

**\* 7. I can benefit from the existence of talent pools.**

- |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly Agree        | Agree                 | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Disagree              | Strongly Disagree     |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**\* 8. Candidates within talent pools can be approached by different relationship instruments.**

**To which extent are you interested in the following Talent-Relationship-Management functions?**

	Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Neutral	Not very interested	Not at all interested
1. Periodical services as birthday or Christmas (e-)cards/e-mails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Newsletters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Access to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

exclusive information (organizational intranet, free search engines)					
4. Information about open job positions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Company magazines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Scholarships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Community functions (discussion forum, career chats with HR department)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Interaction functions (competitions, case studies, surveys)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. 'Giveaways' (advertising gifts)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**5. Talent-Relationship-Management, second part**

**\* 9. To which extent are you interested in the following Talent-Relationship-Management functions?**

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neutral	Not very interested	Not at all interested
10. Visit to the company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Telephone contacts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Internship positions exclusively for individuals in talent pool	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Talent pool meetings, -parties (social activities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Possibility to write thesis on commission within the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Access to sponsored company events (culture, sports, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>







company										
Possibility to write thesis on commission within the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Telephone contacts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\* 12. Have you previous experience of Talent-Relationship-Management instruments?**

Very often      Sometimes      Not sure      Little      Never

**\* 13. Companies should further extent their Talent-Relationship-Management approach in the future.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

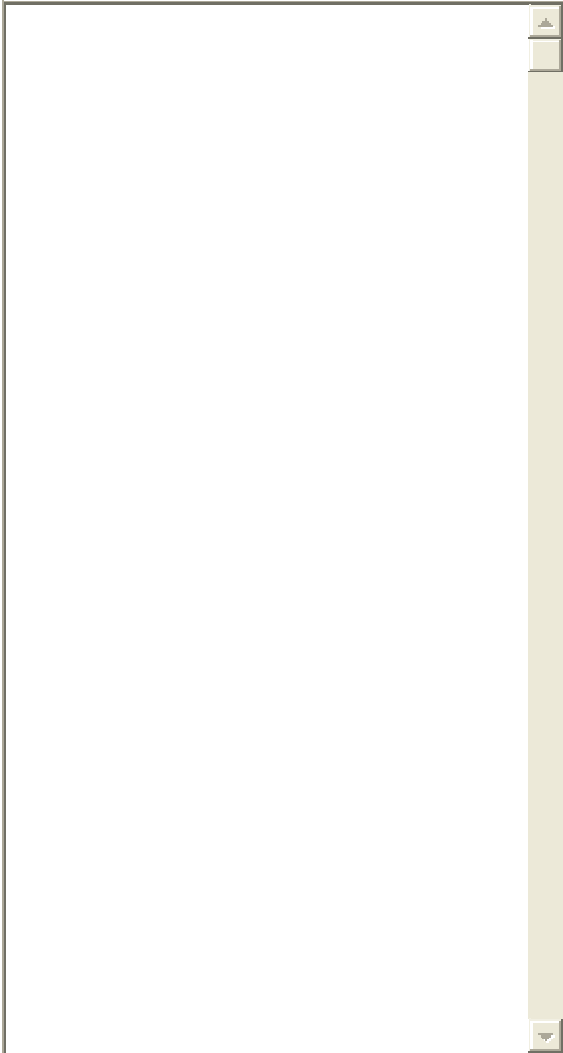
**7. Thank you for your participation!**

Your answers will contribute to a deeper understanding of the different instruments of Talent-Relationship-Management.

Andreas & Robin

Master Students at the Umeå School of Business, Sweden

**14. Questions, additional comments or requests for the results of this study.**



**A1d – Overview of the four different samples in combination with response rate**

Sample	Characteristics of Sample	Origin	Survey sent	Survey reminded
M	Master Students USBE	Sweden	03.04.2007	11.04.2007
IBP	International Business Program Students USBE	Sweden	03.04.2007	11.04.2007
VSB	VSB Scholarship Program	The Netherlands	03.04.2007	11.04.2007
Leonardo	Leonardo Da Vinci Scholarship Program	Germany	03.04.2007	-

Sample	n students	n E-Mails undeliverable	n declined	n answers	Response Rate <sup>a</sup>	Method of distribution
M	127	0	6	63	49,6	Students' E-Mail Addresses through E-Mail List
IBP	31	2	1	7	24,1	Students' E-Mail Addresses through E-Mail List
VSB	213	10	1	87	42,9	Students' E-Mail Addresses through E-Mail List
Leonardo	147	-	-	32	21,7	Program Coordinator (student/private E-Mail Addresses)

<sup>a</sup> response rate = 
$$\frac{\text{total numbers of respondents}}{\text{total number in sample - unreachable}}$$

**A2a – Cover Letter Telephone Interviews**

# **Employer Branding - Telephone Interview**

**University of Umeå**  
Umeå School of Business  
Samhällsvetarhuset  
901 87 Umeå  
Sweden

E-mail: [ansmak04@student.umu.se](mailto:ansmak04@student.umu.se)  
[roj0001@student.umu.se](mailto:roj0001@student.umu.se)

05<sup>th</sup> April 2007

Dear Mrs QXYZ,

We would like to start by expressing our appreciation for your participation in our study. A few minutes of your time will contribute positively to our Master Thesis on Employer Branding.

As we agreed upon in our initial telephone contact last Monday, we hereby send you a preliminary version of the questions, as you might expect them during the telephone interview.

You have experience that would be of value to us and we would very much like to know your view on how QZYX makes use of the Employer Branding concept.

An outline of the telephone interview structure is attached. The interview is planned to be carried out in week 16 or later, depending on your time and schedule. It would be great if you could get back to us via E-mail to suggest time and date that suits you.

We are aware of the need to treat our results with the utmost confidentiality. No source, individual or organization will be identified or commented, without the express permission of the originator.

If you wish further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

We are looking forward to speaking to you soon.

Thank you in advance,

Andreas Macioschek & Robin Katoen

Master Students at Umeå School of Business

## **A2b – Interview Guide Telephone Interviews**

### **Planned process of the interview**

- We thank the participant for the participation on the telephone interview.
- We will give an overview about the purpose of our thesis and shortly indicate that the interview questions are based on a conceptual framework, which was derived out of the theoretical part.
- We explain the further progress after the interview is carried out. In other words, that we will transform the recorded data into a written documentation. The written document will be sent to the interviewee to check the transcription in terms of correctness.
- We give a guarantee that we treat all received information confidentially and present the information anonymously.
- Then we ask for an introduction of the interview partner (position, field of responsibility, track record) and start with recording at the same time.
- Start with interview questions.

## **A2c - Presentation of the Participating Companies/Interviewees in the Qualitative Study**

### **ABB**

Located in over a hundred countries and with 108.000 employees worldwide, ABB is the global leader in power and automation technologies. The company provides products and services to improve power grid reliability, increase industrial productivity and enhance energy efficiency marketed to industrial and commercial customers.<sup>256</sup> According the Swedish Edition of the Universum European Graduate Survey of 2006, ABB is preferred by 15,9 per cent of Engineering and Science students and ranked on the third place. Within ABB Sweden, Ms. Elisabeth Österlund participated as an interviewee. She is in charge of the Employer Branding concept of ABB in Sweden.

### **Ernst & Young**

A revenue of 18.4 billion USD in 2006 was achieved by providing a wide range of services including accounting and auditing, tax reporting and operations, tax advisory, business risk services, technology and security risk services, transaction advisory, and human capital services. In total 114.000 people are working for Ernst and Young in 140 countries. The company was elected as the best employee in Sweden of the year 2007.<sup>257</sup> In the Universum ranking, E & Y is ranked on the second place select by 15,9 per cent of Business students. Ms. Sanna Östberg, in charge of corporate communications of Employer Branding for Ernst & Young in Sweden participated as an interviewee.

### **Swedbank**

Swedbank provides financial services to customers in Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and employs 17.000 employees. The company were named 'Bank of the year 2005' in Sweden. Recently the bank changed its name from the pervious one, FöreningsSparbanken, established after the merger between two Swedish banks. Swedbank serves 8.9 million private and another 460.000 corporate customers in the countries mentioned.<sup>258</sup> According to the Universum ranking, Swedbank is ranked on the eighth place with 10,1 per cent of all Business students votes. Within Swedbank, Sweden, Ms. Therese Karlsson works with Human Resources and Employer Branding towards students as well as a project manager in telephone banking and online banking projects.

### **Volvo**

As one of the leading suppliers of commercial transport solutions providing products such as trucks, buses, construction equipment, drive systems for marine and industrial applications as well as aircraft engine components, the Volvo group includes more than the Volvo brand is associated with. To this end the company markets the brands Mack, Renault Trucks and Nissan Diesel. Other, less known brands on the European market are Prevost Car and Nova Bus. Volvo Group employs more than 90.000 employees in 58 countries. Volvo cars has been sold to the Ford group in 1999 and, thus, does not belong to the Volvo group anymore.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> ABB (2007) *Annual Report 2006* URL:

<http://search.abb.com/library/ABBLibrary.asp?DocumentID=AROR2006EN&LanguageCode=en&DocumentPartId=&Action=Launch> [2007-05-14].

<sup>257</sup> Ernst & Young (2007) *Delivering on our promise*, Global Review 2006 URL: [https://eyo-iis-pd.ey.com/Tour/GlobalReview2006/GLOBAL\\_REVIEW\\_06\\_index.html](https://eyo-iis-pd.ey.com/Tour/GlobalReview2006/GLOBAL_REVIEW_06_index.html) [2007-05-14].

<sup>258</sup> Swedbank (2007) *About Swedbank* URL:

<http://www.swedbank.com/sst/inf/out/infOutWww1/0,,136546,00.html> [2007-05-14].

<sup>259</sup> Volvo Group (2007) *Annual Report 2006* URL: [http://www.volvo.com/group/global/en-gb/investors/financial\\_reports/annual\\_reports/](http://www.volvo.com/group/global/en-gb/investors/financial_reports/annual_reports/) [2007-05-14].



## APPENDIX A

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Volvo is ranked on the eighth place with 12,5 per cent of the votes among Engineering and Science students. Alexandra Alfredsson participated as an interviewee. She is in charge on a national level for student relations and Employer Branding and works also with Volvo's trainee program.

The companies are listed in alphabetic order and will in the analysis part of chapter seven be referred to as letters in order to ensure the anonymity of the respondents.

**Appendix B – Overall Demographic Statistics**

Table B1a – Age Group in total sample

**Age Group in total sample**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	21-23	46	30,5	30,5	30,5
	24-26	68	45,0	45,0	75,5
	27-29	24	15,9	15,9	91,4
	30-32	8	5,3	5,3	96,7
	older than 33	5	3,3	3,3	100,0
	<b>Total</b>	151	100,0	100,0	

Figure B1a – Age Group among total sample and samples M/IBP, N, G respectively

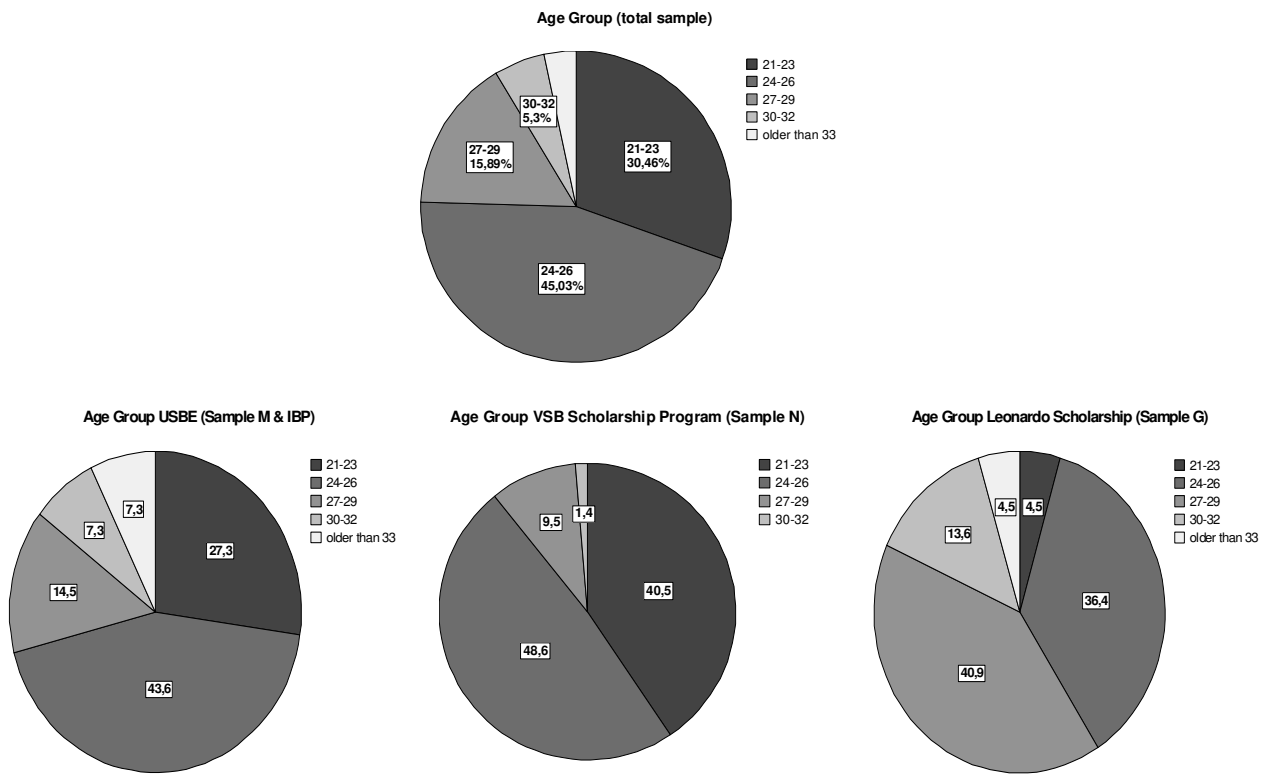


Table B2a - Gender in total sample

**Gender in total sample**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	77	51,0	51,0	51,0
	female	74	49,0	49,0	100,0
	<b>Total</b>	151	100,0	100,0	

