



Being an employer brand

A qualitative research focussing on job choice and person-organization fit in the context of little employer branding

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“Human Resources isn’t a thing we do. It’s the thing that runs our business”

– Steve Wynn, *Wynn Las Vegas*

Preface

September 2011 is when I started my student life in Utrecht, studying Public Administration and Organizational Science. Now, approximately 5 years later, this thesis for my master Strategic Human Resource Management symbolizes the end of my time as a student. Without the support of some people, I wouldn't have been able to deliver the thesis that's in front of you. That's why I would like to thank some people.

First of all, I want to thank my group of close friends for supporting me! In particular I want to thank three ladies: (1) Amber Bleeker, my partner in crime for all the hours spent in the library and the best and most patient soundboard for every twisting thought I had, (2) Anne Hogerheijde, my roommate who was most directly confronted with how I experienced the past six months and all the moods matching that and (3) Suze van Houten, who helped me out with the lay-out of this thesis!

Secondly, I want to thank my family. Not only my parents, but also my brother were a big support during my research. Whenever I needed a fresh opinion, advice from someone with more life experience or just a very big hug my parents were there. And my brother was always willing to pick up the phone when I was calling to have a 'quick' call, that would most likely turn into a call of at least 60 minutes.

Thirdly, I would like to thank my university professor Peter Leisink and the research organization supervisor [REDACTED]. Peter Leisink was always fast in his response, very extensive in his feedback and critical in his way of asking questions. This absolutely helped me in conducting my research and also stimulated me to critically view and describe the choices I made regarding my research. [REDACTED] supported me from within my research organization. I want to thank her for making me feel welcome, for the freedom she gave me to be in charge of the research myself and for the fact she was always prepared to think with me or make suggestions for the research.

Writing my master thesis sounded imposing to me, because of the size of the thesis and the expected difficulty. Sometimes writing this thesis was a bit of a struggle, but luckily I can say I definitely enjoyed parts as well. Especially doing the interviews and being able to see a new organization from within was very enjoyable and instructive to me at the same. I'm not sure whether I should be relieved by handing in this thesis or not, because the end of my thesis implies the start of my working career. This thesis definitely reconfirmed my interest for HRM, so hopefully in the future I can be working in that area as well. At least it's a good start of the job search!

Mariska Klein Entink

Abstract

With an increased focus on human capital as a source of competitive advantage, competing in the war for talent has become a high priority within organization. With increased competition between organizations, finding the scarce talents in a global talent pool, attracting them and retaining them has become more challenging. An organization competing in this war for talent as well is 'Organization X', which is an internationally operating [REDACTED]. 'Organization X' has the desire to attract more talented junior employees, but this organization has a very unknown profile and the organization indicates they perform little employer branding. Previous research shows employer branding plays a crucial role in the perceived image of an organization and therefore this concepts gains importance when wanting to attract the desired talents. The attraction of talents is positively affected when applicants experience a higher level of person-organization fit, because this level of person-organization fit is a predictor of the job choice intentions of a job seekers. Thus, the employer branding provides the input for the image of an organization and based on this image the job seekers experience a level of person-organization fit, which then predicts the job choice intention. Linked to this, the research question central within this study: *How is the job choice of junior employees for 'Organization X' established and how do junior employees at 'Organization X' experience the person-organization fit, both in the context of little employer branding?* This question has been investigated by executing thirteen semi-structured interviews with junior employees within 'Organization X' and additional information was gathered through organization documents and a short survey. The results regarding job choice indicate that the little employer branding plays a role in the way junior employees get to know the organization and the factors that are mentioned as reasons to choose for 'Organization X'. The factors that play a role in the job choice of junior employees for 'Organization X' are the international character, the (trading) business, the job position and the growth possibilities. The company culture, which was expected to play a role in job choice of juniors in general, was not mentioned. When comparing this to statements about other companies, there is overlap between attractive aspects and thus the image of 'Organization X' is not very distinctive. The results regarding experienced person-organization fit indicate that the little employer branding plays a role in the image regarding the values of the company. The little employer branding leads to less internalization of values and this plays a role in absence of a shared image of the company values. Respondents are less able to recall values of the organization, but respondents do experience a person-organization fit based on the match the work environment and organization culture. Thus, the organization should in their branding focus on the aspects as mentioned by the respondents and additionally focus on information about the company culture in order to create a more distinctive image. Besides that, the employer branding of the accurate values of the company will create a shared image internally and externally of the company, which contributes to the attraction of the desired talents as well.

Keywords: job choice; perceived person-organization fit; employer branding; war for talent; employer attractiveness; human resource management

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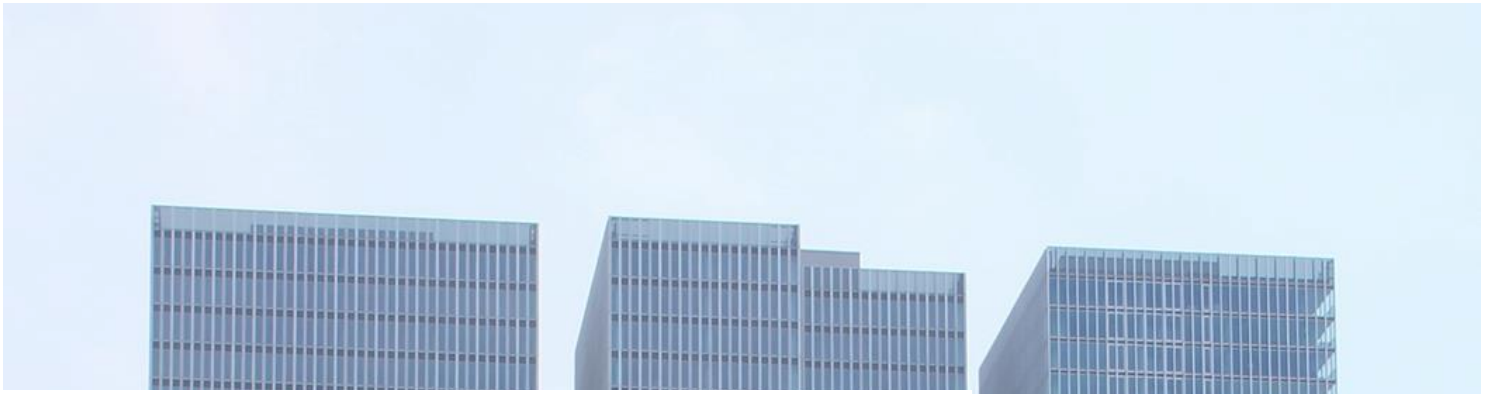
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1. Introduction



