# Finding the right man for the job

The ideology behind social media as tools for recruitment

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# Abstract

Follow us on Twitter, Like us on Facebook, Look for our vacancies on LinkedIn, these sentences are well adopted by companies at the moment. These days we find all sorts of companies on social media, although it is not always clear why they have chosen to be visible on such platforms. They are just kind of there, trying to 'connect' to us by offering us discounts, opportunities to win things, offering something for free. Always asking something in return, namely to recognize to our network of friends, family and colleagues that we 'like' their company. But why? The ongoing buzzing of encouraging, spurring, positive but even critical messages, and research that focus on the growing percentages of businesses who have integrated social media into their communication strategy and are aiming to become a 'social company' certainly makes you feel like you are missing out. The power of the discourse surrounding social media as tools for recruitment appears to be strong as we are witnessing an 'unsatisfying' self-fulfilling prophecy in which companies are massively integrating social media into their recruitment strategies without getting the claimed, expected and promised results, as mentioned in discourse surrounding social media for recruitment.

**Keywords:** *social media, recruitment, critical discourse analysis, self-fulfilling prophecy.*

# 1. Introduction

During my research internship at Total E&P Nederland, engaged in the exploration and production of natural gas in the Dutch sector of the North Sea, I was asked to conduct a research regarding the value of social media, with an emphasis on Facebook, for campus recruitment. For making students familiar with a company and building a relation with them during their college years, with the goal of making recruitment easier and faster in future years. A few weeks after I wrote the report and started to read it again, in the search of inspiration for my master thesis, I noticed that I had included a lot of 'ifs'. There were a lot of preconditions mentioned in the report, measurements supporting the value of social media for campus recruitment were however missing. The value of social media for campus recruitment in the research report was supported by information on the social media behavior of the target group, the preferences of the target group, the affordances of social media and their possible contribution to big data. If it was necessary to mention so many 'ifs' and preconditions to be able to argue that social media would be of value if those 'ifs' and preconditions were met, why did I stick then to the notion that social media would be of value for recruitment? In addition why didn't I find measurements supporting the value of social media for campus recruitment?

I also noticed some interesting frictions between different interviews I conducted. Interviews with an employee of the HR department of Total E&P Nederland (TEPNL), an interview with an employee of consultancy agency Social Embassy, a company that advises organizations about how to integrate social media into their organization and conversations with students of the University of Utrecht and the University of Amsterdam. The employee of the HR department of TEPNL was very enthusiastic about creating platforms on social media for recruitment purposes and was convinced of the value of having such platforms for recruitment. The employee of Social Embassy however stated that social media was not suitable for direct recruitment, that people overall do not look for jobs or apply for a job by using social media. The students that I spoke to were not interested in becoming a member of a company's social media platform. When I asked them what they would like to see on such pages to make it more interesting for them they could not give a clear answer. How come that the employee of the HR department of TEPNL was so convinced about the value of having social media platforms for recruitment, when a social media expert states that it is not suitable for direct recruitment and when students state that they are not interested in becoming a member of a company's social media platform? It made me want to look in more depths at the measured contribution of social media for recruitment.

Where does the generally adopted believe that social media is of value for recruitment emerge from and how does this believe compare to reality? The research question for this report is: How do the claims, expectations and promises regarding the value of social media as tools for finding the right person(s) for a job, compare to reality?

This thesis will look into the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The term "self-fulfilling prophecy" was coined in 1948 by Robert Merton to describe "a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true" (Merton 1968, 477). As we are witnessing an increase in investments in social media for recruitment purposes, without clear and objective measurements supporting the assumptions regarding the value of using social media for recruitment strategies, but with a rich discourse surrounding this topic it could indicate a self-fulfilling prophecy.

## 1.1 Method

This research uses a qualitative research method in the form of critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is used as a method because it provides theories and methods for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different social domains (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 60). Norman Fairclough's theory on critical discourse analysis is used because of the theoretical perspective he provides for this method. Fairclough's three-dimensional model is used because it is based on analyses of discursive practice, text and social practice (Fairclough 1992; 1995a; 1995b; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Fairclough defines discursive practice as the connection of a discourse with other similar discourses and texts, intertextuality. The social practice is described by Fairclough as the relations between discourse on the one hand and power and ideology on the other hand. Fairclough argues that discourses are directly connected to social conditions like the social situation, the environment or even the entire society. This fits the purpose of this research as it will try to frame the claims, expectations, promises, meanings and ideology created through discourse with regards to the value and 'necessity' of social media for recruitment. In addition it will test the power of this discourse by looking at reality, the possible social impact, by means of existing measurements and the analysis of two case studies. This research starts off with a critical discourse analysis of academic and non-academic articles on discourse surrounding social media as valuable tools for recruitment. It showcases a variety of expectations, claims and ideology with regards to social media and their affordances and