APPENDIX B

Figure B2a – Gender among samples M/IBP, N, G respectively

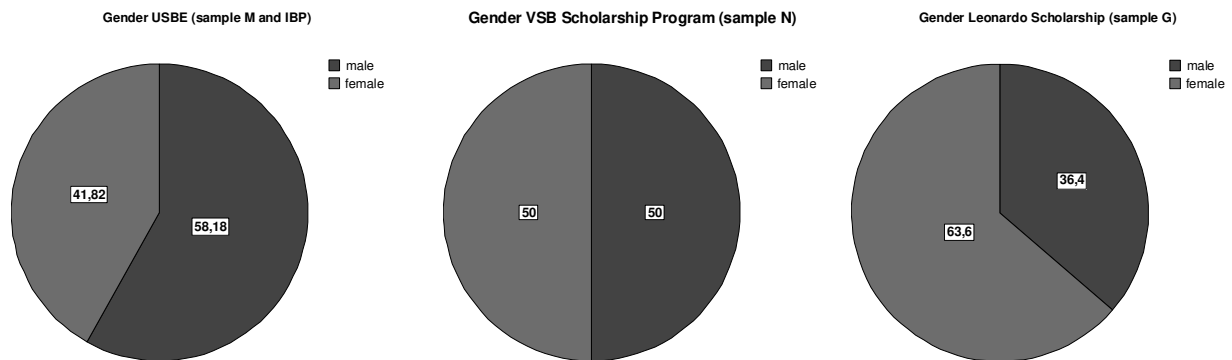


Table B3a – Country of Origin in total sample

Origin in total sample

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bangladesh	1	,7	,7	,7
	Belgium	1	,7	,7	1,3
	Brazil	1	,7	,7	2,0
	China	5	3,3	3,3	5,3
	Czech Republic	2	1,3	1,3	6,6
	Finland	3	2,0	2,0	8,6
	France	5	3,3	3,3	11,9
	Germany	26	17,2	17,2	29,1
	Hungary	1	,7	,7	29,8
	Morocco	1	,7	,7	30,5
	The Netherlands	72	47,7	47,7	78,1
	Pakistan	1	,7	,7	78,8
	Poland	2	1,3	1,3	80,1
	Portugal	1	,7	,7	80,8
	Somalia	1	,7	,7	81,5
	Spain	1	,7	,7	82,1
	Sweden	24	15,9	15,9	98,0
	Thailand	1	,7	,7	98,7
	United Kingdom	2	1,3	1,3	100,0
	<b>Total</b>	151	100,0	100,0	

Table B4a – Program/Department in total sample

Program/Department in total sample					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Umeå School of Business	55	36,4	36,4	36,4
	VSB Scholarship Program	74	49,0	49,0	85,4
	Leonardo da Vinci Stipendien Programm	22	14,6	14,6	100,0
	<b>Total</b>	151	100,0	100,0	

Figure B4a – Program/Department in total sample

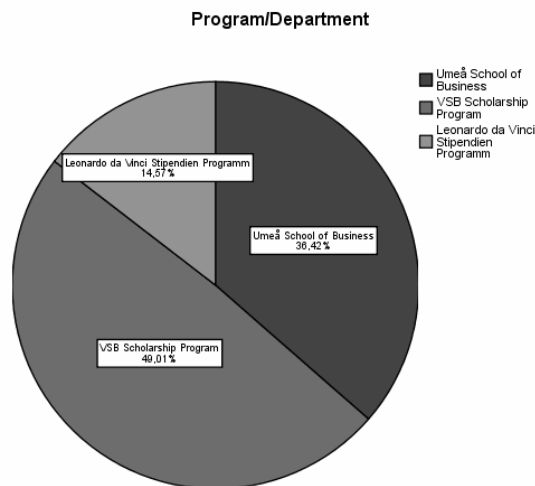


Table B5a – Field of Studies in total sample

Field of Studies in total sample					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Business and Economics	82	54,3	54,3	54,3
	Computer Science/Technology	3	2,0	2,0	56,3
	Engineering Science	12	7,9	7,9	64,2
	Law	4	2,6	2,6	66,9
	Medicine	2	1,3	1,3	68,2
	Natural Sciences	5	3,3	3,3	71,5
	Teacher Education	3	2,0	2,0	73,5
	Others	40	26,5	26,5	100,0
	<b>Total</b>	151	100,0	100,0	

Figure B5a – Field of Studies in total sample and among samples N and G respectively

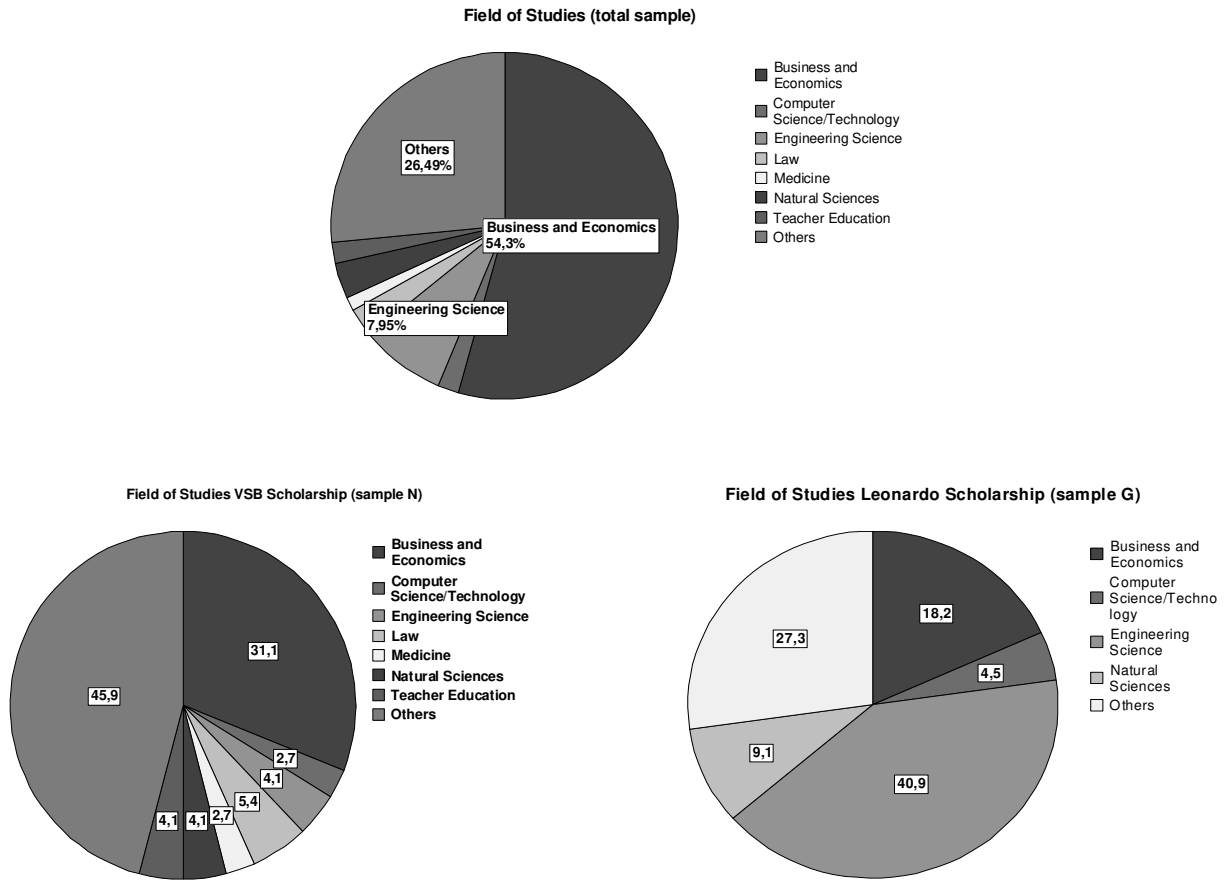
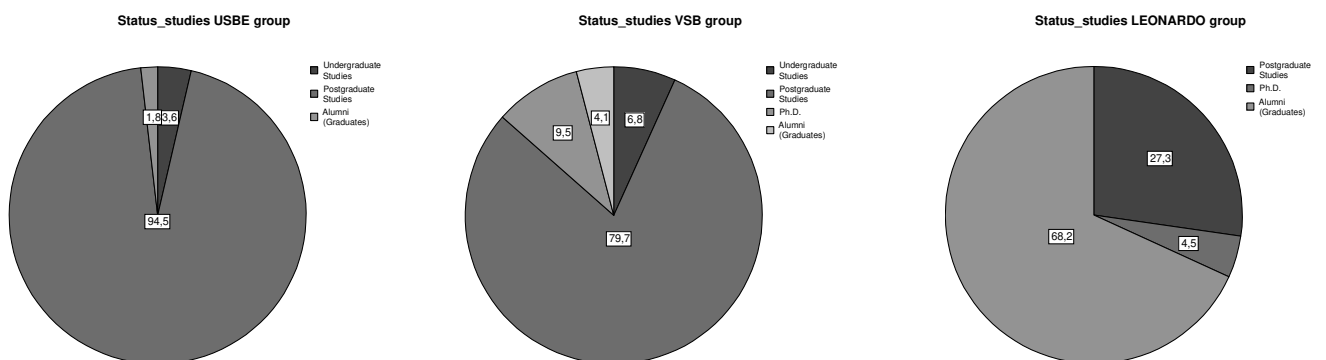


Table B6a – Status of Studies

Status of Studies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undergraduate Studies	7	4,6	4,6	4,6
	Postgraduate Studies	117	77,5	77,5	82,1
	Ph.D.	8	5,3	5,3	87,4
	Alumni (Graduates)	19	12,6	12,6	100,0
	<b>Total</b>	151	100,0	100,0	

Figure B6a – Status of Studies



**Appendix C – Questions about respondents’ perception about the existence of talent pools, own experience and extension of TRM approach**

Table C1a – I can benefit from the existence of talent pools.