1. Introduction

Employees are crucial in organizations. The recruitment of the necessary staff therefore plays a key role in the success of the organization. Recruitment is important in order to reach and attract the desired people and to select and hire the right employees. A relevant challenge for organizations at this moment is the so-called *war for talent*, where organizations compete to bring in and retain scarce human capital. There has been a shift from people needing organization to organizations needing people. The corporate performance of organizations is dependent on the ability of employees. This has led to a change in the source of competitive advantage for organizations, namely people, instead of machines. The war for talent is the outcome of this (Beechler & Woodward, 2009, p.274). This talent war is characterized by the difficulty of keeping top talent in the organization and by the competition that exists between organizations for hiring top talent. The competition for talent on a global scale has increased. Aguinis, Gottfredson and Joo (2012) state this talent war is relevant in organizations of all sizes and across all industries. Farndale, Scullion and Sparrow (2010) state that especially large, international organizations have difficulties in finding skilled employees in a global talent pool that other organizations also use to find their talents. Beechler and Woodward (2009) distinguish four significant factors that are of influence on this war for talent. First of all, they mention some demographic forces and economic trends. Not only do people live longer, but also the number of children born decreases. This leads to “*an unprecedented shift in the age distribution of the general population, and with it, the labor pool supply*” (p.275). Besides this, the economic trend is that there is more cross-border interaction between countries. With the elimination of legal restrictions by national governments, the global integration improves, impacting the labor supply and the talent war. Talent being brought to new parts in the world leads to absence in other parts. The second aspect they describe is the increase in mobility. Labor competition occurs globally, so across geographic borders. The willingness of job seekers to move to other countries has increased. Thirdly, there has been a “*move from product-based to knowledge-based economies [which] is a fundamental transformation impacting the global war for talent*” (Beechler & Woodward, 2009, p.275). The focus used to be on skills and now the focus lies on knowledge. The fourth and final aspect is that the work environment of companies has become more global. This entails interacting with for example a big variety of cultures and markets, and it also means that the diversity within organizations has increased (Beechler & Woodward, 2009, p.276). Based on these factors, the war for talent seems especially relevant for international organizations and for knowledge-based organizations.

The success of organizations is to a greater extent based on the organizations' ability to attract, motivate and retain a group of talented people. Because organizations have more rivalry when it comes to bringing in talent in the organization, there is increasing attention for recruitment processes and job choices being made. Myrden and Kelloway (2015) explain that the perceived reputation of an organization, also compared to competing companies, gives crucial information to job seekers. This emphasizes the importance of employer branding in the attraction of the desired talents, because the employer branding plays a role in the perceived image of job seekers. When an organization has more brand equity, job seekers are encouraged to apply for a job. Farndale, Scullion and Sparrow (2010) state that, in the context of global talent management, the attention for market-mapping and employer branding has grown. Due to the intensified competition between companies for attracting talent, there is more focus on being an

unique and identifiable employer brand (Myrden & Kelloway, 2015). This can be explained by the support these branding activities can give in finding and keeping talented employees. *“Applicants who perceive higher level of overall PO fit with an organization are more likely to be attracted to and accept offer from that organization”* (Swider, Zimmerman & Barrick, 2015, p.880). Person-organization fit between applicants and the company arises from the similarities that exist between what a person is looking for and what they think a company provides. This fit, as perceived by the job seeker, is a predictor of the job choice decisions of job seekers (Cable & Judge, 1996). When job seekers experience a misfit between their own values and the values of the organization during the recruitment process, it is possible that they withdraw from the recruitment process. Within the context of a tight labor market and the war for talent, it is desirable to achieve a high level of person-organization fit (Morley, 2007). Besides this war for talent, technological improvements have changed the way in which and the speed with which people communicate to each other. It has added channels through which possible candidates could be reached (Derous, 2014). This also leads to a more important role for employer branding, not only externally but also internally. It is more important for organizations to be known by potential employees and to have some distinctive characteristics compared to similar organizations. The attractiveness of an employer is determined by the advantages a potential employee foresees in working for a company (Berthon, Ewing & Hah, 2005).

This study is executed within a specific organization, namely ‘Organization X’, where the company branding is very low. This becomes clear in conversation with different HR employees who explain that no or little employer branding is performed by the company (R14; R15; R16).

██████████. This internationally operating company competes in the global talent war and has difficulties in finding junior talents. As stated above, the employer branding forms the image a job seeker has of an organization. This image then provides input for the person-organization fit as experienced by the job seeker. So, the employer branding done by ‘Organization X’ provides the input for the image of this company to job seekers and provides information for the person-organization fit as perceived by job seekers. This perceived fit is then a predictor of the decisions regarding the job choice of juniors. The link between the image as a result of the employer branding and the person-organization fit explains the focus on person-organization fit as predictor of job choice in this study. It is interesting to look into this specific context with little employer branding and see what role this low employer branding plays in the perceived person-organization fit and the job choice made by juniors. It is also interesting to find out how juniors in the past got to know this relatively unknown company, on the basis of what information they formed their job choice and why they chose ‘Organization X’ as the company to work for.

Previous research focussing on perceived person-organization fit is strongly based on graduates in experimental situations. In these experimental situations, the preferred research setting by the researcher is simulated, so the control over the setting is bigger and specific relations of concepts can be investigated. The downside of this is that the situation is set up, so there is a bigger distance from reality and in practice handling of the research subjects. This research distinguishes from that and adds to the existing literature by focussing on respondents in practise. This means there is less control over the research setting, but the research subjects have in practice knowledge and experience on person-organization fit (Morley, 2007).

In the following sections, first further explanation will be given about the organization and the challenge it is facing regarding the attraction of the desired talent in the talent war. Second, the specific problem handled within this research will be discussed and third, the research purpose and the research question are formulated. The fourth and final section regards the scientific, social and practical relevance of this research.

1.1 Description of organization

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. The four central values within the organization supporting this vision are integrity, commitment, respect and accountability ([REDACTED], 27-02-2016).