alleged 'value' for recruitment purposes. It will concern Jan van Dijk and his book *The Network Society*, especially his argumentation on the role of social media in society, as well as José van Dijck with her texts on social media as data companies and her skeptic perspective on massive open online courses. In addition, as a related discourse to the discourse surrounding social media for recruitment, it will address the concept of big data by means of the book *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think* by Kennenth Cukier and Viktor Mayer-Schönberger. What are the goals of the texts regarding social media as tools for recruitment and what systems of meaning does the discourse surrounding social media as valuable tools for recruitment produce? In texts concerning social media for recruitment I specifically look out for words with strong connotations and meaning. By answering the question as to what systems of meaning the discourse surrounding social media as valuable tools for recruitment produce, by means of the critical discourse analysis of that discourse, a theoretical framework is formed. This theoretical framework consisting out of the ideology surrounding social media as valuable tools for recruitment, will be reflected on in the second part of this research. In addition, as mentioned earlier, this research will look at the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy that is created by means of language. Did the claims, expectations and promises expressed in academic and non-academic texts lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy? Measurements and survey results from existing research like research from research agency Intelligence Group, specialized in research regarding the labor market, and CareerXroads, an international consulting practice for recruiting technology solutions, were used to get insight into the actual value of social media for recruitment. These measurements in combination with the case studies are important for looking at the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy and the power of the academic and non-academic discourse surrounding social media as tools for recruitment.
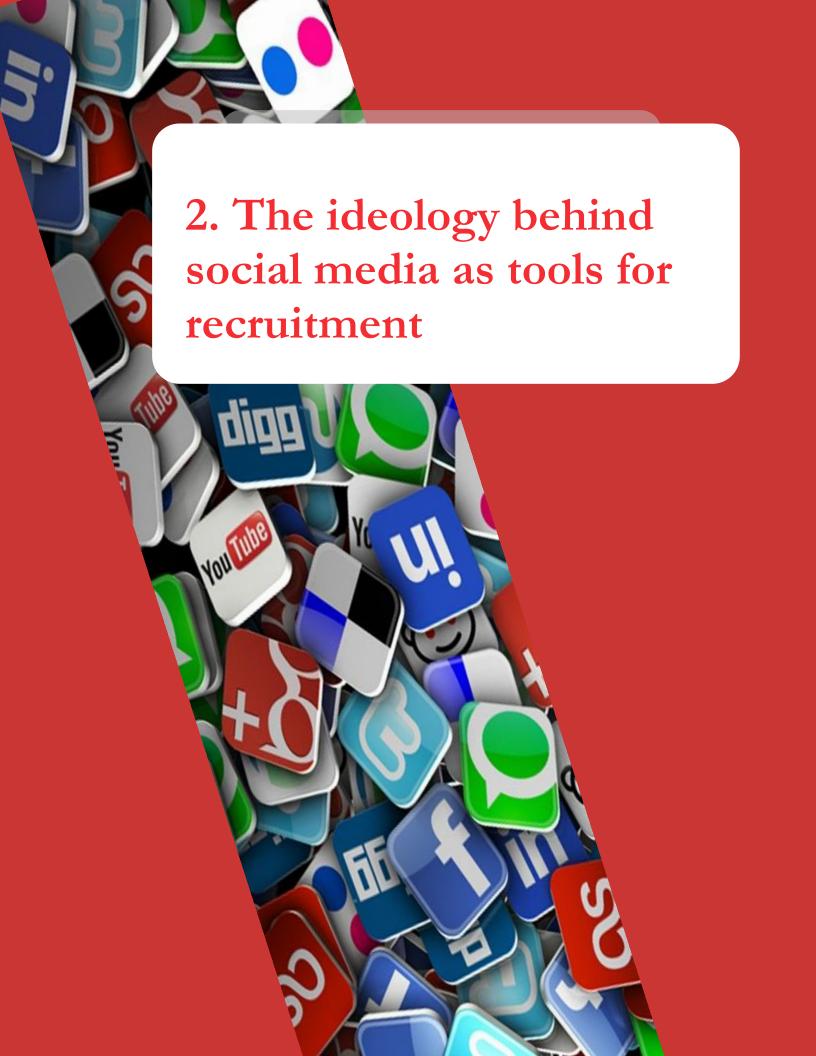
As mentioned in the introduction this research emerged from previous research commissioned by Total E&P Nederland, regarding the value of a social media platform like Facebook for campus recruitment, in this context the interviews have taken place. The interviews showed some interesting aspects and frictions. Those aspects and frictions lead to this research and the aforementioned research question. Findings from this previous research shed light on trends in recruitment strategies, the recruitment needs of higher professional education and academic students, the affordances of social media and the preconditions for achieving the best possible results when using social media (Bindi 2013). For the interviews, I used the unstructured interview method based on the theory by Gill et al. The most important advantage of this method is that it can

provide more information than initially was expected (Gill et al. 2008, 291). A disadvantage of this method is that it leaves room to wander off from the original topic and it leaves room for the interviewer as well as for the interviewed to voice their own preferences, which could mean that it becomes less objective. The structured interview method therefore often is more objective, but only allows for limited content in the participant response, which does not make it suitable for reaching a certain 'depth' within the interview. The unstructured interview method was chosen because significant 'depth' was required to get information on the required high level, about recruitment strategies and trends in recruitment. The unstructured interview method is suitable when knowledge about a subject is on a low level. It is thus suitable for getting familiar with a situation, a company, its obstacles, its activities and its goals because of its ability to provide more information than initially expected. The interviews, conversations and meetings were carried out face-to-face. They consisted out of multiple questioning techniques like, closed questions that could be answered by yes or no and suggestive questions which imply a certain answer. Suggestive questions were used to evoke personal feelings with regards to the use of social media for recruitment purposes. To find out which attitude towards social media for recruitment dominated within the Human Resource department of Total E&P Nederland and among students. In addition to the aforementioned also open questions were used, for obtaining more information about a specific subject. Examples of these three forms of questions are: does Total E&P Nederland use social media for recruitment, do you see the value of social media for campus recruitment strategies and which information means are used for recruitment at this moment (Bindi 2013)? Although face-to-face communication is very rich in its non-verbal cues, which helps sketch a better view on the situation and internal view on matters, it also takes a lot of time. A survey would most likely have resulted in a larger sample size. Multiple-choice questions, which are common in surveys, would however have been limited in their information provision and open questions answered by a large group of people would have taken a long time to process. Additionally it would have been difficult to formulate a general finding out of a large amount of answers to open questions.

The theoretical framework, the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy and the power of the discourse regarding social media for recruitment, will thus be tested by means of existing measurements and two case studies. The first case study for this research is the campus recruitment strategy of Unilever, Unilever was chosen as case study for this research because of the fact that Unilever was mentioned most often by Dutch students who could name a company with a good

campus recruitment strategy (Hoefnagel and Waasdorp 2010, 31). The second case study for this research is the recruitment strategy of Shell, Shell was chosen as a case study for this research because in 2012 it was chosen as favorite employer, not including their own employer, by a representative group of minimal 20.000 Dutch people (Waasdorp 2012a). The analysis of the case studies for this research, emphasize the role that social media play within the (campus) recruitment strategy of Unilever and Shell.

The literature review, interviews, the case studies and existing measurements and survey results from various sources were used in a cross-sectional analysis to verify the information from those three methods. The critical discourse analysis of academic and non-academic articles with regards to social media for recruitment, the interviews and the case studies together will be used for possibly unravelling the apparent 'obviousness' of the value and the 'necessity' of social media for recruitment. The aforementioned will be used for looking at the possibility of a self-fulfilling prophecy and it will give insight into the power of the discourse surrounding social media as tools for recruitment.