**Benefits of Talent Tools (total sample)**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	15	9,9	9,9	9,9
	Agree	104	68,9	68,9	78,8
	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	26	17,2	17,2	96,0
	Disagree	6	4,0	4,0	100,0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

Figure C1b - I can benefit from the existence of talent pools (samples M/IBP, N, G respectively)

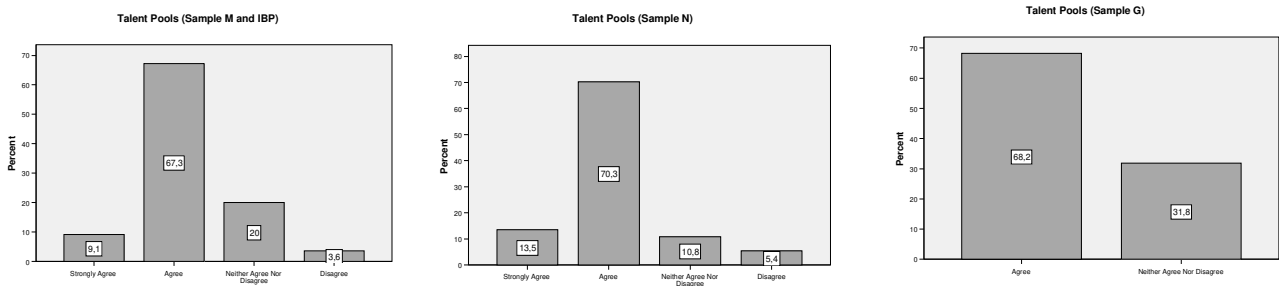
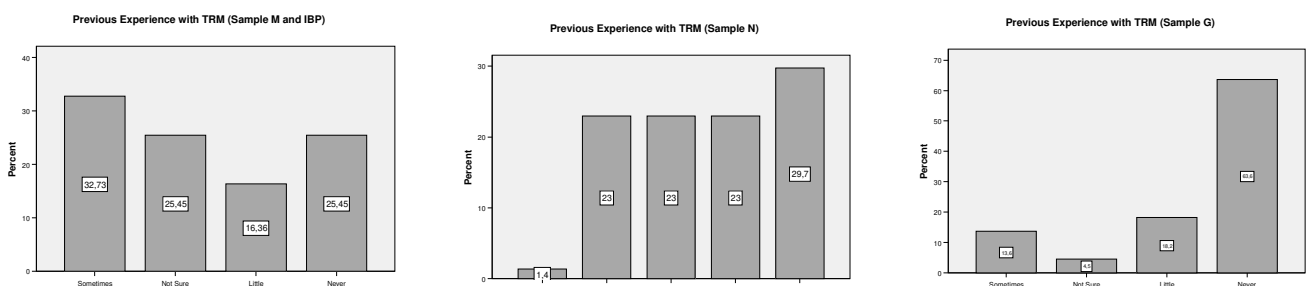


Table C2a - Have you previous experience of Talent-Relationship-Management instruments?

**Previous Experience with TRM (total sample)**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Often	1	,7	,7	,7
	Sometimes	38	25,2	25,2	25,8
	Not Sure	32	21,2	21,2	47,0
	Little	30	19,9	19,9	66,9
	Never	50	33,1	33,1	100,0
<b>Total</b>		<b>151</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

Figure C2b - Have you previous experience of Talent-Relationship-Management instruments? (Samples M/IBP, N, G respectively)



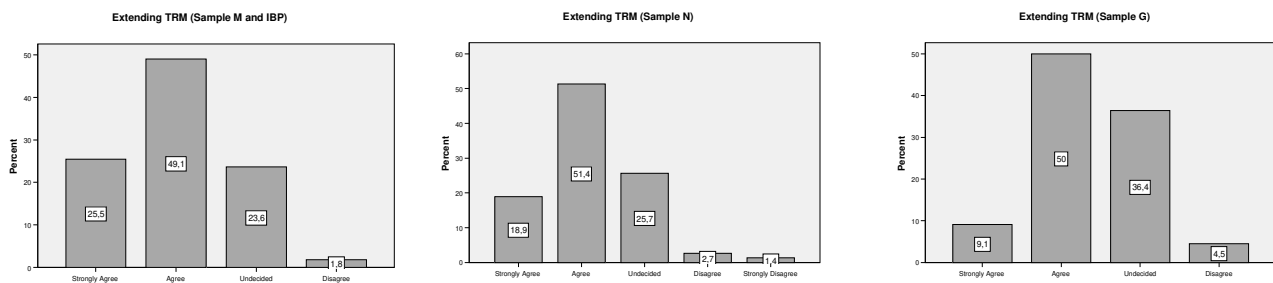
## APPENDIX C

Table C3a – Companies should further extent their Talent-Relationship-Management approach in the future.

### Extension of TRM in the future (total sample)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	30	19,9	19,9	19,9
	Agree	76	50,3	50,3	70,2
	Undecided	40	26,5	26,5	96,7
	Disagree	4	2,6	2,6	99,3
	Strongly Disagree	1	,7	,7	100,0
	<b>Total</b>	151	100,0	100,0	

Figure C3b - Companies should further extend their Talent-Relationship-Management approach in the future (Samples M/IBP, N, G respectively)

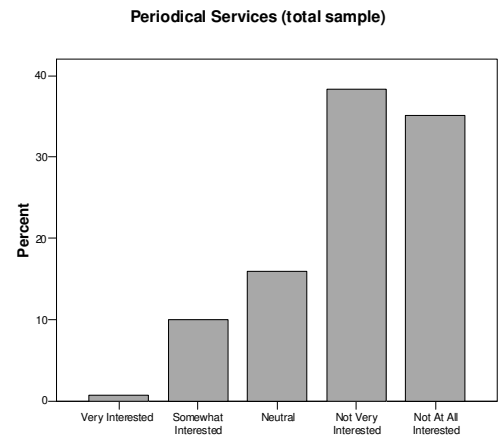


**Appendix D – Perception of the different TRM instruments**

Tables D1 – D19/Figures D1 – D19 - Respondents perception about different TRM instruments (total sample)

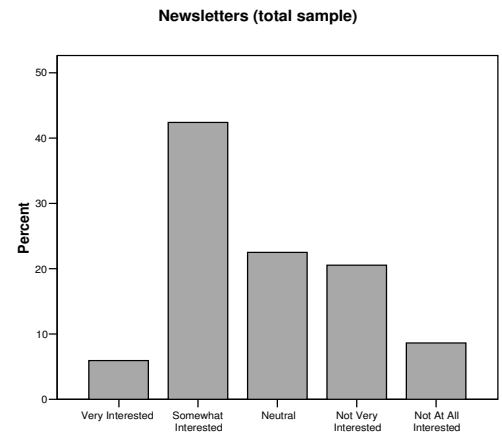
**D1 Periodical Services (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	1	,7	,7	,7
Somewhat Interested	15	9,9	9,9	10,6
Neutral	24	15,9	15,9	26,5
Not Very Interested	58	38,4	38,4	64,9
Not At All Interested	53	35,1	35,1	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	



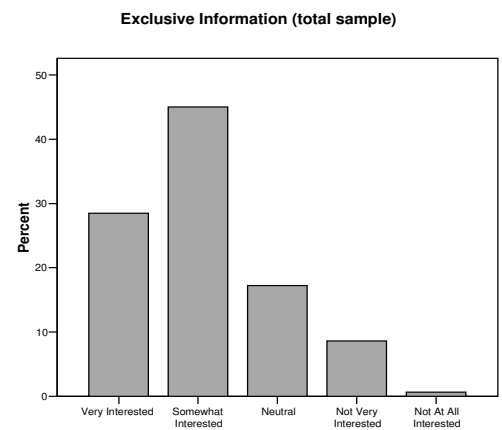
**D2 Newsletters (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	9	6,0	6,0	6,0
Somewhat Interested	64	42,4	42,4	48,3
Neutral	34	22,5	22,5	70,9
Not Very Interested	31	20,5	20,5	91,4
Not At All Interested	13	8,6	8,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	



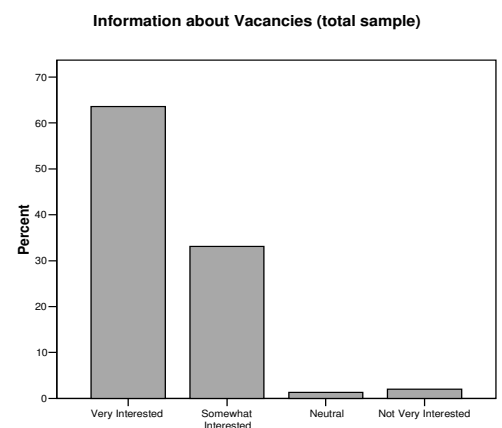
**D3 Exclusive Information (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	43	28,5	28,5	28,5
Somewhat Interested	68	45,0	45,0	73,5
Neutral	26	17,2	17,2	90,7
Not Very Interested	13	8,6	8,6	99,3
Not At All Interested	1	,7	,7	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	



**D4 Information about Vacancies (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	96	63,6	63,6	63,6
Somewhat Interested	50	33,1	33,1	96,7
Neutral	2	1,3	1,3	98,0
Not Very Interested	3	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	



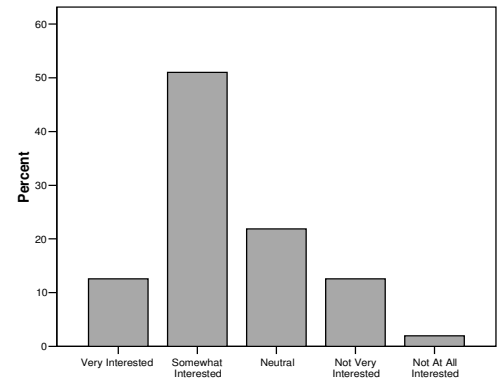


## APPENDIX D

### D5 Company Magazines (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	19	12,6	12,6	12,6
Somewhat Interested	77	51,0	51,0	63,6
Neutral	33	21,9	21,9	85,4
Not Very Interested	19	12,6	12,6	98,0
Not At All Interested	3	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

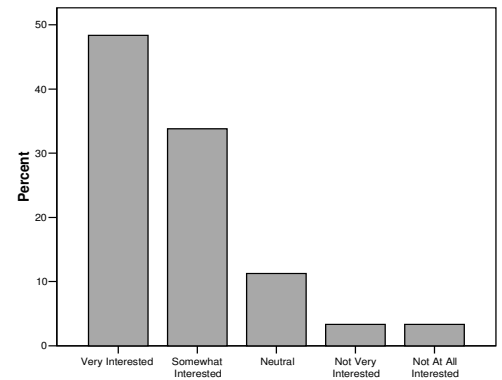
Company Magazines (total sample)



### D6 Scholarships (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	73	48,3	48,3	48,3
Somewhat Interested	51	33,8	33,8	82,1
Neutral	17	11,3	11,3	93,4
Not Very Interested	5	3,3	3,3	96,7
Not At All Interested	5	3,3	3,3	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

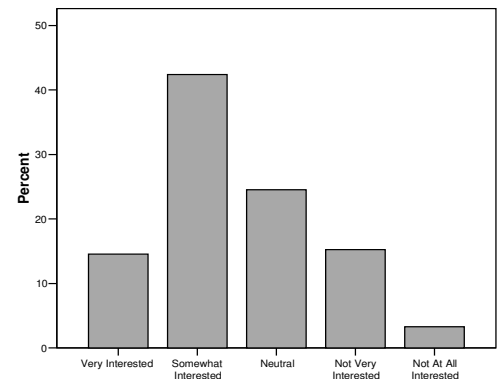
Scholarships (total sample)



### D7 Community Functions (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	22	14,6	14,6	14,6
Somewhat Interested	64	42,4	42,4	57,0
Neutral	37	24,5	24,5	81,5
Not Very Interested	23	15,2	15,2	96,7
Not At All Interested	5	3,3	3,3	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

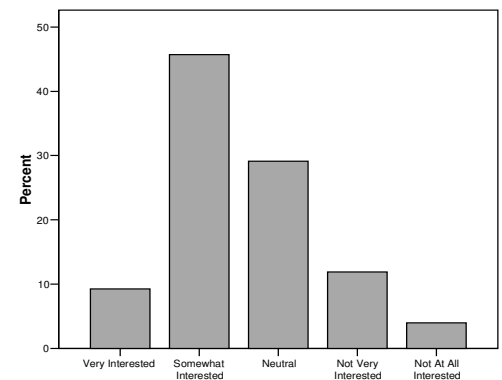
Community Function (total sample)



### D8 Interaction Functions (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	14	9,3	9,3	9,3
Somewhat Interested	69	45,7	45,7	55,0
Neutral	44	29,1	29,1	84,1
Not Very Interested	18	11,9	11,9	96,0
Not At All Interested	6	4,0	4,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

Interaction Function (total sample)

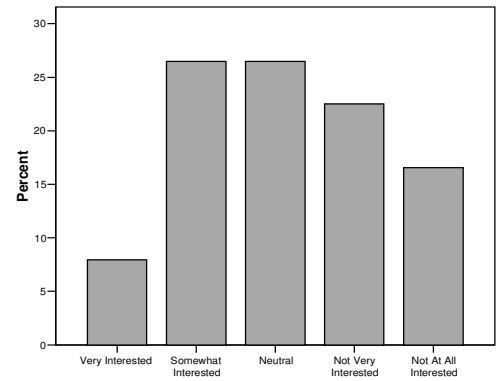


## APPENDIX D

### D9 Giveaways (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	12	7,9	7,9	7,9
Somewhat Interested	40	26,5	26,5	34,4
Neutral	40	26,5	26,5	60,9
Not Very Interested	34	22,5	22,5	83,4
Not At All Interested	25	16,6	16,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