In the recent history there have been two changes for the organization that are important for the understanding of the current situation of the organization. It is important to describe these two changes because of their possible influence on the subject of research. First, there has been an organization-wide change. [REDACTED]. This meant a change in the leadership of the company, [REDACTED]. This change in leadership possibly influences the way in which people operate and interact with each other. It may also have implications for the atmosphere, culture and values within the organization. Besides this, it may also affect the image job seekers form when getting to know the organization. For example, does this leadership change lead to more international opportunities for employees and therefore affect the attractiveness of the organization? Second, there has been a practical organization change for the part of 'Organization X' located in the Netherlands. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. It is possible that this new building evokes new ways of working between current employees, for example more collaboration because of the open spaces. This might also impact the atmosphere in the organization. This new building can also have implications for the image future employees form of 'Organization X'. These two changes possibly have an influence on the PO fit experienced by current employees and the perceived PO fit by future employees. It is therefore important to keep in mind this context of the organization in the execution of this research.

1.2 Problem definition

Finding the desired talented people in the labour market, in particular juniors, is a big challenge for the organization 'Organization X' at the moment. This becomes clear in the different interviews with HR employees. 'Organization X' has the ambition to bring in talent in the organization in a structured way. In the last five years this has not been done in a structured way and 'Organization X' states that the problem they are facing now is the lack of talent. There are different reasons why 'Organization X' makes this statement. First of all, this is because they experience a lack of bench strength, referring to "*the competence and number of employees ready to fill vacant leadership and other positions*" (dictionary.com, 28-03-2016). Second, there is also a lack of succession planning. These two factors combined, make it problematic to respond to job positions opening up. Besides these two, there is a third reason why 'Organization X' states there is a lack of talent. Within teams, especially concerning trading, not all the employees are performing accordingly, which leads to other employees feeling a lot of pressure and to the head of the team not being able to delegate tasks. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Finally, the annual results of 2015 are not as hoped-for.

In order to improve the bench strength, the succession planning, the functioning of teams and the annual results, 'Organization X' has the desire to bring in talent in the organization in a structured way. 'Organization X' chooses to focus on young talent. Within this research, the concept junior refers to employees that have limited amount of work experience. It can be graduates or employees with just a few years of work experience. Within 'Organization X' the standard used for being a junior is a maximum of two years of work experience, therefore this will be applied in this study as well.

The desire for a structured way of bringing in talent is the reason why there is currently a [REDACTED] Program being set up within the Dutch part of 'Organization X', situated in Rotterdam. The number of junior applicants is high, but these applicants do not match the desires of 'Organization X'. In other words, there is quantity but not quality. By setting up this program 'Organization X' hopes to attract more desirable people and in this way strengthen the organization in her core functions which concerns different business areas such as finance, legal and operations. 'Organization X' states that there are several factors that need to get attention in the process of attracting the desired talent, namely company branding, definition of what talent is within 'Organization X', career plans, development of employees and accurate job profiles. The content of the Young Professional Program has already been determined. 'Organization X' is now working on defining a clear profile for the Young Professionals they are looking for. Also the necessary recruitment process is being defined.

The desire to bring in talent in the organization in a structured way within 'Organization X' is now given a formal procedure, namely via the Young Professional Program. As stated before, the P-O fit is of influence on the recruitment process and the job choice decisions of job seekers. To get insight in how to attract the right talents and get a better understanding of what profile these right talents have, it would be ideal to focus on the group of graduates that 'Organization X' wants to attract and that are also seeking for a job. This group could provide insight in the considerations they make when choosing an employer and could also provide insight in their image of 'Organization X'. Practically, it would be extremely difficult to get in contact with this specific group and acquire their cooperation. Due to these difficulties, within this research the

focus lies on a group that is quite similar to the ideal group, namely the juniors currently working at 'Organization X' that entered the organization within the last two years. The advantage of studying this group of respondents is that it is practically achievable to get in contact with this group and get their cooperation. Besides this, it also is relevant to study this group of respondents because they have an image of 'Organization X' in practice. They can possibly say something about the correspondence between their expectations before they started working at the company and the reality. The current juniors have actual experience with 'Organization X' and know the organization from inside and know for example something about the values within the organization. Focussing on the juniors that are currently working within 'Organization X' could possibly bring along a limitation as well. First, the image could be biased due to the difference in time between the moment people entered the organization and the time of the interviews. It is possible that current juniors do not have a totally clear memory of their actions of approximately two years ago. Setting a boundary in the number of years that the juniors have been employed by the organization, namely two years, helps to limit this influence. Second, the image can be biased because the interrogated juniors have been working at 'Organization X' for some time. There is a high chance that the organization has influenced the employees, so there is a chance that the image juniors have of 'Organization X' has changed since they started working there. On the one hand this is good in practice knowledge, but on the other hand the question is whether the juniors are capable of recalling the image they had of 'Organization X' prior to working there. So, this group of respondents consisting of juniors that entered the organization within the last two years had advantages and disadvantages. It is an interesting group to look at because they do not differ much from the ideal group, the respondents have quite a fresh memory about the choice they made for 'Organization X', they have in practice knowledge of the organization and it is practically achievable to get in contact and get cooperation from this group. Therefore this is the focus of this research. Based on the information these respondents can give, it might be possible to state something about what future job seekers will consider when choosing their employer. In this way it is useful to gather information about the considerations that current juniors made when choosing for 'Organization X' as employer.

1.3 Research purpose and research question

The purpose of this research is to contribute to clarifying how employer branding plays a role in both job choice and the experienced person-organization fit by junior employees within 'Organization X'. This provides insight in how these three concepts cohere with each other. The aim is to get insight in how person-organization fit is experienced by current employees to speculate about what might attract future applicants and to get insight in how the job choice by current juniors for 'Organization X' is formed, in order to derive what the distinctive aspects of 'Organization X' are. The research might also be insightful for organizations comparable to 'Organization X' that are also competing in the *war for talent* as described in the introduction. This would regard internationally operating and knowledge-based organizations where highly educated people are needed. The aim of describing the factors that influenced the job choice of incumbent juniors and of describing the experienced person-organization in relation with employer branding leads to the following research question:

How is the job choice of junior employees for ‘Organization X’ established and how do junior employees at ‘Organization X’ experience the person-organization fit, both in the context of little employer branding?

This central question is answered through answering two sub-questions:

- 1) How is the job choice of incumbent junior employees for ‘Organization X’ as employer established in the context of little employer branding?
- 2) How do incumbent junior employees at ‘Organization X’ experience the person-organization fit in the context of little employer branding?