# 2. The ideology behind social media as tools for recruitment

New media networks facilitate interactions between various levels within society, the dissolving of boundaries between macro-, meso- and micro-levels of social life, between the spheres of living, working, studying, recreation etcetera influenced various practices within society. Non-mediated practices are increasingly becoming mediated practices. Although face-to-face communication is still the most important kind of communication in many cases, it is in some cases partly replaced or supplemented by mediated communication. As is the case for recruitment strategies, which are increasingly supplemented by mediated communication in the form of connections through social media. These days we find all sorts of companies on social media, although it is not always clear why they have chosen to be visible on such platforms. They are just kind of there, trying to 'connect' to us by offering us discounts, opportunities to win things, offering something for free. Always asking something in return, namely to recognize to our network of friends, family and colleagues that we 'like' their company. But why? The ongoing buzzing of encouraging, spurring, positive but even critical messages, and research that focusses on the growing percentages of businesses who have integrated social media into their communication strategy and are aiming to become a 'social company', certainly makes you feel like you are missing out. Especially articles that are critical towards social media seem to reveal its 'power'.

Popular discourse surrounding social media and its value for businesses has changed its focus. Marketing and communication is no longer the main focus point of discourse surrounding social media. Its value for recruitment, for finding the right person for a job, is now leading. As mentioned, this research will look into the possibility of a self-fulfilling prophecy in which discourse, regarding social media and its use for finding the right person for a job, resulted in the massive integration of social media by businesses into their recruitment strategies. We are witnessing an increase in investments in social media for recruitment purposes without clear and objective measurements supporting the alleged value of social media for recruitment strategies. To be able to see if we are dealing with a self-fulfilling prophecy we first need to look at the discourse surrounding social media as tools for recruitment. Let's begin by looking at the allocated role of social media within society. Jan van Dijk, professor at the University of Twente, specialized in media, ICT and the network society, with his book *The Network Society* offers a perspective on societal trends with regards to new media usage. With his book he describes the role of social networks, media networks and information in society. Van Dijk describes the network society as consisting primarily out of heterogeneous individuals connected by networks, communication is according to him is often

mediated by using interactive media like social media. He argues that social media are the best representation of what the network society entails (Van Dijk 2012, 181). Within the network society social media according to Van Dijk have become both the home of the individual as the core of society and the window to the social environment of an individual (Van Dijk 2012, 181). Hereby arguing that social media are the most effective communication means of contemporary society. Social, technical and media networks Van Dijk argues, together shape the infrastructure of this society, an infrastructure that creates shorter linkages. According to him they increase the connectivity between individuals and organizations (Van Dijk 2012, 21). Van Dijk creates an ideology of social media as being the bases on which a network society is able to function. With a "networked economy consisting out of societal relations where individuals, groups and organizations shape a society that is built on, and linked by, social and media networks", characterizing its mode of organization at every level: individual, organizational and societal (Van Dijk 2012, 31).

Many non-academic articles written by media commentators, journalist, social media experts and advisors can be found with titles like: Social media recruitment: tips and tools, 20 Social Media Tips for Campus Recruitment and 5 Tips for Recruiting College Students via Social Media (P&Oactueel 2011; Haren n.d.; Klamm 2011). Many of those non-academic articles emphasizing the affordances of social media with sentences that carry words with strong connotations, like the following citation from Dan Klamm's article on Mashable.com for instance "More and more companies are recognizing the value of social media in building their employer brand in the minds of college students" (Klamm 2011). The word 'recognizing' in this sentence suggests that the value of social media is a fact. Another defining sentence: the rise of social media changes the way in which employer branding should be conducted (Hendrikse 2013). The word 'should' suggests that it as a must, a logical consequence. It states that for achieving a good employer brand it is necessary to change the way in which employer branding is conducted because of the 'rise' of social media. Non-academic articles regarding social media for recruitment purposes, most of the time do not focus on the impact of using social media for recruitment or results in the form of measurements. They often do not use a specific case. Non-academic discourse focuses more on giving tips for using social media for recruitment and on the value of social media for recruitment by means of looking at its characteristics and affordances. The majority of non-academic articles regarding social media for recruitment purposes are positive in tone although they do not mention any results with regards to the use of social media for recruitment. Those articles regularly advise companies to integrate social

media into their recruitment strategies by also mentioning the increasing numbers of companies that did integrated social media into their strategies (Roozen 2010; Petersen 2012; Petersen 2013). By mentioning the increase in the number of companies that integrated social media into their strategies you create a kind of greediness and insecurity among the companies that do not have social media in their mix of recruitment means.

Even critical notes on social media, like those from José van Dijck for instance, indirectly add to the ideology of the value of social media for recruitment, although in a different manner. José van Dijck shows different features of social media which often reveal issues that are important for users of such platforms to be aware of. Issues that involve privacy for instance. Critical research with the goal of showing the downfalls of social media however also reveal opportunities for other parties. José van Dijck in her article "Dat gratis online Harvard komt ook hier concurreren" and during her lecture "I like wetenschap" refers to social media as "data companies" or "data-mining firms", companies that are able to gather and sell user data to external parties (Van Dijck 2013b; 2009, 55). While trying to raise awareness with regards to the use of user data, she also reveals an possible interesting feature of social media for companies. In her article "Dat gratis online Harvard komt ook hier concurreren", José van Dijck also discusses massive open online courses (MOOCs), in that article she argues that study results of the participants of MOOCs affords the ranking of the smartest minds (Van Dijck 2012b). She describes MOOCs as "data-driven learning" and compares it to social media as she argues that the revenue models and goals of both are the same, making data commercially exploitable. Van Dijck argues that an assessment will no longer be needed because companies will be able to unnoticed follow and scout individuals by means of data gathered by for instance social media and MOOCs (Van Dijck 2012b). Van Dijck compares MOOCs to social media platforms instead of relating it to educational institutions where student data is carefully protected and worked with. By comparing MOOCs to social media instead of education institutions, the connotations that people have will be different because of the discourse surrounding social media platforms. Van Dijck now describes MOOCs as being profit oriented constructions instead of an educational institution with the ideology of providing free education for everyone. Van Dijck's view on social media and MOOCs as being data companies or data-mining companies, connects to another similar discourse regarding the value of online activity for businesses, namely discourse regarding big data. Discourse regarding big data indirectly is about addressing that social media, used for recruitment, at this moment is already outdated as we are moving towards identifying talent