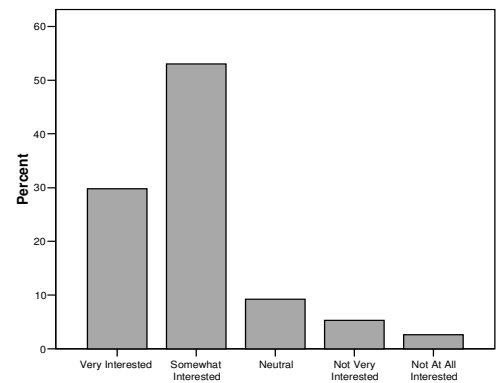
### Giveaways (total sample)



### D10 Company Visits (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	45	29,8	29,8	29,8
Somewhat Interested	80	53,0	53,0	82,8
Neutral	14	9,3	9,3	92,1
Not Very Interested	8	5,3	5,3	97,4
Not At All Interested	4	2,6	2,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

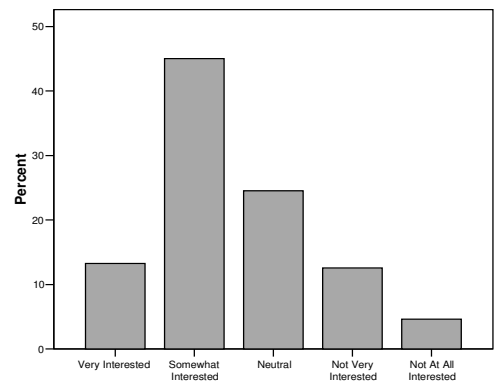
### Company Visits



### D11 Phone Contacts (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	20	13,2	13,2	13,2
Somewhat Interested	68	45,0	45,0	58,3
Neutral	37	24,5	24,5	82,8
Not Very Interested	19	12,6	12,6	95,4
Not At All Interested	7	4,6	4,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

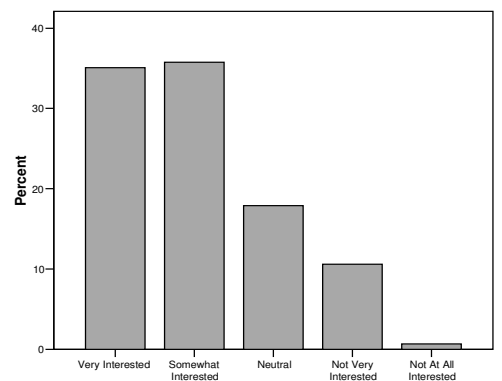
### Telephone Contacts (total sample)



### D12 Internships (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	53	35,1	35,1	35,1
Somewhat Interested	54	35,8	35,8	70,9
Neutral	27	17,9	17,9	88,7
Not Very Interested	16	10,6	10,6	99,3
Not At All Interested	1	,7	,7	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

### Internship (total sample)

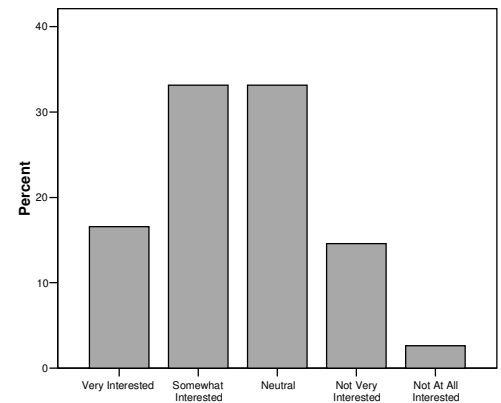


## APPENDIX D

**D13 Talent Pools Meetings (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	25	16,6	16,6	16,6
Somewhat Interested	50	33,1	33,1	49,7
Neutral	50	33,1	33,1	82,8
Not Very Interested	22	14,6	14,6	97,4
Not At All Interested	4	2,6	2,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

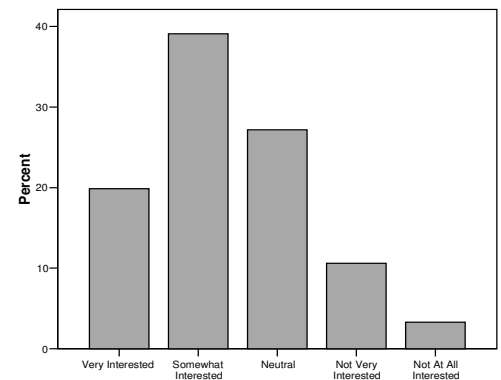
**Talent Pool Meetings (total sample)**



**D14 Theses (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	30	19,9	19,9	19,9
Somewhat Interested	59	39,1	39,1	58,9
Neutral	41	27,2	27,2	86,1
Not Very Interested	16	10,6	10,6	96,7
Not At All Interested	5	3,3	3,3	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

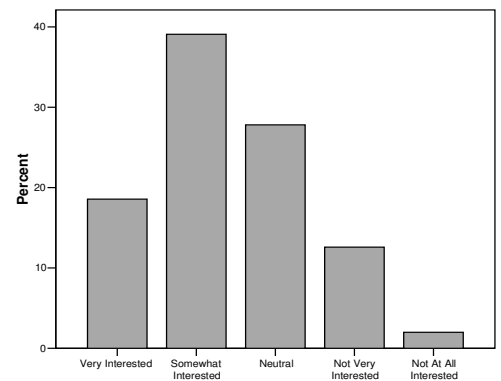
**Theses (total sample)**



**D15 Sponsored Events (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	28	18,5	18,5	18,5
Somewhat Interested	59	39,1	39,1	57,6
Neutral	42	27,8	27,8	85,4
Not Very Interested	19	12,6	12,6	98,0
Not At All Interested	3	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

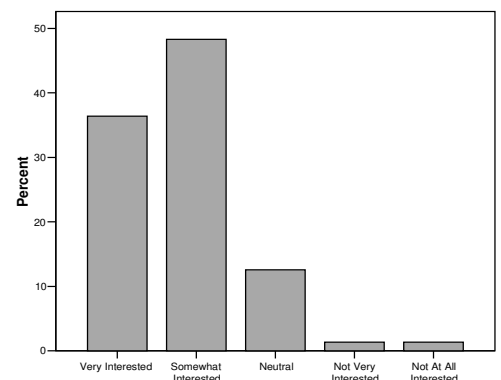
**Sponsored Events (total sample)**



**D16 Workshops (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	55	36,4	36,4	36,4
Somewhat Interested	73	48,3	48,3	84,8
Neutral	19	12,6	12,6	97,4
Not Very Interested	2	1,3	1,3	98,7
Not At All Interested	2	1,3	1,3	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

**Workshops (total sample)**

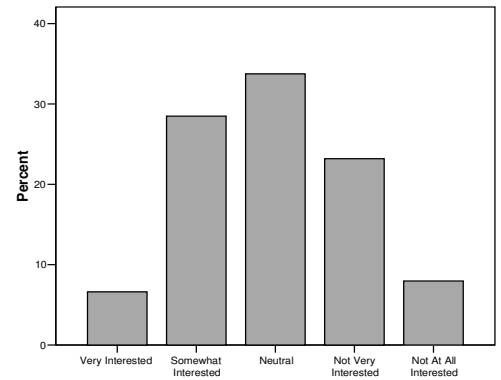


## APPENDIX D

### D17 Personal Websites (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	10	6,6	6,6	6,6
Somewhat Interested	43	28,5	28,5	35,1
Neutral	51	33,8	33,8	68,9
Not Very Interested	35	23,2	23,2	92,1
Not At All Interested	12	7,9	7,9	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

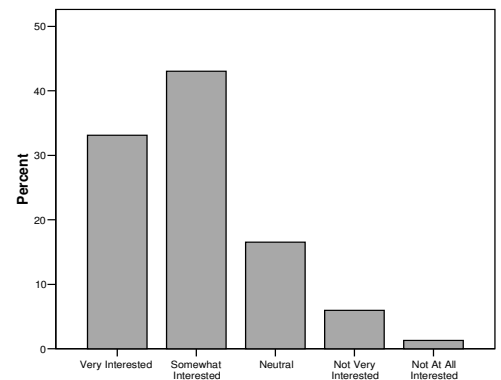
Personal Websites (total sample)



### D18 Career Advices (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	50	33,1	33,1	33,1
Somewhat Interested	65	43,0	43,0	76,2
Neutral	25	16,6	16,6	92,7
Not Very Interested	9	6,0	6,0	98,7
Not At All Interested	2	1,3	1,3	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

Career Advice (total sample)



### D19 Mentoring (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	48	31,8	31,8	31,8
Somewhat Interested	62	41,1	41,1	72,8
Neutral	25	16,6	16,6	89,4
Not Very Interested	13	8,6	8,6	98,0
Not At All Interested	3	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

Mentoring (total sample)