The first sub-question focusses on the reasons of juniors to choose for ‘Organization X’ as employer and how these reasons form the job choice with little employer branding of the company. The second sub-questions focusses on the experienced person-organization fit in relation to the little employer branding. By answering these two sub-questions the central question will be answered. So, this research acquires information about the factors influencing the choice of current juniors for ‘Organization X’ and about the creation of a person-organization fit. Besides this, it is possible to make some speculations about the future branding of the company to attract potential applicants based on the considerations that incumbent juniors made in their job choice for ‘Organization X’ and based on the current experienced level of person-organization fit.

1.4 Scientific, social and practical relevance

Person-organization fit is a very broad concept and a lot of research has already been done about this type of fit. The link with job satisfaction, commitment and turnover intentions has been investigated, but the link with job choice has also been made. Morley (2007) mentions that *“a problem that plagues many of the fit studies of job choice is the heavy reliance on college students as a source of research data”* (p.112). The argument for this is that it seems questionable that the perceived fit in the context of an experiment resembles the perceived fit during an actual job search. A lot of research is also executed following a quantitative research design. For example Yaniv and Farkas (2005) have investigated the link between person-organization fit and the corporate brand perceptions of employees and customers of a well-known company. They examined this relationship through surveys. Another example is the quantitative research of Resick, Baltes and Shantz (2007), where they investigate the relation between person-organization fit and job choice decisions. Besides this Boswell, Rohelin, LePine and Moynihan (2003) emphasize in their research that the self-insight of people often is limited. So when investigating in a quantitative way, with for example asking people to assess the importance and influence of different aspects on themselves, there is a risk of not getting true preferences as results. With qualitative research, when being able to ask people questions about their way of handling and acting, more reflection on these ‘true preferences’ is possible. This can be done when for example the interviewer is critically reviewing the statements a respondent makes. Besides that, their research also shows that there is a difference between how respondents think they will act when making job choice decisions and how they actually act when making these choices. This research will add to the scientific literature because of the source of information it uses to get more understanding of the person-organization fit concept, namely a group of respondents that have actually experienced the person-organization fit in practice and not in an experimental situation.

Gatewood et al. (1993) state that initial job choice decisions are influenced by the corporate and the recruitment image. The branding of the company therefore is of influence on the initial job choice decisions of job seekers. Research has also found that the perceived PO-fit by job seekers predicts their job choice intentions (Cable & Judge, 1996). This study combines these two insights and focuses how employer branding plays a role in the constitution of both experienced person-organization fit and job choice. Thus the specific context is an organization with a very unknown profile and little employer branding, which has an impact on the equity of the brand of the company. This specific context makes more interesting to investigate the relationship between PO-fit and job choice. So, the scientific relevance of this research question lies in the additional knowledge it can bring to the connection between job choice, the person-organization fit and branding, investigated in qualitative way with respondents that have in practice knowledge.

The social relevance of this research is limited, but the research does contribute to the literature about person-organization fit and contributes to a better understanding of how to influence this type of fit. The outcomes of the research can be insightful for other international and knowledge-based organizations, that are recruiting in the war for talent as well. Optimizing the person-organization fit between employees and employers can lead to less misfits and therefore more efficient recruitment processes (Morley, 2007).

The practical relevance of this research for 'Organization X' is that they gain insight in what makes the company attractive as employer and what aspects are of influence on the experienced P-O fit. In this way 'Organization X' can be more aware of the way in which they profile the company to potential employees, especially concerning the values they carry out. A better understanding of how to influence the perceived P-O fit can lead to applicants being more likely to be attracted to the organization (Swider et al., 2015). Withdrawal from the recruitment process because of a perceived misfit, can be minimized in this way (Morley, 2007). This research also provides clarity of the distinctive characteristics of the organization and the type of person that is attracted to 'Organization X' and this helps in forming a more distinctive profile for future candidates. Besides this, speculations can be made about the considerations future job seekers make and about how to attract these future candidates.



2. Theoretical framework



2. Theoretical framework

Within this section the different central concepts of this research, namely job choice, person-organization fit and employer branding, will be defined and linked to each other. First of all, the broad concept of job choice will be discussed and the different influences on this concept will be reviewed. Second, the focus will be on person-organization fit and its influence on job choice. Person-organization fit will be defined and will be linked to the identity of the organization, the specific focus on juniors within this research and the international context of the organization. Third, the concept of employer branding is described and the influence of this on person-organization fit will be clarified. The goal of this theoretical framework is to clarify (the relations between) the different concepts and to provide theoretical background for the interpretation and better understanding of the results of the research. This chapter will lead to different expectations for this research based on prior research.

2.1 Job choice

Gatewood, Gowan and Lautenschlager (1993) describe the job choice process as “*a series of decisions made by an applicant as to which jobs and organizations to pursue for possible employment*” (p.414). So, in their definition they emphasize the importance of both the job and the company. Barber defines job choice as a “*dynamic decision process in which job seekers move through various stages, making decisions*” (Barber, as cited in Bowell, Roehling, LePine, Moynihan, 2003). They state that dependent upon the various stages during the job search, the importance of factors influencing the applicant vary. This can be explained by the process that applicants go through, in which they become increasingly aware of the existent opportunities and their own needs. According to Kulkarni and Nithyanand (2012), job choice decisions are influenced by three categories of factors, namely objective, subjective and critical contact factors. Objective factors for example refer to tangible attributes of the job itself and the company. Subjective factors for example refer to the match between the values and needs of the applicant and the values and offer of the company. The contact factors that are critical for example refer to the experienced personality of the recruiter. According to Corporaal and Kluijtmans (2012), who focus on the attractiveness of employers, a lot of recruitment research focusses on the job and organizational characteristics that influence the attractiveness of a job or an organization. The attractiveness here refers to the extent to which the job seeker expects his/her preferences to become reality in a certain job and organization. Job choice decisions, namely the intention to apply and the actual choice for accepting a job offer, are predicted by the attractiveness of the job and the organization. Corporaal and Kluijtmans (2012) state that the most important aspects influencing young job seekers in their job decisions are objective job and organization characteristics, subjective job and organization characteristics, person-organization fit, the recruiter and the recruitment process. These five factors are predictors of both job choice and job and organization attractiveness. Subjective job and organization characteristics can be understood as image. Objective and subjective job and organization characteristics are divided in three aspects, namely job content, work environment and image of the company. These aspects are most strongly related to the attractiveness concept. Job content is divided in subcategories the challenge, variety and autonomy and flexibility in time and place. Work environment is divided in the subcategories the supervisor, colleagues and training and development opportunities and the physical work environment. The concept of image is based

on the way organizations handle their employees, their clients and society (Corporaal & Kluijtmans, 2012).