through the use of data. Kenneth Cukier, in a reading regarding the book *Big Data: a Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, And Think,* argues that data is the oil of the information economy (Cukier n.d.). By using the phrase: data is the oil of the information economy, Cukier suggests data to be the drivers for a functioning economy, in other words, without data our economy would be lost. Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, Kenneth Cukier's co-writer for the book *Big Data: a Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, And Think*, in an interview argues that big data is all about shedding light on connections, linkages and discoveries, that we haven't made before by means of data (Cukier and Mayer-Schönberger n.d.). Hereby suggesting that it is something new and the basis for progress as only data is able to shed light on connections, linkages and discoveries, that we haven't made before. With data Mayer-Schönberger argues, we are able to see things that we weren't able to see before and that this will mean adjustments to traditional ideas of, among other, decision making and human resource (Cukier and Mayer-Schönberger 2013, 16). In an interview with Steve Lohr, technology reporter for the The New York Times, Professor Erik Brynjolfsson, Professor of Information Technology and the Director of the MIT Center for Digital Business at the MIT Sloan School of Management, makes a similar remark by comparing big data to the microscope. According to Brynjolfsson data measurement is "the modern equivalent of the microscope", which "allowed people to see and measure things as never before" (Lohr 2012, 3). As a result, Brynjolfsson argues, decisions will increasingly be based on data and analysis, rather than on experience and intuition (Lohr 2012, 3). By arguing that data measurement is the modern equivalent of the microscope, connotations with regards to the microscope and its contribution and progress in many fields, rub off on the way we look at data as basis for decision making. Thereby suggesting that it will be the next big thing in history, data will open the door for 'progress'.

Discourse surrounding social media and data measurements as tools for companies, for finding the right person for a job, create an ideology formed by means of claims, comparisons, expectations and even by, as some authors see it, 'doom scenarios'. They are suggested to be the basis of progress in contemporary society, social media as being the most effective communication means, data as the driver for a functioning economy and soon for efficient companies. The value of social media is formulated as a fact and the use of social media for corporate goals as a must.

# 3. Looking at reality

Follow us on Twitter, Like us on Facebook, Look for our vacancies on LinkedIn, these sentences are well adopted by companies at the moment. Recruiters are increasingly integrating social media into their recruitment strategies. The research "Recruitment kengetallen 2013" (recruitment indicators) shows that 68% of the 100 recruiters who participated in the research focused on social media in 2013 (Waasdorp 2013). Indirectly, the large percentage of recruiters that focused on social media in 2013, reveals the hopes and beliefs that social media are of value for their recruitment strategy. This could indicate a self-fulfilling prophecy. Can one however speak of a self-fulfilling prophecy in which companies did not just massively migrated onto social media platforms but also got the results that where suggested in discourse surrounding social media for finding the right person for a job?

We are witnessing a new trend in applying for a job and recruitment. Employers looking for individuals to fill their vacancies are investing in means to find, select and come into contact with those individuals. New media and especially social media are increasingly used for these goals (Waasdorp 2013). During my research internship at Total E&P Nederland I saw the recruiters struggle to fill technical vacancies with higher educated technical professionals, they are now putting their hopes on social media for easier and faster fulfillment of those vacancies.

Examples of changes in applying for a job and recruitment are applications by candidates via Twitter, by posting a tweet with a link to their LinkedIn page for instance (P&Oactueel 2011). Applying for a job, by using Twitters 140 characters, to give a short but strong motivation for wanting a certain job is also one of the changes in applying for a job. The use of suitable keywords is argued to be preferable so that the tweet can be better found by a possible employer (P&Oactueel 2011). On a social medium like Twitter, which gets flooded by messages, this however is not that easy. Searching with the keywords #engineer and #job for instance shows a list of vacancy tweets but no tweets from people that are looking for a job. Finding candidates via LinkedIn by using suitable keywords works better, because LinkedIn's search engine searches on what people mention on their profile, with regards to their skills, education and experience. This data is consciously made available by the users of LinkedIn for career purposes. A recruiter can find a list of individuals with the right skills, experience etcetera but those individuals are not necessarily looking for a job. The list with search results on LinkedIn shows if the individuals in that list have a relation to the recruiter's own network. LinkedIn also offers the opportunity to look at the profiles of the individuals, to see their previous experiences. A premium account is however necessary to look at profiles from people

who are not connected within three steps from the recruiter's account.

Striking however is that highly educated recent graduates don't like to apply for a job by using social media, as shown by "Arbeidsmarkt GedragsOnderzoek", a behavioral research regarding the labor market, carried out for Natural Talent among 878 highly educated recent graduates (Waasdorp 2012a). Additionally only 8% of the whole Dutch labor market uses social media to get into direct contact with a company of choice (Haasnoot 2013). Students attending a higher professional education or an academic education do orient themselves by using their personal online network (54%) and various social media channels (38%) but when it comes to actually obtaining a job only 3% is willing to put out a job application via a social media platform (Waadorp 2012a). The survey "Rapportage Campus Recruitment" regarding the Dutch labor market, carried out by Marieke Hoefnagel and Geert-Jan Waasdorp working at intelligence group, a research agency focusing on the labor market, recruitment and knowledge with regards to various target groups; shows that 25% of all working individuals who graduated from an academic study obtained its job with the help of their network of friends, family, acquaintances, etcetera (Hoefnagel and Waasdorp 2010, 17). Social media however did not even make the top five. The network of an individual (25%), vacancy sites (11%), business sites (9%), internships (8%) and employment agencies (7%), were the main sources for obtaining a job (Hoefnagel and Waasdorp 2010, 17). Applying for a job students and recent graduates prefer to do simply by e-mailing their CV and motivation letter, 52% cite this as their favorite way of applying for a job (Waasdorp 2012a; Van Haren n.d. b).

Gerry Crispin and Mark Mehler, founders of CareerXroads an international consulting practice for recruiting technology solutions, conducted the research "Sources of Hire 2013: Perception is Reality". This research, regarding the value of social media for hiring new employees, shows that only 3,5% of all new employees in the United States were recruited by means of social media in 2011, in 2012 this was 2,9%, the number thus even decreased over a year (Crispin and Mehler 2013, 7). Most employers were hired through referrals (24,5%), followed by career sites (23,4%). Marco Hendrikse, web editor at PenOactueel.nl, argues that more companies should make referral recruitment, recruiting by a company through the networks of its own employees, an important part of their recruitment strategy (Hendrikse 2013). This was also argued by an employee of Social Embassy during my interview with her.

Although only 2.9% of the hires were attributed directly to social media, the respondents of Crispin and Mehler's survey believed that social media did influence, drive and work in combination

with seven out of eleven other recruitment sources: referrals, the company's career site, job boards, direct sources, college, temp-to-hire and career fairs (Crispin and Mehler 2013, 1). If the interdependence of those sources could have been measured, social media might have received more credit. If social media has an indirect role in the hiring of new employees we could speak of a sort of networking effect in which social media is not providing direct hiring opportunities but indirectly is leading to new hires.