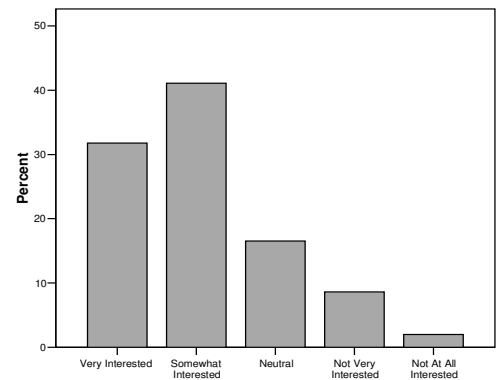


Figure D1b – Combination of Figure 7.1, Figure 7.3 and Figure 7.5 of Chapter 7

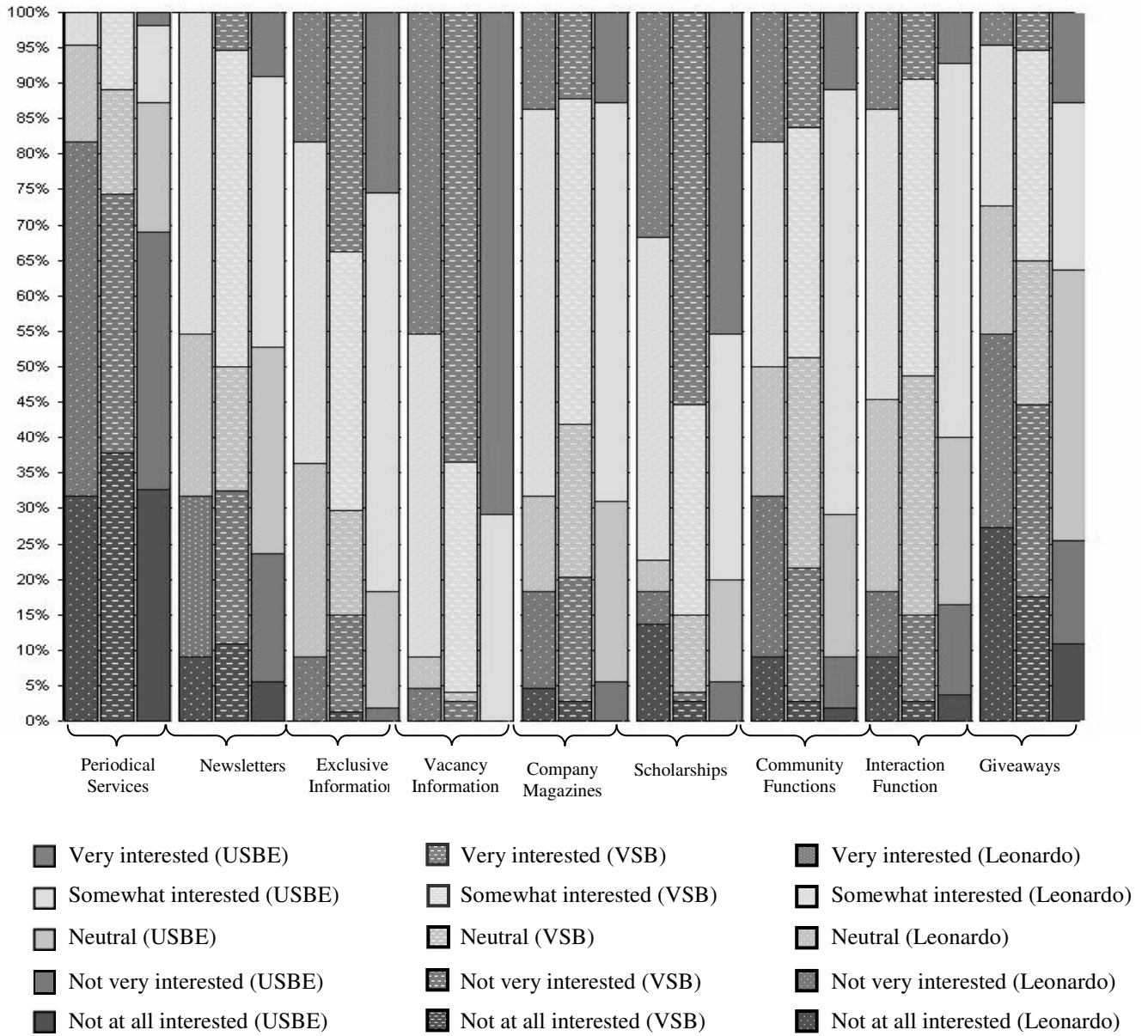
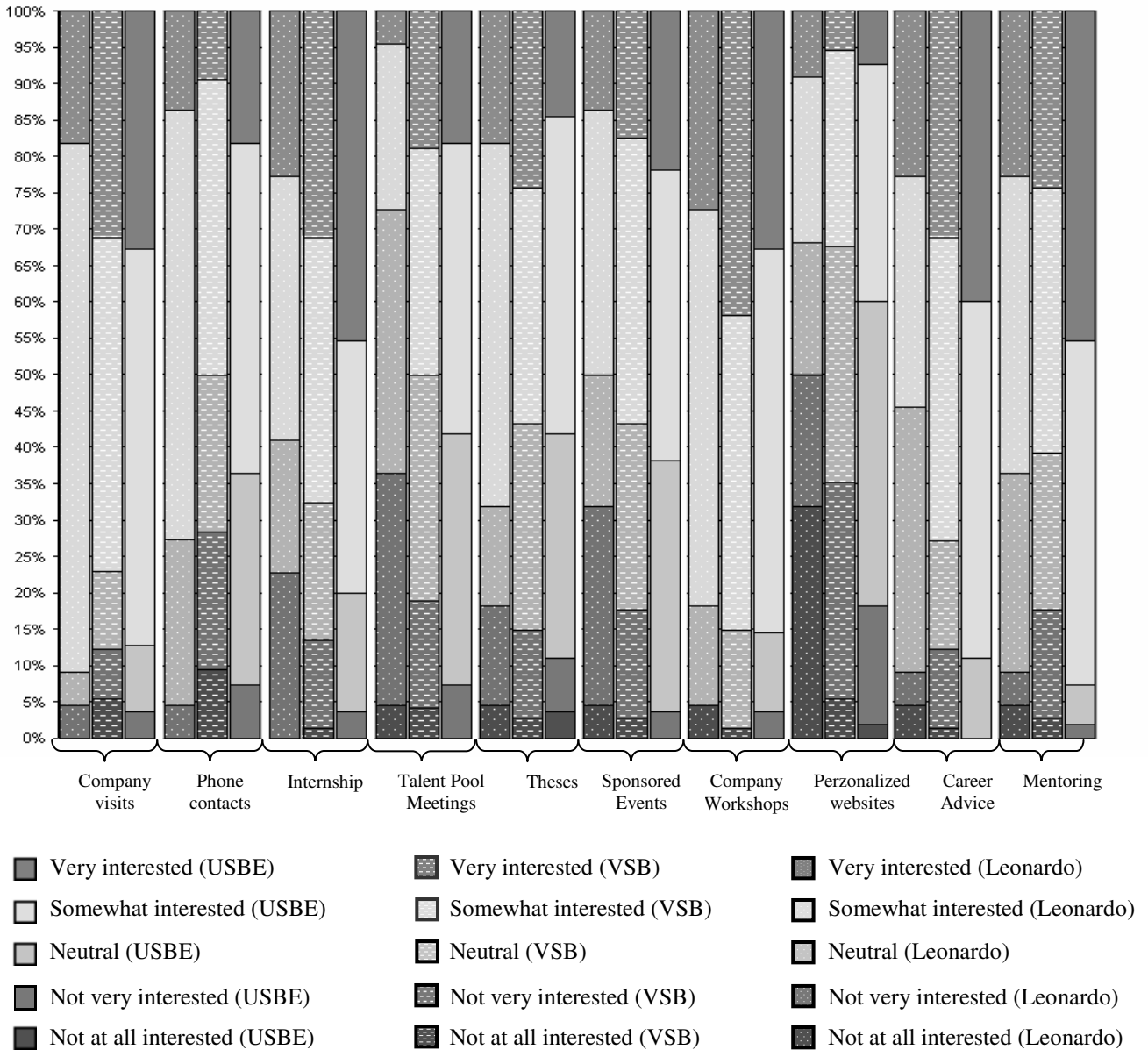


Figure D1b – Combination of Figure 7.1, Figure 7.3 and Figure 7.5 of Chapter 7 (cont.)



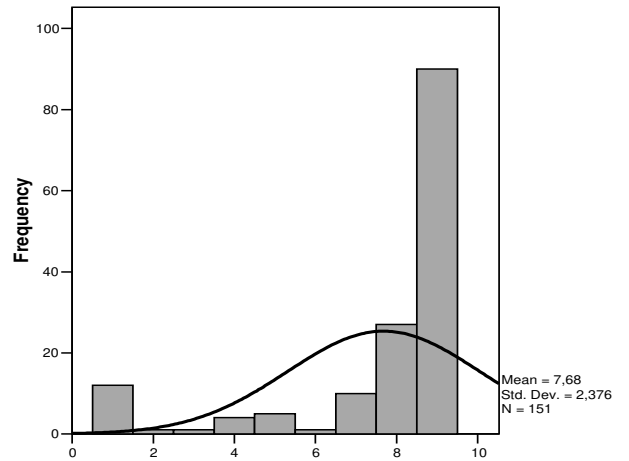
**Appendix E – Ranking of different TRM instruments**

Tables E1a – E19a / Figures E1a – E19a - Ranking of different TRM instruments (total sample)

**E1a Ranking Periodical Services (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	12	7,9	7,9	7,9
Rank 2	1	,7	,7	8,6
Rank 3	1	,7	,7	9,3
Rank 4	4	2,6	2,6	11,9
Rank 5	5	3,3	3,3	15,2
Rank 6	1	,7	,7	15,9
Rank 7	10	6,6	6,6	22,5
Rank 8	27	17,9	17,9	40,4
Rank 9	90	59,6	59,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

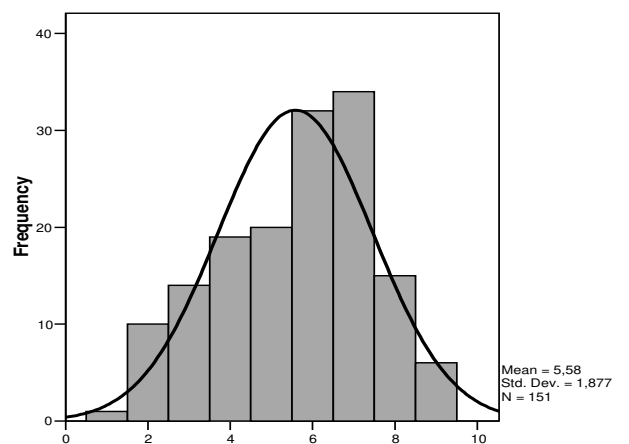
**Ranking Periodical Services (total sample)**



**E2a Ranking Newsletters (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	1	,7	,7	,7
Rank 2	10	6,6	6,6	7,3
Rank 3	14	9,3	9,3	16,6
Rank 4	19	12,6	12,6	29,1
Rank 5	20	13,2	13,2	42,4
Rank 6	32	21,2	21,2	63,6
Rank 7	34	22,5	22,5	86,1
Rank 8	15	9,9	9,9	96,0
Rank 9	6	4,0	4,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

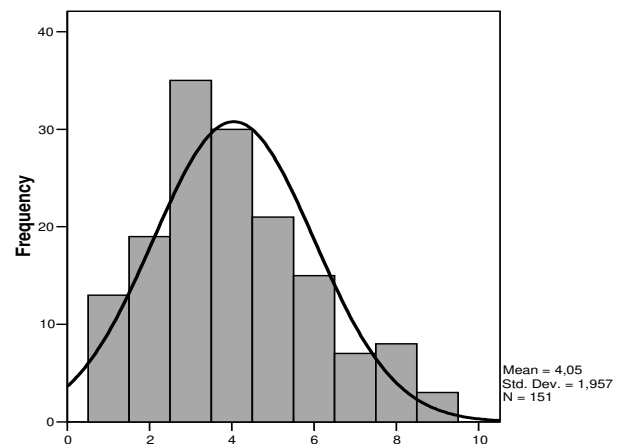
**Ranking Newsletter (total sample)**



**E3a Ranking Exclusive Information (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	13	8,6	8,6	8,6
Rank 2	19	12,6	12,6	21,2
Rank 3	35	23,2	23,2	44,4
Rank 4	30	19,9	19,9	64,2
Rank 5	21	13,9	13,9	78,1
Rank 6	15	9,9	9,9	88,1
Rank 7	7	4,6	4,6	92,7
Rank 8	8	5,3	5,3	98,0
Rank 9	3	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

**Ranking Exclusive Information (total sample)**

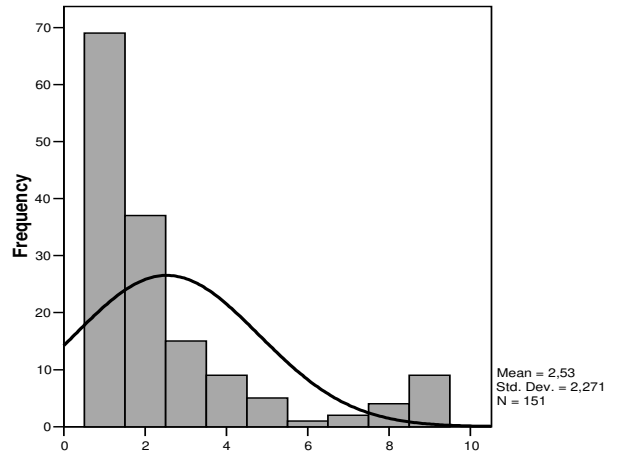


APPENDIX E

**E4a Ranking Information about Vacancies (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	69	45,7	45,7	45,7
Rank 2	37	24,5	24,5	70,2
Rank 3	15	9,9	9,9	80,1
Rank 4	9	6,0	6,0	86,1
Rank 5	5	3,3	3,3	89,4
Rank 6	1	,7	,7	90,1
Rank 7	2	1,3	1,3	91,4
Rank 8	4	2,6	2,6	94,0
Rank 9	9	6,0	6,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

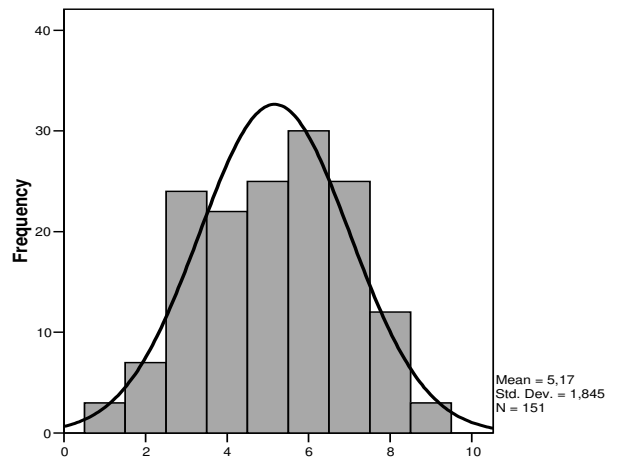
**Ranking Information about Vacancies (total sample)**



**E5a Ranking Company Magazine (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	3	2,0	2,0	2,0
Rank 2	7	4,6	4,6	6,6
Rank 3	24	15,9	15,9	22,5
Rank 4	22	14,6	14,6	37,1
Rank 5	25	16,6	16,6	53,6
Rank 6	30	19,9	19,9	73,5
Rank 7	25	16,6	16,6	90,1
Rank 8	12	7,9	7,9	98,0
Rank 9	3	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

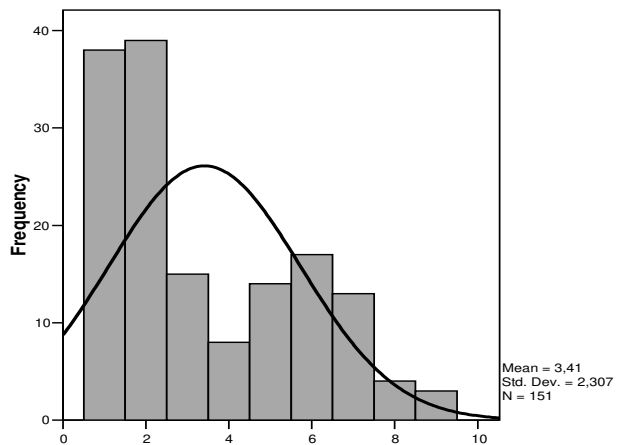
**Ranking Company Magazine (total sample)**