Job choice intentions are also influenced by some other aspects. Cable and Judge (1996) specifically investigate the relationship with the perceived P-O fit, but also underline the influence of other factors, such as different job attributes. A few examples of the variables used in their research as possible predictors of job choice intentions are person-organization fit perceptions, person-job fit perceptions, organizational rewards perceptions, organizational image perceptions, organizational security perceptions and also perceived job opportunities (Cable & Jugde, 1996, p.304). A view on which factors influence job choice decision, following one aspect of Cable and Judge, comes from Moy and Lee (2002). When making a job choice, they state that the most important aspects that influence job seekers are the job attributes. The job choice model follows the assumption that the advantages and disadvantages of these job attributes are being weight up by job seekers when making job choice decisions. These job choice decisions refer to actions concerning applying for a job and accepting a job. It can also refer to behaviour based on the satisfaction with the choice. The result of this weighing process is, according to Moy and Lee (2002): “partly dependent on the perception of the job attributes that are available and its congruence with the job seeker’s preference function, i.e. the perceived importance and attractiveness of the attributes” (p.341).

Job attributes can be divided into three groups, namely the job itself, the compensation or security and the work environment (the company). Moy and Lee (2002) investigated the importance of nine different job attributes amongst business graduates in Hong Kong in their research. The ranking of the nine different job attributes they looked into can be found in table 1 on the right.

Job attributes	Average rating^a
Long-term career prospects	2.59
Pay	2.80
Job security	3.78
Managerial relationships	5.01
Fringe benefits	5.28
Working conditions	5.46
Involvement in decision making	6.33
Responsibility given	6.66
Marketability	7.08

Note: ^a The lower the point, the higher the rating

Table 1. Rating of nine job attributes (Moy & Lee, 2002)

The long-term career prospects were assigned as most important when selecting jobs. This job attribute is defined as “*Opportunities for promotion and advancement offered by the firm*” (Moy & Lee, 2002, p.342). The explanation Moy and Lee (2002) give for this job attribute having the highest rate is that more potential in a career implicates a higher possibility of earning more and thus increased chance of a desirable social status. Regarding the job selection of graduates, an essential factor is the development of interpersonal relationships with managers. In sum, their research shows that when choosing initial jobs, extrinsic motives like career possibilities, salary and job security play a crucial role to graduates. When contrasting this with a more recent study of Iacovou, Shirland and Thompson (2011) also focussing on the job selection preferences of business students the highest rated job attributes are growth potential, benefits package, job responsibility and variety, with growth potential referring to “*opportunities for promotions, opportunities for personal growth*” (p.97). The focus in their research is less on the extrinsic

motives, but also on more intrinsic aspects like personal growth, responsibility and variety of the job, therefore the research of Moy and Lee seems the lack in these aspects. Another research regarding the preferences of graduates is from Boswell et al. (2003), in which they focus on graduating students in four different areas, namely engineering, business, labor relations and hotel management. They point out that there are divided results when it comes to the influence of job attributes on the decisions jobseekers make. In their study, they tested the influence of fourteen aspects at three different moments in time. Table 2 below shows the results of this. Time 1 refers to the moment that the individual had not received a job offer, time 2 refers to the moment that the individual had received a job offer and time 3 refers to the moment that the individual had accepted a job offer.

TABLE II Factors Important to Job-Choice Decisions

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Rate the importance of the following factors (Time 1)</i>	<i>What I'm looking for in an employer (Time 1)</i>	<i>What influenced my acceptance decision (Time 2&3)</i>	<i>What influenced my rejection decision (Time 2&3)</i>
	<i>Mean rating</i>	<i>Percent mentioned</i>	<i>Percent mentioned</i>	<i>Percent mentioned</i>
Company culture ^a	6.2	62.8	36.5	19.0
Advancement opportunities ^b	6.0	37.2	25.8	9.6
Nature of work (e.g., challenging)	5.9	51.9	37.6	40.5
Training provided	5.7	49.7	8.6	2.4
Work/non-work balance	5.5	31.1	3.2	0.0
Monetary compensation	5.3	71.0	19.4	23.8
Benefits	5.2	51.9	1.1	0.0
Location	5.0	0.0	37.6	26.2
Vacation time	4.6	21.9	0.0	0.0
Level of job security	3.9	11.5	1.1	4.8
Size of company	3.7	0.0	4.3	9.5
International assignments	3.3	4.4	2.2	0.0
Reputation of the company	—	0.0	19.4	0.0
Industry	—	0.0	14.0	11.9

^aIncludes survey rating and mention in interviews of "personally like your coworkers."

^bIncludes survey rating and mention in interviews of "personal growth."

Table 2. Factors important to Job-Choice Decisions (Boswell, et al., 2003)

The table shows that at time 1, so before receiving a job offer, the graduates rated company culture, advancement opportunities and the nature of the work as the three most important factors influencing their job choice. At the open-ended question at the end of the survey also distributed at time 1, the graduates mentioned company culture, the nature of the work and compensation and benefits as influential (Boswell et al., 2003). At time 2 and 3, the most influential aspects for acceptance according to the graduates are the nature of the work, the location, the company culture, advancement opportunities, monetary compensation, reputation of the company and the industry. The most influential aspects for rejection are the nature of the work, the location, monetary compensation and the company culture. Therefore one can say that the important aspects according to graduates change over time. Important aspects at time 1,

such as benefits and the training provided, were judged as less influential in the actual job choice. Organizational specific aspects like reputation, industry and size gained importance when actually making job choice decisions. The constant factors that stay important over time are the company culture, the nature of the work and (partly) the advancement opportunities (Boswell et al., 2003). So when comparing to the view of Moy and Lee (2002) and Iacovou, Shirland and Thomson (2011), Boswell et al. (2003) finds the most importance for intrinsic motives. Lievens, Decaestecker and Coetsier (2001) focus in their research on final-years students, from universities in Belgium, in the area of business and engineering and they examine the preference of these students regarding the size of the organization, the extent to which the company is international, the pay mix (base salary and bonuses) and the level of centralisation. They find that prospective applicants (final-year students) are more attracted to medium- and large-sized organizations. Regarding the international aspects, prospective applicants prefer multinational organizations. The strongest attractiveness relationship was found concerning the level of centralisation, prospective applicants were more attracted to decentralised organizations than to centralised organizations. They found no significant effect of pay mix on the attractiveness of organizations.