Considering the percentages from Crispin and Mehler's research with regards to the use of social media and the actual amount of hires as a result, and by not being able to accurately measure the influence, drive and working of social media in combination with other recruitment sources, social media do not seem to live up to the expectations, claims and ideology as created in discourse surrounding social media for finding the right person for a job by companies. This interim conclusion will be further examined by means of two case studies. What role do social media play in the campus recruitment strategy of Unilever and in the recruitment strategy of Shell?

### 3.1 Unilever's campus recruitment activities

Companies that find themselves having difficulties fulfilling vacancies could integrate a campus recruitment strategy. To get into contact with students of relevant studies and specializations, to make them familiar with the company and by representing itself as a good future employer. Research among 208 academic students carried out by Marieke Hoefnagel and Geert-Jan Waasdorp from research- and consultancy firm Intelligence Group, shows that 67% of the 208 respondents think that having contact with a campus recruiter during their study will increase their chances on the labor market (Hoefnagel and Waasdorp 2010, 26). According to the aforementioned research carried out by Marieke Hoefnagel and Geert-Jan Waasdorp, only 23% of 208 students who participated in the research could name a company with a good campus recruitment strategy (Hoefnagel and Waasdorp 2010, 31). The top three companies named by those students were Unilever (1), TNT (2) and Deloitte (3). In 2011 Unilever was also selected as favorite employer by 1.100 academic students (Unilever 2011). What did Unilever do to become top of mind among those students? This question is difficult to answer without inside information and interviews with the students who mentioned Unilever's campus recruitment strategy and chose Unilever as favorite employer. Through analyses of Unilever's website, social media pages and articles regarding Unilever's campus recruitment practices the following activities, information, information means and method for campus recruitment however were found.

Unilever states that it has been working with a method called the "Campus Manager Approach" (Unilever 2011). With this approach Unilever sends trainees, selected from the business, to their college town to attract new top talent. Unilever attracts about 30 to 40 new trainees each year in the Benelux (NVP n.d., 3). In addition to the Campus Manager Approach it is using its website and social media as information means for its campus recruitment strategy. When it comes to social media, Unilever uses Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter. Unilever has a lot of different accounts for different countries, affiliates, goals, activities and work processes on each network. This research will focus on Unilever's campus recruitment strategy for Dutch students because Unilever was voted best practice with regards to campus recruitment by Dutch students (Hoefnagel and Waasdorp 2010, 31).

Unilever uses its website for its campus recruitment strategy and it has a Facebook page which is relevant for Dutch students, but also for students from other countries around the world. Unilever also has a LinkedIn page called "Unilever Campus Manager Approach" but information on this page is scarce (Unilever Careers n.d.). Visitors of the page only find a small text regarding Unilever's activities and a small text regarding its "Unilever Future Leaders Programme". Besides that it shows several referrals of other Unilever LinkedIn pages, none of which have anything to do with campus recruitment. With regards to Twitter, Unilever has several pages but only the Indonesian one focuses on (campus) recruitment. The focus will therefore lie on Unilever's website and Facebook page.

Unilever has various Facebook platforms, three of which focus on campus recruitment in Belgium and one on campus recruitment for its affiliate in Bangladesh. Unilever does not have specific campus recruitment pages for other countries besides those four campus recruitment pages. It does however have a Facebook career platform. This page is filled with information regarding recruitment (Unilever Careers n.d.). The information on that page is written in different languages. On the "Unilever Careers" platform, the timeline is filled with tips, like the do's and don'ts for interviews, references to the career page on Unilever's website, information about the "Unilever Inhousedag" and information about the "Future Leaders Programme". Out of 208 students 84% believes that letting their CV be checked by someone within the working community will help increase their changes on the labor market (Hoefnagel and Waasdorp 2010, 26). In addition to the aforementioned, 45% of those 208 students indicate that they have a greater need for a job application training when it is given by a prospective employer than by their university (Hoefnagel

and Waasdorp 2010, 22). Students thus seem to feel the need to be schooled by employers when it comes to the job application process. Giving them tips on what to do and what not to do with regards to interviews, like Unilever does, could therefore be appreciated by students.

Unilever's careers page on Facebook is all about recruitment, with an emphasis on students and graduates. Besides the timeline there are five subpages. The subpage "Made By You" which only shows an image saying "Like our page and be the first to find out the latest updates about Unilever for Graduates". Additionally there is a subpage called "Campus" of which the content is country dependent, the Dutch campus page does not contain information. "FAQs" shows and answers some frequently asked questions and the subpage "YouTube" shows films categorized under "Working at Unilever", "Unilever people" and "Unilever future leaders programme". The page "YouTube" again offers the opportunity to select a country but there is no option to select the Netherlands. In addition to that it is not possible to comment on those films on that specific page. On Unilever's YouTube channel it is only possible to comment on the films if the individual signs in first.

All the aforementioned subpages on Unilever's Facebook careers page relate to recruitment by Unilever. The use of Facebook and other social media by Unilever could be improved. In fact it does not play a big part in the overall campus recruitment strategy for Dutch students. Unilever has a LinkedIn page called "Unilever Campus Manager Approach" but this page does not seem to contribute to campus recruitment by Unilever at this moment. It does not have a specific campus recruitment Twitter account for the Netherlands and on Facebook it only has campus recruitment pages for their Belgian affiliates and one for their affiliate in Bangladesh. The page "Unilever Careers" however is also used for campus recruitment purposes but this page focuses on different countries and it does not only focus on campus recruitment but also on regular recruitment. In addition to the aforementioned, when there is offered the opportunity to select a specific country on Unilever's Career page on Facebook, there is no option to choose the Netherlands or when you can choose the Netherlands it has no content. The fact that Unilever is not optimally using its social media for campus recruitment might however not be that big of a problem. In general social media are not used by students to orient themselves with regards to the labor market, as mentioned earlier (Hoefnagel and Waasdorp 2010, 34). LinkedIn seems to be the only exception with 44% of the students saying that they are orienting themselves on the labor market by using LinkedIn (Hoefnagel and Waasdorp 2010, 34). One could argue that this percentage is rather low as LinkedIn is meant for

creating and maintaining work relations based on data, that is provided by the user, for that purpose. In addition to the aforementioned, conversations with several students from the University of Utrecht and the University of Amsterdam showed that they are not interested in becoming a member of a company Facebook page. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, Arbeidsmarkt GedragsOnderzoek (a behavioral research regarding the labor market) carried out for Natural Talent evidenced that highly educated recent graduates don't like to apply for a job by using social media (Waasdorp 2012a). The small role that social media play in Unilever's campus recruitment strategy thus does not seem to be a problem. Even with the small role that social media play in its campus recruitment strategy, Unilever was still named most often by Dutch students regarding a company with the best campus recruitment strategy.