**E6a Ranking Scholarship (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	38	25,2	25,2	25,2
Rank 2	39	25,8	25,8	51,0
Rank 3	15	9,9	9,9	60,9
Rank 4	8	5,3	5,3	66,2
Rank 5	14	9,3	9,3	75,5
Rank 6	17	11,3	11,3	86,8
Rank 7	13	8,6	8,6	95,4
Rank 8	4	2,6	2,6	98,0
Rank 9	3	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

**Ranking Scholarship**



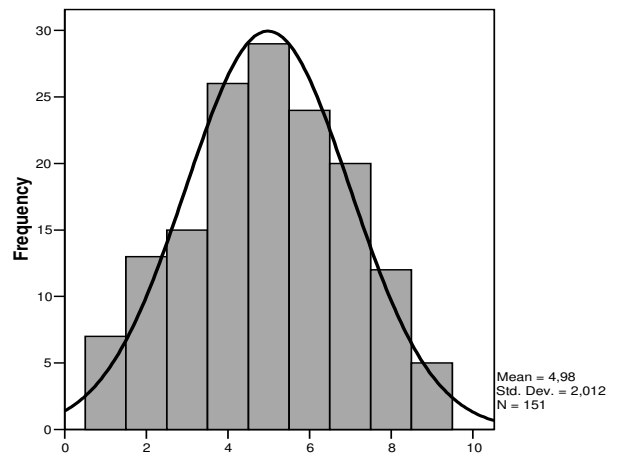


APPENDIX E

**E7a Ranking Community Function (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	7	4,6	4,6	4,6
Rank 2	13	8,6	8,6	13,2
Rank 3	15	9,9	9,9	23,2
Rank 4	26	17,2	17,2	40,4
Rank 5	29	19,2	19,2	59,6
Rank 6	24	15,9	15,9	75,5
Rank 7	20	13,2	13,2	88,7
Rank 8	12	7,9	7,9	96,7
Rank 9	5	3,3	3,3	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

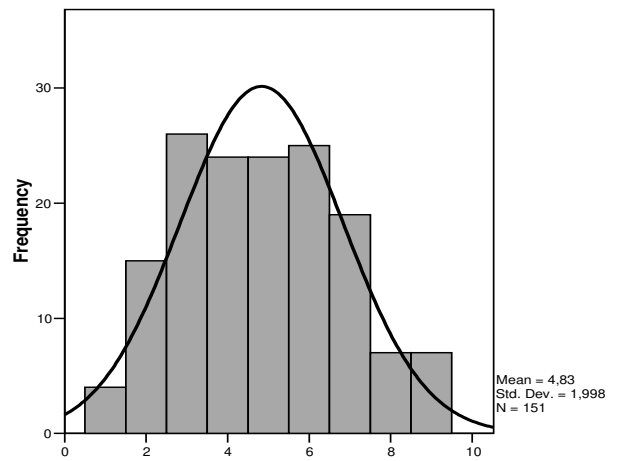
**Ranking Community Function (total sample)**



**E8a Ranking Interaction Function (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	4	2,6	2,6	2,6
Rank 2	15	9,9	9,9	12,6
Rank 3	26	17,2	17,2	29,8
Rank 4	24	15,9	15,9	45,7
Rank 5	24	15,9	15,9	61,6
Rank 6	25	16,6	16,6	78,1
Rank 7	19	12,6	12,6	90,7
Rank 8	7	4,6	4,6	95,4
Rank 9	7	4,6	4,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

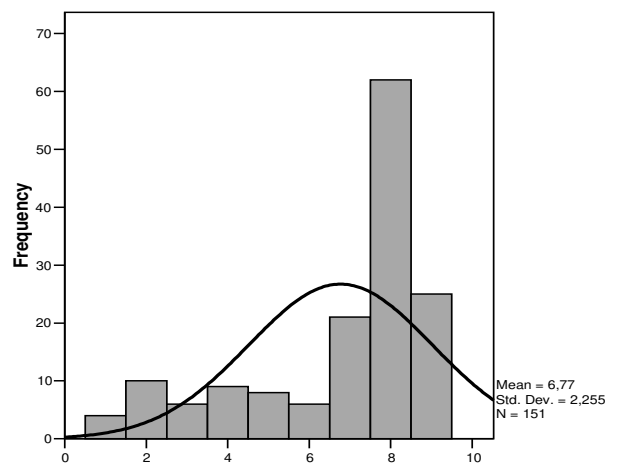
**Ranking Interaction Function (total sample)**



**E9a Ranking Giveaways (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	4	2,6	2,6	2,6
Rank 2	10	6,6	6,6	9,3
Rank 3	6	4,0	4,0	13,2
Rank 4	9	6,0	6,0	19,2
Rank 5	8	5,3	5,3	24,5
Rank 6	6	4,0	4,0	28,5
Rank 7	21	13,9	13,9	42,4
Rank 8	62	41,1	41,1	83,4
Rank 9	25	16,6	16,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

**Ranking Giveaways (total sample)**

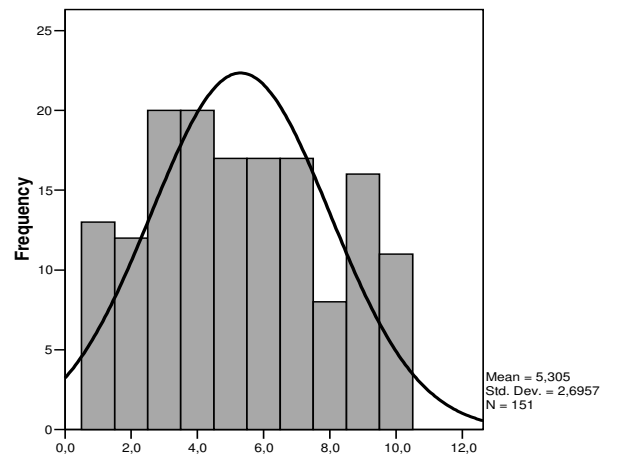


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E10a Ranking Company Visits (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	13	8,6	8,6	8,6
Rank 2	12	7,9	7,9	16,6
Rank 3	20	13,2	13,2	29,8
Rank 4	20	13,2	13,2	43,0
Rank 5	17	11,3	11,3	54,3
Rank 6	17	11,3	11,3	65,6
Rank 7	17	11,3	11,3	76,8
Rank 8	8	5,3	5,3	82,1
Rank 9	16	10,6	10,6	92,7
Rank 10	11	7,3	7,3	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

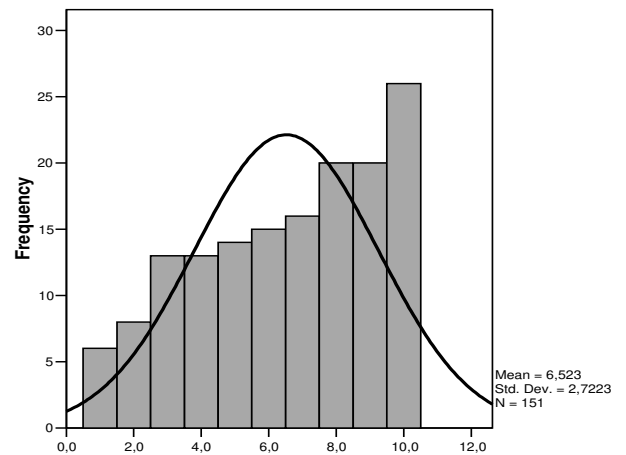
Ranking Company Visits (total sample)



E11a Ranking Telephone Contact

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	6	4,0	4,0	4,0
Rank 2	8	5,3	5,3	9,3
Rank 3	13	8,6	8,6	17,9
Rank 4	13	8,6	8,6	26,5
Rank 5	14	9,3	9,3	35,8
Rank 6	15	9,9	9,9	45,7
Rank 7	16	10,6	10,6	56,3
Rank 8	20	13,2	13,2	69,5
Rank 9	20	13,2	13,2	82,8
Rank 10	26	17,2	17,2	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

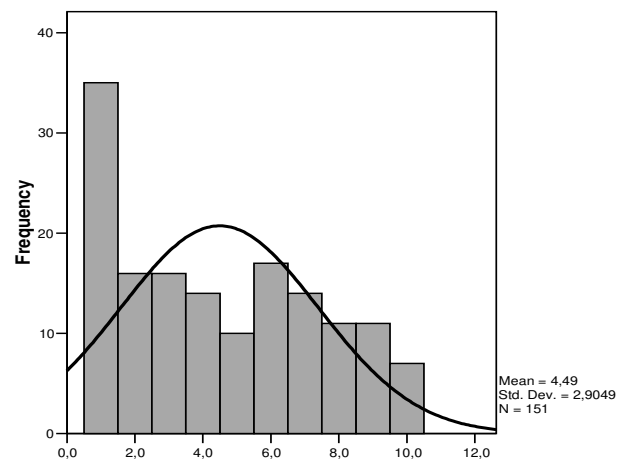
Ranking Telephone Contacts (total sample)



E12a Ranking Internship

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	35	23,2	23,2	23,2
Rank 2	16	10,6	10,6	33,8
Rank 3	16	10,6	10,6	44,4
Rank 4	14	9,3	9,3	53,6
Rank 5	10	6,6	6,6	60,3
Rank 6	17	11,3	11,3	71,5
Rank 7	14	9,3	9,3	80,8
Rank 8	11	7,3	7,3	88,1
Rank 9	11	7,3	7,3	95,4
Rank 10	7	4,6	4,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

Ranking Internship (total sample)

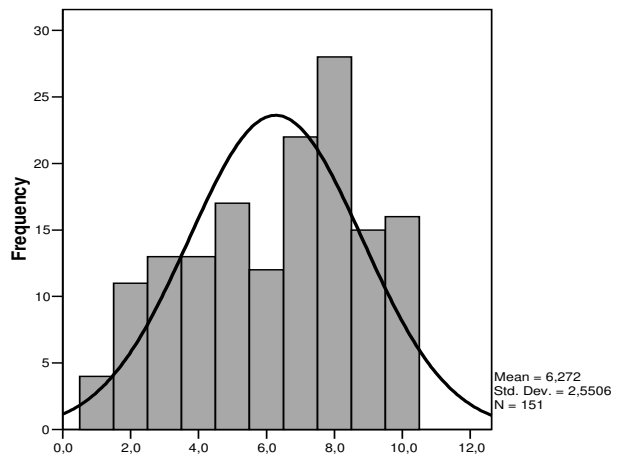


APPENDIX E

**E13a Ranking Talent Pool Meetings (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	4	2,6	2,6	2,6
Rank 2	11	7,3	7,3	9,9
Rank 3	13	8,6	8,6	18,5
Rank 4	13	8,6	8,6	27,2
Rank 5	17	11,3	11,3	38,4
Rank 6	12	7,9	7,9	46,4
Rank 7	22	14,6	14,6	60,9
Rank 8	28	18,5	18,5	79,5
Rank 9	15	9,9	9,9	89,4
Rank 10	16	10,6	10,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

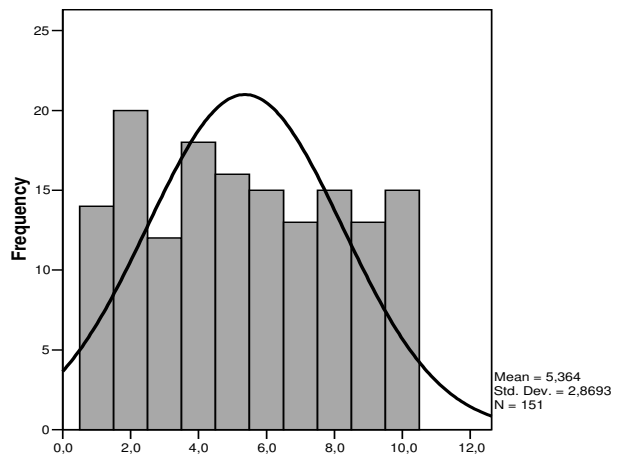
**Ranking Talent Pool Meetings (total sample)**



**E14a Ranking Theses (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	14	9,3	9,3	9,3
Rank 2	20	13,2	13,2	22,5
Rank 3	12	7,9	7,9	30,5
Rank 4	18	11,9	11,9	42,4
Rank 5	16	10,6	10,6	53,0
Rank 6	15	9,9	9,9	62,9
Rank 7	13	8,6	8,6	71,5
Rank 8	15	9,9	9,9	81,5
Rank 9	13	8,6	8,6	90,1
Rank 10	15	9,9	9,9	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