Complementing the view of Gatewood, et al. (1993), in which they focus on both the job and the organization as aspect of the job choice, Boswell, et al. (2003) state that in order to attract suitable applicants, an organization can reinforce the attractiveness of a job by influencing either the job characteristics or organizational aspects. They also state that another method for attracting more applicants is to make the recruitment activities more effective. This effect can be direct, via for example deadlines within the recruitment process, and indirect, via impressions about the company during the recruitment process which may lead to assumptions about e.g. the work atmosphere (Boswell, et al., 2003). The intention of job seekers to have further contact with an organization is significantly related to the perceived corporate image and recruitment image, according to Gatewood, et al. (1993, p.421). The exposure of job seekers to information is of greatest importance in the perception of image. The image of an organization is not mainly dependent on the presented information to a job seeker in recruitment activities of the organization, but the image of an organization improves when job seekers are exposed to a greater amount of information of the organization. So, the mere exposure to organization information effects the image perception that an individual has of a company. Besides the improvement of the image, there is also a positive influence on the intentions to pursue employment (Gatewood, Gowan & Lautenschlager, 1993, p.424). Kulkarni and Nithyanand (2012) connect job choice with social influence and mention that job choice decisions of applicants are influenced by the information from credible strong connections, such as family members and close friends. Kulkarni and Nithyanand (2012) state that "*Research with graduate students shows that such informational social influence has a strong impact on perceptions of organizational attractiveness*" (p.141). Word-of-mouth communication is of strong influence on graduates and it interferes with the impact of recruitment actions. When lacking organization information, applicants use their social environment to find additional information.

In sum, the job choice of juniors is influenced by different aspects. One division of these factors is in subjective and objective aspects, but Boswell et al. (2003) make the distinction between job characteristics and organizational aspects for influencing the attractiveness of a company. Different job attributes have been studied several times, with Moy and Lee (2002) finding extrinsic motives as most influential. The most recent view comes from Iacovou, Shirland and

Thompson (2011) who state growth potential, benefits package, job responsibility and variety are the most important. Boswell et al. (2003) emphasize the factors in different moments in time. Their findings of the factors influencing the acceptance decision seems to resemble the situation in this study the most, because here the job seekers have accepted the job offer at 'Organization X'. Therefore the nature of work, location, company culture and advancement opportunities are expected to be important factors. Key in this is the exposure of job seekers to information is about the organization because this provides input for the image of an organization, this image will then determine the intention of the job seeker regarding the job choice (Gatewood, Gowan & Lautenschlager, 1993, p.421-424). This is essential information in this study because the little employer branding in this way effects the image job seekers have of the company when making job choice decisions.

2.2 Person-organization fit

As mentioned in the paragraph above, person-organization fit plays a role in the job choice of job seekers. The concept of person-organization fit will be defined and illustrated here. The concept of person-organization fit can be placed within a broader category, namely of person-environment fit. First of all, the term fit can be explained in terms of concepts like similarity, need-satisfaction and demand-ability match. There are different types of these person-environment fit relationships, like person-job fit, person-group fit and also person-organization fit. Within every type the focus is on a different aspect (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005, p.282).. Kristof (1996) gives a clear definition of person-organization fit: "*The compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both*" (Kristof, 1996, p.4-5). This definition identifies two different concepts which are supplementary and complementary fit. The fit is supplementary when the characteristics of the individual are similar to those of other actors in the organization. Associated terms with this supplementary fit is the congruence between values and goals. The fit is complementary when the characteristics of the individuals and of others are not similar but when they complement each other, so the individuals' characteristics adds to what the environment is lacking of or the other way round. Concepts connected to this are demands-abilities fit and needs-supplies fit. The conceptualization of person-organization fit is frequently done by the concept of supplementary fit, so it's about the congruence in values of the individual and the organization as a whole (Boon, Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe, 2011). Besides the distinction between supplementary and complementary fit, another distinction can be made between objective and subjective fit. Objective fit evolves by evaluating the match between individual and organization, which happens by separately collecting details about the individual and the organization. Subjective fit, also referred to as perceived fit, can be assessed in conversation with the individual. The individual is then asked if, in their perception, there is a good match (fit) with the organization and its employees. Besides focussing on congruence in values for the operationalization of perceived person-organization fit, it's also possible to focus on congruence with organizational culture for examining this (Resick, Baltes & Shantz, 2007).

Resick, Baltes and Shantz (2007) emphasize the importance of person-organization fit by showing it's link to "*organizational attraction and retention, recruiters' selection decisions, and employees' work-related attitudes and actions*" (p.1446). When there is a good match between the person and the job, this is positively related to job satisfaction. A good match between

person and organization is positively related to organizational commitment and negatively to turnover (Boon, Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe, 2011). There is a strong relation between perceived person-organization fit and positive work-related attitudes and organizational attraction. Besides this, a less strong relationship exists between perceived person-organization fit and task (Resick, Baltes & Shantz, 2007). O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991) name that *"the greater the similarity between an individual's self-concept and his or her image of an organization, the more that individual preferred that organization"* (p.489). They state that empirical evidence shows that increased compatibility between the personality of a job seeker and the job demands is linked to positive emotions and less chance of turnover.

2.2.1 Person-organization fit and job choice intentions

Cable and Judge (1996) state that when job seekers choose an organization to work for, they: *"prefer organizations that have the same "personality" as they do"* (p.294). Personal characteristics should be in line with organizational attributes in order for an individual to give preference to an organization. Research shows that the congruence between the personality of a job seeker and the attributes of the organization affects the job seekers. Evidence states that *"P-O fit can affect job choice decisions"* (Cable and Judge, 1996, p.294). The perceived P-O fit is a result of the congruence between the perceived values of the organization by the job seeker and the values of the job seeker itself. This perceived P-O fit is a significant predictor of job choice intentions, which means it can predict whether a job seeker is likely to accept a job offer from an organization. Cable and Judge (1996) also found that the demographic similarity in values between the job seeker and a representative of the organization is not a predictor of the perceived P-O fit by the job seeker. Demographic similarity here refers to the resemblance between the job seeker and organizational members in terms of aspect like age, gender, race and socioeconomic status (Cable & Judge, 1996).