On its website Unilever offers students and graduates information about how to apply for a job or an internship, it explains to graduates what the "Unilever future leaders programme" entails and other information related to working at Unilever (Unilever n.d. a). Unilever on its website meets the recruitment needs of highly educated students, which are: telling students what working at the company entails, the challenges of the job and career opportunities (Wervingswereld 2013). Unilever also offers them the "Performance Evaluation toolkit". This toolkit, according to Unilever, is a confidential interactive exercise, solely for personal use and benefit to help students and graduates make the right career decisions (Unilever n.d. b). Unilever 'reinsures' that the toolkit is in no way part of their selection process, but it argues that it does reflect their approach with regards to career development. This is however questionable because of the affordance of this toolkit to easily collect data and to form a database consisting out of potential future employees, ranked accordingly to their answers given by using the toolkit. This relates to José van Dijck's view on MOOCs and social media as data-mining companies and Kenneth Cukier and Viktor Mayer-Schönberger on a society driven by data.

### 3.2 Shell's recruitment activities

In 2012 a representative group of minimal 20.000 Dutch people, selected Shell as favorite employer, not including their own employer (Waasdorp 2012a). Shell's popularity as an employer grew with 22% thereby defeating the Rabobank after it had been the favorite employer for four years.

Shell has a website, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and LinkedIn pages. It uses its website as a means to inform job seekers about opportunities at Shell. On the page "Studenten en pas-afgestudeerden"(students and graduates) there are five links to the five subpages: (1) how do I apply,

(2) Shell graduate programme, (3) carreer growth and benefits, (4) is Shell the right employer for me and (5) events (Shell n.d.). The first subpage, how do I apply, has three links to three pages: (1) two ways to get a job with Shell, (2) the application process and (3) tips for writing a CV. These pages do not only explain the application progress and different opportunities for getting a job at Shell but they also provide job seekers with tips on how to properly write a CV. The page "Het Shell Graduate Programme" on Shell's website, tells graduates about what they can expect when they start working at Shell and what is in it for them regarding their careers at Shell. The analyses from Wervingswereld shows that the top three recruitment factors, for recruiting students of higher professional education and academic education with a specialization in technique, mathematical and natural science, is giving them information about what working at a company entails (44%), the challenges of the job (39%) and career opportunities (37%) (Wervingswereld 2013). The Shell Graduate Programme page does inform about the fact that they will start with this programme when they start working at Shell, it gives them information about what it means to work for Shell when following Shell's graduate programme and what is expected. The page "Degree Matcher" gives more information about what is expected of the job applicant for a specific job. The page career growth and benefits tells more about career opportunities. So, all in all, Shell meets a big part of the recruitment needs of students on its website, with its pages for students and graduates.

In addition Shell also organizes events like the Shell Recruitment Day and the Eco-marathon for instance. The Shell Recruitment Day is one of the two options to apply for a job at Shell, the other option is by doing an internship at Shell. The Shell Recruitment Day is a "final face-to-face assessment day" where Shell tests the participants by letting them work on various business scenarios so they can assess the participants capacity to analyze issues and identify wider implications (Shell n.d.). Besides the aforementioned Shell observes how the participants are working together, how they deal with change and to what extent they drive their own learning. The day ends with a final interview. Shell's Eco-marathon is a student competition in the field of innovation, technology and sustainability which is not only held in the Netherlands but is an annual competition in Europe, North and South America and Asia (Shell n.d.). Shell also created an game related to their Eco-marathon activities. The game "Energy Run" can be played via Facebook and is related to this annual activity of Shell. Shell describes the game as "the Shell Eco-marathon virtual challenge", the player can design and build a fuel-efficient vehicle. With this self-designed and build car the player has to 'drive' as far as possible on as little energy as possible. The intention of the

game is exactly what the Eco-marathon is all about.

As mentioned Shell is also present on social media. It has several Facebook platforms for different affiliates and different business segments, none of which specifically focus on recruitment. Shell's main Facebook platform, initiated by the headquarters, started its Facebook platform on the 23th of May 2011 and had 3.569.698 likes on the 26sth of May 2013. Shell, among other things, uses the Facebook timeline to tell its history. A Facebook timeline is the first thing visitors see, it is a chronological listing of everything that the users has ever posted or received and a way to tell something about its history for every year it feels is relevant. For each year that Shell found relevant regarding its history it posted a photo and a text consisting out of one or two sentences. Shell's Facebook page can be defined as a general business page; it does not focus on one specific target group or a specific working progress within the company. Shell posts visuals and information about oil & gas platforms but also about other activities, sponsorships, awards they have won, charity and partnerships with museums for instance. The information on its Facebook page thus contains information about various levels within the organization. Shell never mentioned a vacancy or internship on their timeline or referred to the website regarding vacancies or internships via the timeline in the period it was active on Facebook. In addition to the timeline on Shell's Facebook page there are also some specific tabs, like "Global Energy Mix", "Shell Natural Gas", "Shell Eco-marathon", "Working at Shell" and 7 others. On the page "Working at Shell" not a lot of information is given to the visitor of the page about the subject. There can be found some general information about Shell's business culture, short films about working at Shell and some pictures. Also there is a link to more information about Well Engineering jobs. The link guides the visitor to the page "Well Engineering" on www.shell.com, thereby thus leaving Shell's Facebook platform. The goal for starting and maintaining the Facebook platform is not direct recruitment because Shell is not mentioning vacancies or internships on its timeline, because "Working at Shell" is a subpage and not the main page, because of the limited information given on the subpage "Working at Shell" and because of the fact that you leave Shell's Facebook page if you want more information about working at Shell. Obviously Shell's Facebook platform could help recruitment indirectly.

With regards to Shell's presence on Twitter, it has various accounts for various affiliates and business segments, just as is the case on Facebook. On Twitter Shell however has an account specifically for recruitment, Shell Careers. This page has over 17.000 follower and is used to post messages regarding professions, stories of employees of Shell, vacancies, stories of students,

activities and events with regards to recruitment and general information about Shell's business activities. This page shows a combination of two goals, direct recruitment by means of posting links to vacancies, and employer branding by means of voicing the experiences of their own employees with regards to what it is like to work for Shell and by posting messages on the success and progress in certain areas of Shell's business field.