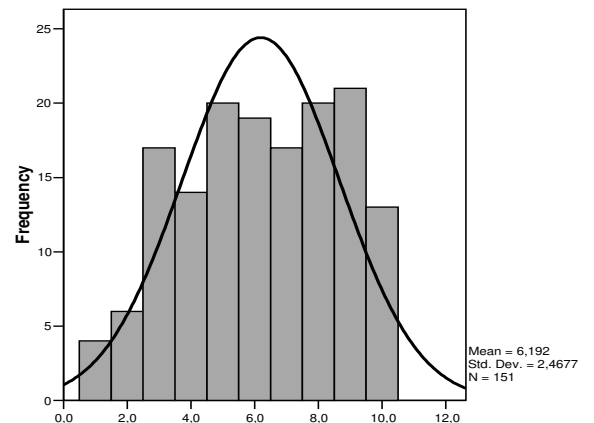
**Ranking Theses (total sample)**



**E15a Ranking Sponsored Events (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	4	2,6	2,6	2,6
Rank 2	6	4,0	4,0	6,6
Rank 3	17	11,3	11,3	17,9
Rank 4	14	9,3	9,3	27,2
Rank 5	20	13,2	13,2	40,4
Rank 6	19	12,6	12,6	53,0
Rank 7	17	11,3	11,3	64,2
Rank 8	20	13,2	13,2	77,5
Rank 9	21	13,9	13,9	91,4
Rank 10	13	8,6	8,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

**Ranking Sponsored Events (total sample)**

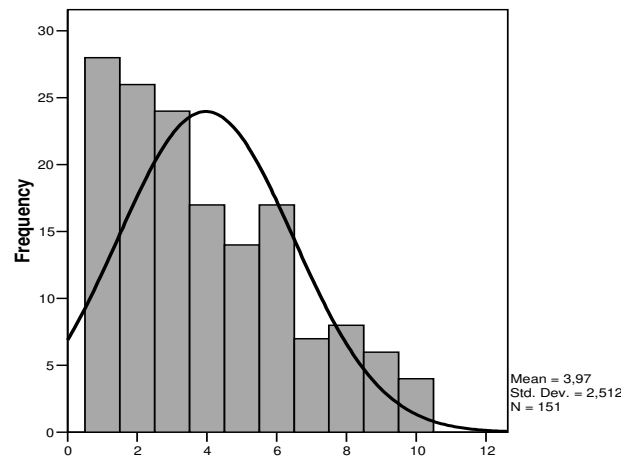


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**E16a Ranking Workshops (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	28	18,5	18,5	18,5
Rank 2	26	17,2	17,2	35,8
Rank 3	24	15,9	15,9	51,7
Rank 4	17	11,3	11,3	62,9
Rank 5	14	9,3	9,3	72,2
Rank 6	17	11,3	11,3	83,4
Rank 7	7	4,6	4,6	88,1
Rank 8	8	5,3	5,3	93,4
Rank 9	6	4,0	4,0	97,4
Rank 10	4	2,6	2,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

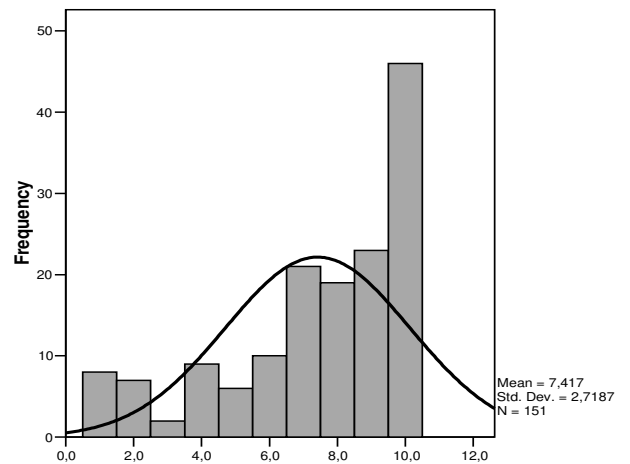
**Ranking Workshops (total sample)**



**E17a Ranking Personal Websites (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	8	5,3	5,3	5,3
Rank 2	7	4,6	4,6	9,9
Rank 3	2	1,3	1,3	11,3
Rank 4	9	6,0	6,0	17,2
Rank 5	6	4,0	4,0	21,2
Rank 6	10	6,6	6,6	27,8
Rank 7	21	13,9	13,9	41,7
Rank 8	19	12,6	12,6	54,3
Rank 9	23	15,2	15,2	69,5
Rank 10	46	30,5	30,5	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

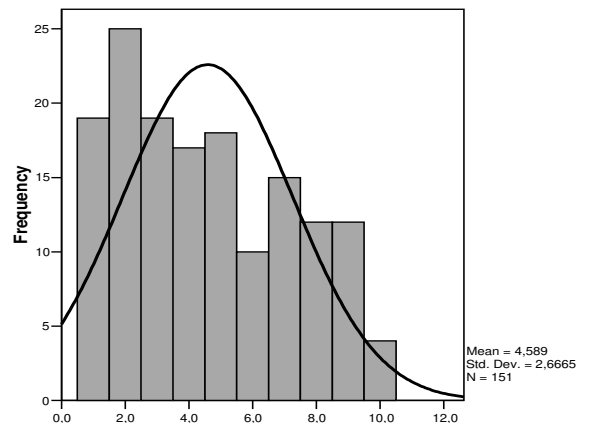
**Ranking Personal Websites (total sample)**



**E18a Ranking Career Advice (total sample)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	19	12,6	12,6	12,6
Rank 2	25	16,6	16,6	29,1
Rank 3	19	12,6	12,6	41,7
Rank 4	17	11,3	11,3	53,0
Rank 5	18	11,9	11,9	64,9
Rank 6	10	6,6	6,6	71,5
Rank 7	15	9,9	9,9	81,5
Rank 8	12	7,9	7,9	89,4
Rank 9	12	7,9	7,9	97,4
Rank 10	4	2,6	2,6	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

**Ranking Career Advice (total sample)**

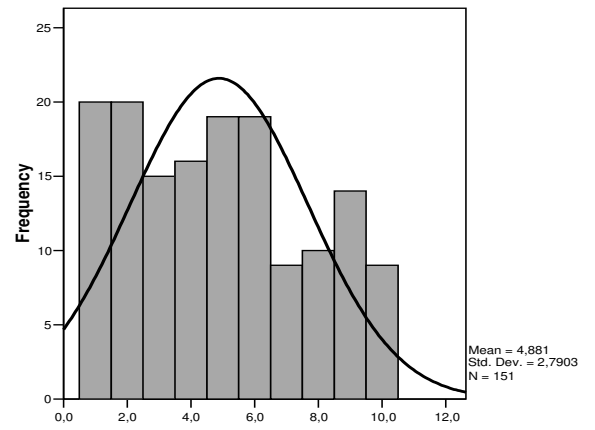


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E19a Ranking Mentoring (total sample)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rank 1	20	13,2	13,2	13,2
Rank 2	20	13,2	13,2	26,5
Rank 3	15	9,9	9,9	36,4
Rank 4	16	10,6	10,6	47,0
Rank 5	19	12,6	12,6	59,6
Rank 6	19	12,6	12,6	72,2
Rank 7	9	6,0	6,0	78,1
Rank 8	10	6,6	6,6	84,8
Rank 9	14	9,3	9,3	94,0
Rank 10	9	6,0	6,0	100,0
Total	151	100,0	100,0	

Ranking Mentoring (total sample)



**Appendix F – One Way ANOVA Test on Perception of TRM Instruments**

Table F1a – ANOVA Groups of Age

**ANOVA GROUPS= AGE**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Scholarship	Between Groups	13,120	4	3,280	3,534	<b>,009</b>
	Within Groups	135,516	146	,928		
	Total	148,636	150			
Extension TRM approach	Between Groups	6,034	4	1,508	2,560	<b>,041</b>
	Within Groups	86,046	146	,589		
	Total	92,079	150			

Figure F1a – Profile Plots on scholarship instrument/age

Figure F1b – Profile Plots on opinion about TRM extension/age

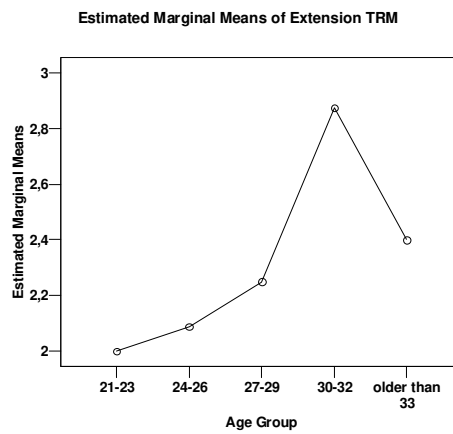
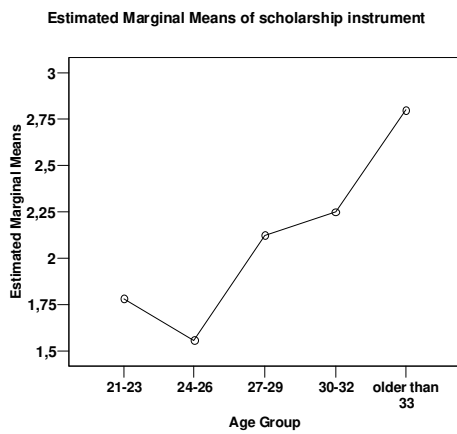


Table F2a – ANOVA Groups of Gender

**ANOVA GROUP=GENDER**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Newsletters	Between Groups	12,534	1	12,534	11,229	<b>,001</b>
	Within Groups	166,326	149	1,116		
	Total	178,861	150			
Telephone Contacts	Between Groups	4,649	1	4,649	4,525	<b>,035</b>
	Within Groups	153,099	149	1,028		
	Total	157,748	150			

Figure F2a – Profile Plots on opinion newsletter instrument/gender

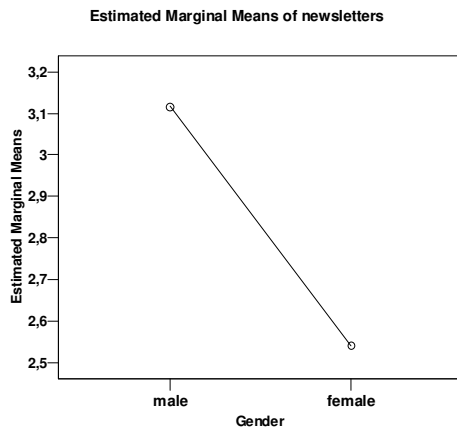


Figure F2b – Profile Plots on opinion telephone contact instrument/gender

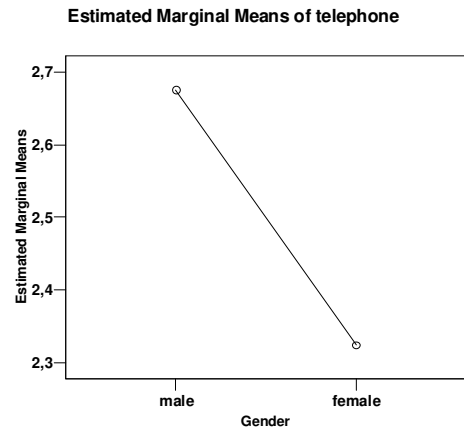


Table F3a – ANOVA Groups of Fields of Study

**ANOVA GROUP = FIELD OF STUDY (i.e. business, engineering, others)**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Periodical Services	Between Groups	6,788	2	3,394	3,611	<b>,029</b>
	Within Groups	139,106	148	,940		
	Total	145,894	150			
Information about Vacancies	Between Groups	3,104	2	1,552	4,130	<b>,018</b>
	Within Groups	55,612	148	,376		
	Total	58,715	150			
Company Magazines	Between Groups	12,717	2	6,358	7,999	<b>,001</b>
	Within Groups	117,641	148	,795		
	Total	130,358	150			
Scholarships	Between Groups	7,178	2	3,589	3,755	<b>,026</b>
	Within Groups	141,458	148	,956		
	Total	148,636	150			
Giveaways	Between Groups	10,482	2	5,241	3,714	<b>,027</b>
	Within Groups	208,869	148	1,411		
	Total	219,351	150			
Company Visits	Between Groups	6,773	2	3,387	4,171	<b>,017</b>

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	Within Groups	120,167	148	,812		
	Total	126,940	150			
Telephone Contacts	Between Groups	13,313	2	6,657	6,821	<b>,001</b>
	Within Groups	144,435	148	,976		
	Total	157,748	150			
Talent Pool Meetings	Between Groups	6,970	2	3,485	3,472	<b>,034</b>
	Within Groups	148,579	148	1,004		
	Total	155,550	150			
Career Advice	Between Groups	10,812	2	5,406	6,770	<b>,002</b>
	Within Groups	118,181	148	,799		
	Total	128,993	150			
Mentoring	Between Groups	13,883	2	6,942	7,490	<b>,001</b>
	Within Groups	137,163	148	,927		
	Total	151,046	150			