There are different possibilities when it comes to operationalization of P-O fit, but the congruence between the values of the job seeker and the organization is widely accepted as the way in which P-O fit is operationalized (Morley, 2007). Values are part of a bigger concept, which is culture and are the underlying assumptions on which individuals base their actions. Culture can be described as *"a set of cognitions shared by members of a social unit"* (O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991, p.491). Aspects involved in the establishment of culture are values, expectations about norms and behaviour. The values and assumptions are visible in aspects like the norms, rituals and symbols. Values can be defined as *"internalized normative beliefs that can guide behaviour"* (O'Reilly, et al., 1991, p.492). When different people, belonging to the same social unit, have resembling values, this may lead to social expectations or norms. When more people from this social unit shared these values, an organizational culture may arise. In general, people seem to be attracted to groups similar to themselves. So the underlying values of individuals influence their choice for job and organizations. And reinforcing this process, organizations aim to bring in individuals with presumably similar values. One could even state that *"Values provide the starting point, with the joint processes of selection and socialization acting as complementary means to insure person-organization fit"* (Chatman, as cited in Chatman & Caldwell, 1991, p.492).

In sum, within this research the person-organization fit is refers to the perceived supplementary fit, so whether an individual perceives similarities in characteristics of themselves and the

organization. Regarding the operationalization of this, in the interviews both values and organizational culture will be used to form an image of the fit, as suggested by Resick, Baltes, and Shantz (2007). The statement of O'Reilly, Chatmand and Caldwell (1991) shows the link to employer branding, because they say that experienced similarity, which indicates experienced person-organization fit, is based on the image of an organization.

2.3 Employer Branding

The concept of a brand can be described as the symbolization of tangible and intangible attributes which can add value and be influential (Edwards, 2010). The brand of a company often arises from the central product a company produces. In this context the term brand can be defined as *"a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors"* (Schneider as cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p.502). Establishing a brand can help in the differentiation of not only tangible products, but also individuals, places and companies. Besides this link with products, it is also possible to link branding to human resource management practices such as recruitment. In this context, it is referred to as employer branding. Edwards (2010, p.6) describes employer branding as *"an activity where principles of marketing, in particular the "science of branding", are applied to HR activities in relation to current and potential employees"*. Employer branding can also be defined as *"a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm"* (Sullivan as cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p.501). The basis of employer branding should be the position of the company and the corporate identity, according to Elving, Westhoff, Meeusen and Schoonderbeek (2013). In the war for talent, the marketed identity of company can lead to substantial advantages in finding the necessary employees. Elving et al. (2013) state that *"employees are no longer recruited solely for their functional knowledge; compatibility between the employee and the organisation is important as well"* (p.356). The reputation of an organization is influenced by the employees working at this organization and therefore the employees are an essential aspect of the competitive advantage that companies have.

Edwards (2010) makes a distinction between the target audience of different forms of branding. First of all, product branding views the representation of a product to customers, so the focus is on an external audience. Second, corporate branding views the representation of a company and is aimed at different external audiences. Third, employer branding has internal and external target audiences, focussing on current and potential employees. In the case of employer branding the marketed product is a unique employment experience, which refers to the experience offered to both current and potential employees (Edwards, 2010). In addition to this, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) clarify the distinction between corporate and employer branding by appointing the two main differences between them. The first difference concerns the nature of the branding. Employer branding specifically focuses on employment and thus the identity of a company as an employer. The second difference concerns the targeted audience, which is both internal and external in the case of the employer brand. Contrariwise, the corporate brand mainly focuses on an external audience (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Edwards (2010) states that it is crucial for employer branding to identify the key elements that characterize the company. This characterization can be based on the values and principles

within a company because those elements determine the daily functioning of (the people within) the company. Therefore one could state that employer branding comes down to influencing the image of the company as experienced or as seen by the current and potential employees. The unique employment experience aligned with employer branding, should establish that employment with a specific company leads to functional, economic and psychological advantages that are coherent with the identity of the company (Edwards, 2010). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) came up with a three steps description of the process of employer branding. The first step is the value proposition of the company as employer. This proposition entails the central message of the employer brand and contains the specific value the organization provides to their employees. It is based on things like culture within the organization, the style of management, the current employer reputation, the quality of the current employees and the quality of the product or service provided. After defining the value, the second step in this employer branding process is to communicate and sell this value to the targeted audience, such as recruiting agencies and possible future employees. Crucial in this external marketing is that the employer branding activities are in line with the other branding actions. In this way it can strengthen the corporate brand. The third and final step is to market the employer brand internally. The reason for this is that *"it carries the brand "promise" made to recruits into the firm and incorporates it as part of the organizational culture"* (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p.503). The aim is to make all the employees committed to the company values and goals.

Employer attractiveness can be seen as an antecedent of the broader concept of employer branding. Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) state that *"the more attractive an employer is perceived to be by potential employees, the stronger that particular organisation's employer brand equity"* (p.156). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) describe what employer branding entails and in their view it becomes clear that there is a role for employer branding in the attraction of new employees. They state that *"employer branding represents a firm's effort to promote, both within and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer"* (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p.501). It is interesting for companies to invest in their employer branding because it provides competitive advantage. The process behind this is that, by differentiating from competitors in the labour market, the distinctive characteristics of a company as employer are highlighted. These distinctive aspects establish the employer identity of a company. Besides that, employer branding contributes to the internalization of company values by employees and it contributes in retaining employees. The use of employer branding becomes more crucial in the context of a more knowledge-based economy, where skilled human capital is often scarce. So, the relevance of employer branding is based on the thought that human capital adds value to the company (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Edwards (2010) states that *"potential recruits are more likely to apply for a job at a particular organisation that has an existing positive company reputation. The greater a company's reputation, the more attractive it tends to be seen by potential recruits"* (p.8). One central factor predicting the experienced positive reputation of a company is the level of profitability. Also, if a company is evaluated higher on a set of socially responsible aspects, such as environmental consciousness, the quality of a the product and engagement with employees, the company scored higher on attractiveness as employer (Edwards, 2010). The relationship between job and organizational characteristics and the attractiveness of a company can be explained by the signalling theory. This theory assumes that job seekers base their image of an organization on the job and organizational characteristics because these job seekers do not acquire a full package of information about a company. Instead of a full package, the characteristics can be compared to signals, representing

the in-company working conditions. Elving et al. (2013) formulate characteristics that add to the employer attractiveness of companies, which are “a supportive working environment, characteristics of the organisation (for example, ethical standards), salary, career prospects and location, compensation, culture and developmental possibilities” (p.359). Prior research has found that organizational attractiveness increases when there is a higher level of person-organization fit. The communication of adequate and sufficient information about aspects like mission, values and successes of the company contributes the job seekers perception of the level of person-organization fit. Therefore the right communication is an important aspect and can enhance the organizational attractiveness (Elving et al., 2013).