In addition to Shell's website, Facebook platforms and Twitter accounts, Shell also has several LinkedIn pages. A few of those pages have the sub-page careers. On those pages visitors find a few short films that show employees of Shell and Shell's activities. In addition you find some targeted vacancies, based on the LinkedIn profile of the visitor. Detailed information however is not found on the pages, hyperlinks lead to detailed information on Shell's website. Thereby, as was the case on Shell's Facebook platform, leaving the social media environment.

Shell's website and its offline activities play a big role in its recruitment activities. In addition its Twitter account "Shell Careers" is well maintained and mainly focused on recruitment and employer branding. Shell's Facebook page and LinkedIn pages however barely seem to focus on (direct) recruitment. All of Shell's social media pages redirect the visitor back to Shell's website when it comes to information about vacancies, careers at Shell, working at Shell etcetera.

Measurements with regards to the actual amount of hires through social media channels and the analyses of Unilever's and Shell's (campus) recruitment strategy, show that social media do not play a big role in the recruitment of new hires and in the (campus) recruitment strategy of Unilever and Shell. Even with the small role that social media play in the recruitment strategies of Unilever and Shell, they are still popular employers among students and job seekers.

It seems as if we are witnessing a 'unsatisfying' self-fulfilling prophecy, in which companies are massively migrating onto social media as a result of discourse surrounding social media tools for recruitment, but are not getting the results as claimed, expected, promised and suggested in discourse surrounding social media for recruitment. That is why we cannot speak of a complete self-fulfilling prophecy. Social media seem to be integrated by companies into their recruitment strategies because of the discourse surrounding social media for recruitment. Because of the buzz of increasing social media use and encouraging messages to take the step towards becoming a "social company" (Jongeneel 2012). Goals like improving employer branding by creating visibility and familiarity and creating relations with customers, clients or possible future employees could be the driving forces behind this need to integrate social media into recruitment strategies.

# 4. Power

Discourse surrounding social media for recruitment resulted in a social impact. The power of this discourse therefore is strong, it influenced the way in which companies recruit. Even without measurements supporting the value of social media for recruitment.

If the claims, expectations and promises expressed in discourse regarding social media for recruitment were correct, and the companies that integrated social media into their recruitment strategy would have had the results as implied in the discourse, the power relation between company and job seeker would have changed. Especially in the case of the use of data for finding and selecting candidates for a job. Data from social media in combination with data from other sources, according to Kenneth Cukier and Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, make it possible for companies to create profiles and predictions on the basis of that data. Those profiles and predictions would allow recruiters to rank and select the best possible future employees for a job. If this was or will be the case in future years, this will lead to a change in the power relation between recruiters and possible future employees and a change in how individuals will be able to obtain a job.

Data was used for tracking the movements and interests of groups in a de-identified form, which means that it did not identify an individual in a group (Saadati and Christie 2013, 2). In recent years however there has been an increasing ability to, and a trend towards, tracking the movements and predicting the interest of individuals (Saadati and Christie 2013, 2). This gathering, analyzing and selling of identified data obviously has its 'dark side', especially with regards to privacy and its 'prediction' abilities (Cukier n.d.). The gathering of data is often done without consent or without individuals being consciously aware of this process (Saadati and Christie 2013, 1). Big data is in addition to the aforementioned capable of tracking movements, behaviors, preferences and with that data it tries to predict the behavior, likings and perhaps, if we follow José van Dijck's line of thought, with the evolving of MOOCs in upcoming years also the competence, skills, intelligence and qualities of an individual. What would be troubling about those predictions is that individuals in future years might be 'sanctioned' or judged on the basis of their 'profile' (Cukier n.d.). In relation to recruitment this might mean that algorithms in the upcoming years will predict who are the brightest minds, who has potential and who will fit best with what a company is looking for, all on the basis of data. This also leads to an ethical consideration of the possible "dictatorship of data", what if big data statistics would always triumph (Cukier and Mayer-Schönberger 2013, 17)? Kenneth Cukier argues that in a way the data will always be fallible because you'll never have the perfect prediction (Cukier n.d.). Individuals in upcoming years might be 'sanctioned' or judged on a their 'profile'

formed by data that is not even fully correct. This might mean the exclusion from job opportunities based on incorrect information. An individual could also be excluded from job opportunities because of a missing data trail. When no data is available it wouldn't be possible to 'profile' an individual. That individual would be excluded from job opportunities if data would play a big part in finding, selecting and ranking possible future employees. No data record will mean exclusion from the talent pools of companies. The 'visibility' and 'findability 'of an individual, by means of his data trail, would thus be very important for obtaining a job as companies would increasingly use data for the recruitment of new employees. This is of direct influence on the power relation between company/recruiter and job seekers. It influences the way in which an individual gets access to good job opportunities. Some job seekers will no longer be approached because of their data-trail or the lack of data. Using data as a substantial part of the recruitment strategy will offer a non-complete group of potential future employees because of factors like unequal access to ICT and the internet and unequal digital skills. The talent pool created by a company on the basis of Big Data could leave out a lot of potential, because of the aforementioned factors but also because of the fallibility of data as mentioned earlier. A group of highly capable people will not be able to get a job because of incorrect profiles and predictions made on the basis of inaccurate data, because of their lack of digital skills or because they are untraceable when it comes to visibility through data. In addition to the aforementioned some jobs, especially in relation to recruitment, will become redundant when data will play a bigger part in recruitment strategies. The controlled way of working and the selectiveness of big data will deprive a lot of job seekers of job opportunities. If data would be used for recruitment, the power would lie with the recruiters or recruitment tools, they will find and select the right person for a job. The role of the job seeker will become more passive as the role of the recruiter or recruiter tool becomes more active.