Figure F3a – Profile Plots on opinion Periodical Services/field of studies

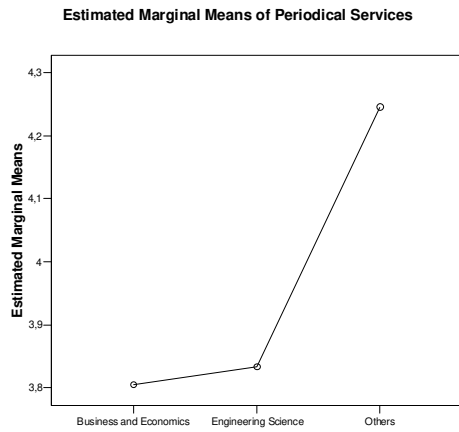


Figure F3b – Profile Plots on opinion about Inform. about vacancies/field of studies

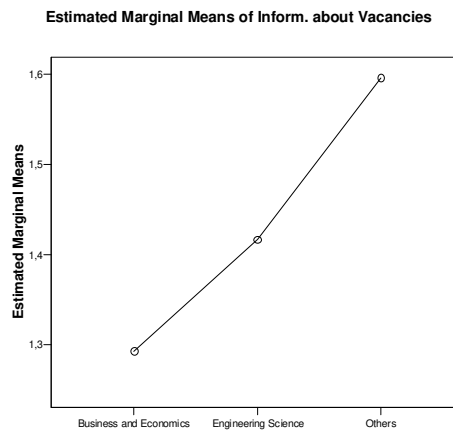


Figure F3c – Profile Plots on opinion Company magazines/ field of studies

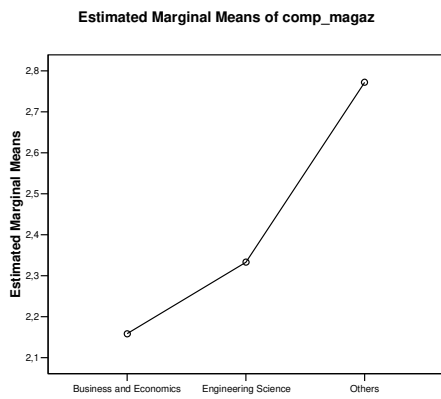
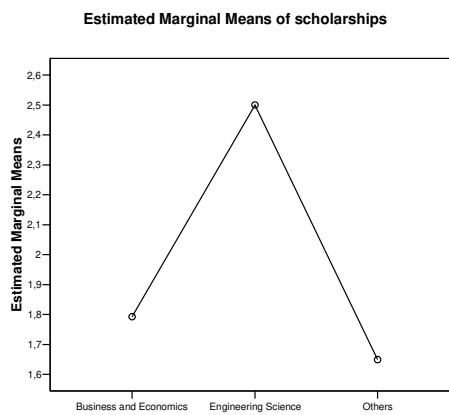


Figure F3d – Profile Plots on opinion Scholarships/field of studies





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Figure F3e – Profile Plots on opinion Giveaways/ field of studies

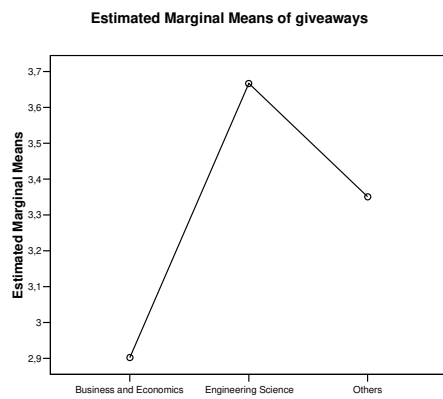


Figure F3f – Profile Plots on opinion Company visits/ field of studies

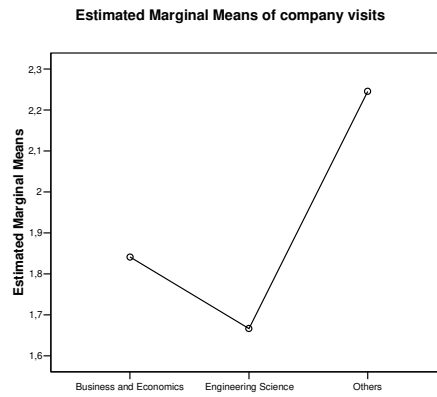


Figure F3g – Profile Plots on opinion Telephone Contacts/ field of studies

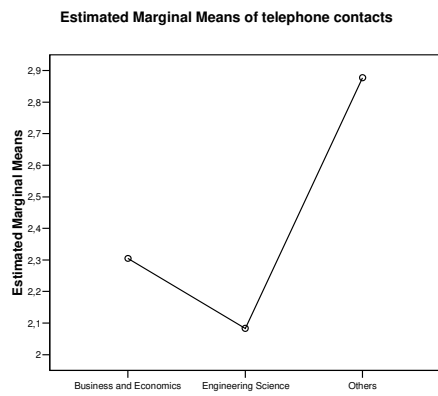


Figure F3h – Profile Plots on opinion Talent pool meetings/ field of studies

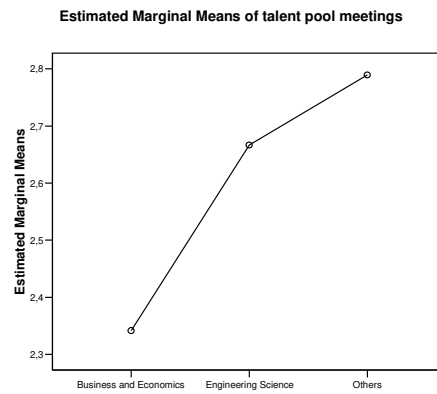


Figure F3i – Profile Plots on opinion Career advice/ field of studies

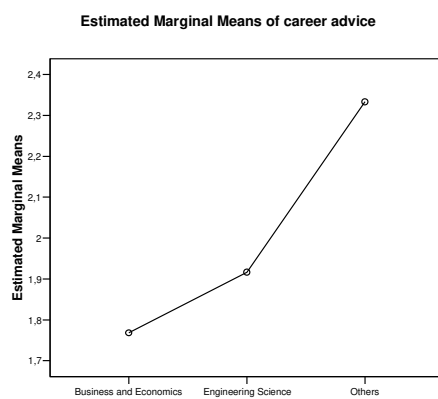


Figure F3j – Profile Plots on opinion Mentoring/ field of studies

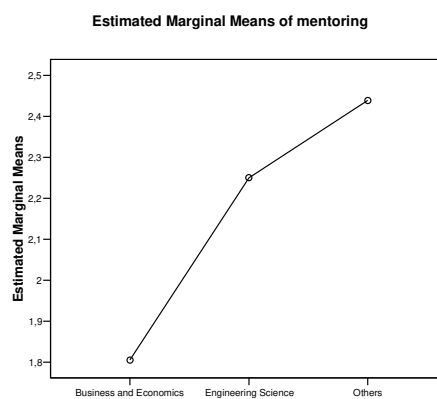


Table F4a – ANOVA Groups of Department/Scholarship

**ANOVA GROUPS= DEPARTMENT**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Information about vacancies	Between Groups	2,435	2	1,217	3,202	<b>,044</b>
	Within Groups	56,280	148	,380		
	Total	58,715	150			
Telephone contacts	Between Groups	11,499	2	5,749	5,818	<b>,004</b>
	Within Groups	146,250	148	,988		
	Total	157,748	150			
Internship	Between Groups	7,710	2	3,855	3,941	<b>,021</b>
	Within Groups	144,754	148	,978		
	Total	152,464	150			
Talent Pool Meetings	Between Groups	9,608	2	4,804	4,872	<b>,009</b>
	Within Groups	145,942	148	,986		
	Total	155,550	150			
Personal Websites	Between Groups	7,721	2	3,860	3,612	<b>,029</b>
	Within Groups	158,173	148	1,069		
	Total	165,894	150			
Career Advice	Between Groups	8,219	2	4,110	5,036	<b>,008</b>
	Within Groups	120,774	148	,816		
	Total	128,993	150			
Mentoring	Between Groups	17,091	2	8,545	9,441	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	133,956	148	,905		
	Total	151,046	150			

Figure F4a – Profile Plots on perception Inform. about Vacancies /Department or

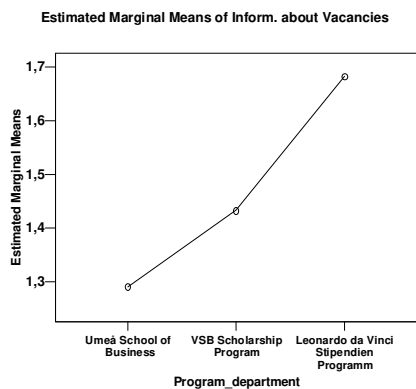


Figure F4b – Profile Plots on perception telephone instrument/ Department or Scholarship

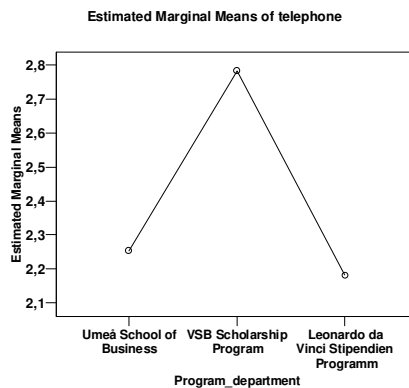


Figure F4c – Profile Plots on perception about Internship/Department or Scholarship

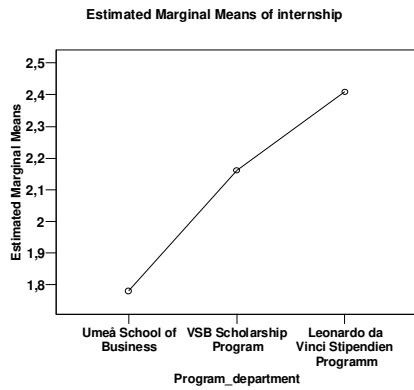


Figure F4d – Profile Plots on perception about Talent Pool Meetings/ Department or Scholarship

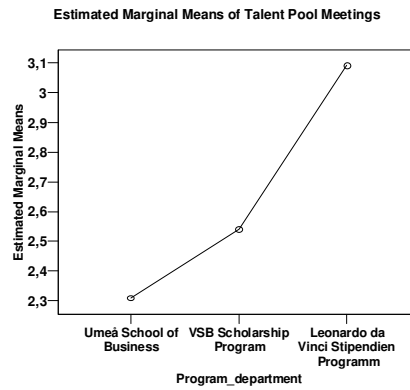


Figure F4e – Profile Plots on perception about Personal Website/Department or Scholarship

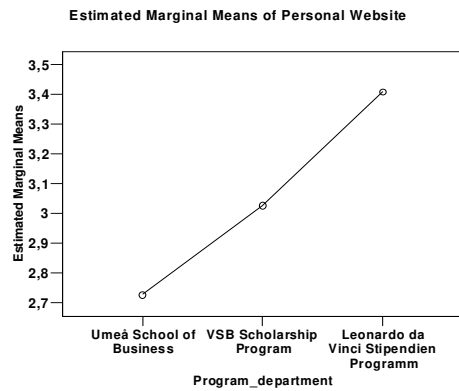


Figure F4f – Profile Plots on perception about Career Advice/ Department or Scholarship

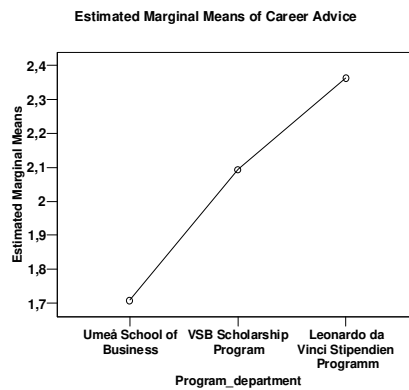


Figure F4g – Profile Plots on perception about Mentoring/Department or Scholarship

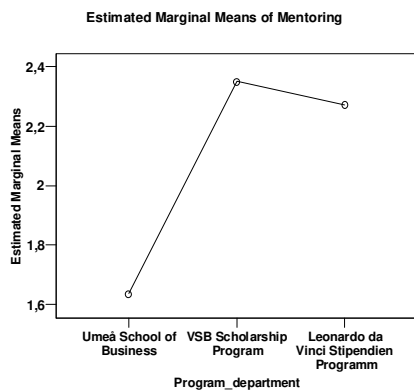


Table F5a – ANOVA Groups of Stage of Studies

**ANOVA GROUPS=STATUS OF STUDIES**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Exclusive Information	Between Groups	11,225	3	3,742	4,668	,004
	Within Groups	117,821	147	,802		
	Total	129,046	150			

Figure F5a – Profile Plots on perception about Exclusive Information/Stage of Studies