# 5. Concluding

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis this research emerged from previous research commissioned by Total E&P Nederland, regarding the value of a social media platform like Facebook for campus recruitment. In this context interviews had taken place. Those interviews showed some interesting aspects and frictions which lead to this research and the research question this report started out with: How do the promises and expectations regarding the value of social media as tools for finding the right person(s) for a job, compare to reality?
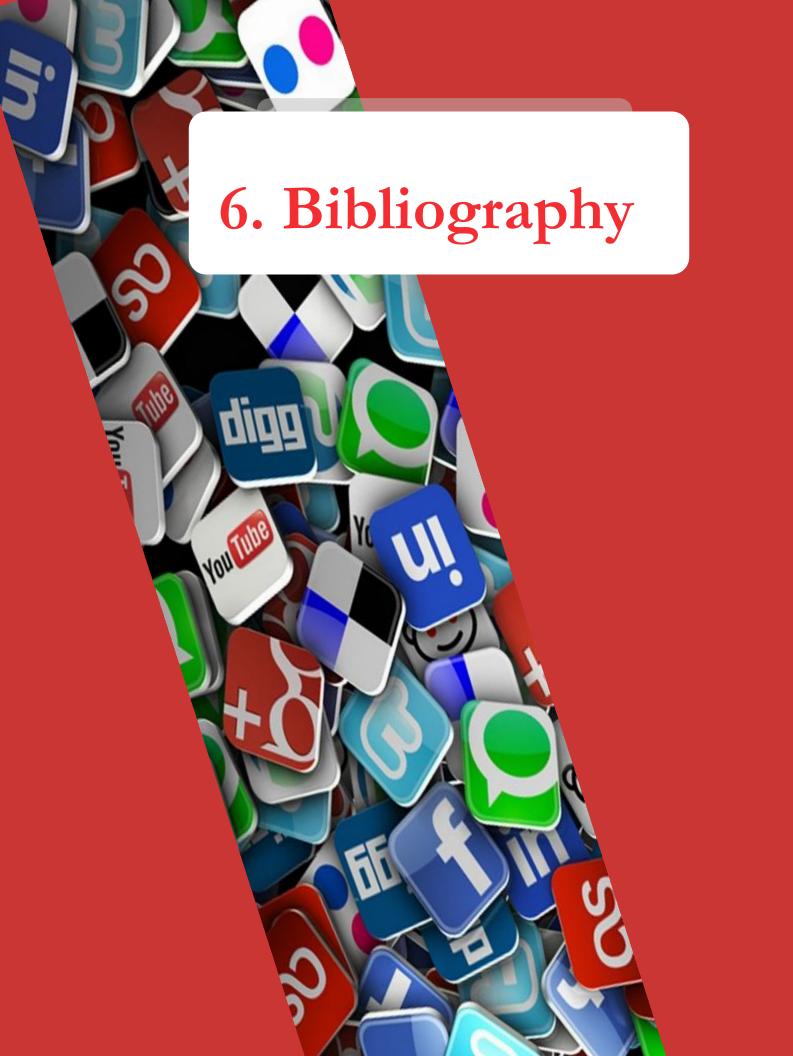
To be able to get insight into the interesting aspects and frictions that the interviews showed and to be able to answer the research question I used three methods. First of all critical discourse analysis of academic and non-academic text regarding social media as tools for recruitment. The main texts that where analyzed where those of Jan van Dijk, his book *The Network Society*, especially his argumentation on the role of social media in society. José van Dijck with her texts on social media as data companies and her skeptic perspective on massive open online courses. In addition, as a related discourse to the discourse surrounding social media for recruitment, it addressed the concept of big data by means of the book *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think* by Kennenth Cukier and Viktor Mayer-Schönberger. In those text concerning social media as tools for recruitment I specifically looked out for words with strong connotations and meaning, hereby trying to find out what systems of meaning the discourse surrounding social media as valuable tools for recruitment produce. The critical discourse analysis in the first part of this report was meant for locating the source of the ideology that surrounds social media for recruitment and for framing the promises and expectations that surround social media for recruitment. Who says what about social media as tools for recruitment and why? The critical discourse analysis lead to the conclusion that discourse surrounding social media and data measurements as tools for finding the right person for a job, create an ideology formed by means of claims, comparisons and expectations in academic as well as non-academic articles. Social media are suggested to be the basis of progress in contemporary society, social media as being the most effective communication means, social media as providers of data and data as the driver for a functioning economy and soon for efficient companies. In addition the value of social media is formulated as a fact and the use of social media for corporate goals as a must.

For looking at reality, the power of the discourse surrounding social media as tools for recruitment and the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy, I used existing measurements which show the small contribution of social media to direct hiring, the interviews which showed discrepancies

between believes and actuality and two case studies. The first case study for this research was the campus recruitment strategy of Unilever, Unilever was chosen as case study for this research because of the fact that Unilever was mentioned most often by Dutch students who could name a company with a good campus recruitment strategy. The second case study for this research was the recruitment strategy of Shell, which was chosen as a case study for this research because it was chosen as favorite employer, not including their own employer, by a representative group of minimal 20.000 Dutch people in 2012. The analysis of the case studies for this research, emphasized the role that social media play within the (campus) recruitment strategy of Unilever and Shell. The two case studies and measurements in the second part of this research were used for looking at the social impact of the discourse as described in part one of this thesis, surrounding social media for recruitment. In addition it was used for looking at whether we can speak of a self-fulfilling prophecy. This chapter lead to the conclusion that social media only play a small part in the recruitment of new hires and in the (campus) recruitment strategy of Unilever and Shell at this time. It seems as if we are witnessing an 'unsatisfying' self-fulfilling prophecy in which companies are massively migrating onto social media as a result of the discourse surrounding social media as tools for recruitment. The results however do not meet the claims, expectations and promises as suggested in discourse surrounding social media for recruitment, that is why we cannot speak of an actual self-fulfilling prophecy. When looking at the social context, who has the 'power', we can conclude that it are the influential contributors to the discourse, regarding social media for recruitment, that have the power. Their discourse is able to generate a social impact, its power influenced the way companies recruit. If the claims, expectations and promises made in that discourse were correct and the companies that integrated social media into their recruitment strategy would had the results as implied in the discourse, the power relation between company and job seeker would have changed. Especially in the case of the use of data for finding and selecting candidates for a job.

The critical discourse analysis of academic and non-academic articles with regards to social media for recruitment, the interviews and the case studies together where used for unravelling the apparent 'obviousness' of the value and the 'necessity' of social media for recruitment. This research gave insight into the discourse surrounding social media as tools for recruitment. It looked at the power of this discourse by looking at the social impact by means of existing measurements and two case studies. There can be concluded that the power of this discourse is strong as we are witnessing an unsatisfying self-fulfilling prophecy in which companies are integrating social media into their

recruitment strategies without getting the claimed, expected and promised results as mentioned in discourse surrounding social media for recruitment.

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