The extent to which an employer brand is distinctive determines whether the company is able to recruit distinctive human capital. The external branding of a company contributes to the distinctiveness of a company as an employer. The internal branding contributes to the uniqueness of the workforce of a company. When employees are continuously exposed to the value proposition of a company, the organization culture becomes hard for others to imitate. The stability of this acquired competitive advantage is dependent on the stability of the distinctive workforce. The internal branding can stimulate the willingness of employees to stay within the company and thereby optimize the retention of employees. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, p.505) propose a conceptual framework for understanding the concept of employer branding in relation to marketing and human resource concepts (see figure 1).

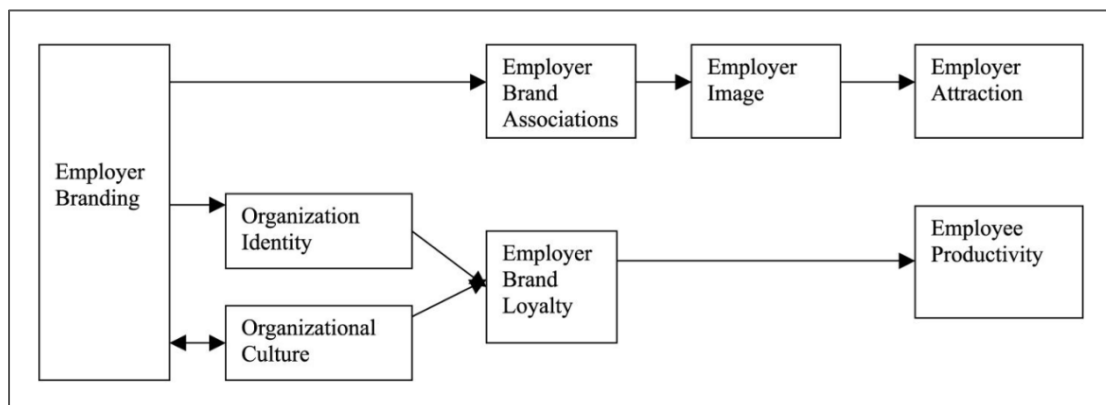


Figure 1. Employer branding framework (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p.505).

In this framework it becomes clear how Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) think the different concepts are related. In this way, the attractiveness of an employer is determined by the image and the image is influenced by the employer branding activities.

Regarding the importance of employer branding, Elving, et al. (2013) conducted a research in the Netherlands focussing on the use or lack of employer branding in recruitment practises on the one hand and on (the effectiveness of) employer branding in job advertisements on the other hand. For the first part of the research they used randomly selected job advertisements of four different vacancy websites and for the second part students from the university of Amsterdam were approached. They find that respondents prefer advertisements with employer branding aspects in it and they also find that in the recruitment practices of companies employer branding is hardly ever used. When focussing on the organizational attractiveness, the research distinguishes four aspects of influence, namely organizational climate, development, innovation

and compensation. For these last two no significant relation was found. When focussing on person-organization fit, the four estimates of this concept are working climate, compensation, social responsibility and social climate but only for these last two a positive relation with the estimated person-organization fit was found. In sum, they highlight that “*EB enhances organisational attractiveness and the possibility of estimating a fit between organisation and potential employee*” (Elving et al, 2013, p.368). Even more, they state that “*corporate positioning, internal branding, EB and related practices could be successful avenues for organisations*” (p.355). They view employer branding as a powerful practice in finding talented employees. Myrden and Kelloway (2015) examined whether the attraction of young job seekers to companies was effected by brand image and they tested if employment experience had a moderating role in this, because previous research shows that employees become less susceptible to employer branding and more cynical when employees have more work experience. Functional and symbolic attributes are investigated in their connection to the attractiveness of the company to young workers and in connection to work experience. The functional attributes can be defined from the viewpoint of the employer as “*elements of employment with the firm that are desirable in objective terms such as salary, health care coverage, benefits and leave allowances*” (Myrden & Kelloway, 2015, p.272). In contrast, the symbolic attributes refer to “*the job or the organization in terms of subjective or intangible attribution*” (Myrden & Kelloway, 2015, p.272). Examples of these symbolic attributes are the perceived prestige of the company, the expected social approval of working for the company, type of leadership and the culture within the company. Symbolic attributes also refer to the intrinsic satisfaction a job seeker gets when working for the company, such as the needs for being able to express yourself, the need to get social approval and the need for self-esteem. Myrden and Kelloway (2015) studied a group of university students and found that the symbolic and functional attributes, together with the perceived employer brand image, predicted the attraction of these students to the company. For these young workers, the symbolic attributes turned out to be a stronger predictor of the attractiveness of the company than functional attributes. When an individual had more work experience, the symbolic attributes gained importance in predicting the attraction to the company.

In sum, employer branding is an activity that can contribute to the organization’s attractiveness and which is focused on an internal and external audience. The external branding can contribute to the distinctiveness of the company and to the chances for a job seeker of establishing a fit and the internal branding contributes to the internalization of values and the uniqueness of the company culture (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

2.4 Expectations

Before formulating the expectations, first the connection between the three central concepts within this study will be clarified. In figure 2 the conceptual framework of these concepts can be found. The framework of Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), with the employer image being a result of the employer branding, functioned as input of this framework. Combining this with the findings that the similarity between the individual and the image of the company determines the preference for an organization (O’Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991) and that person-organization fit is a predictor of job choice (Cable & Judge, 1996) the design of the conceptual framework can be explained.

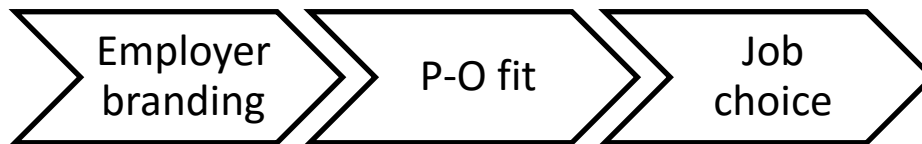


Figure 2. Conceptual framework of three central concepts.

The employer branding of a company provides input for the information and image a respondent has about the company. This information plays a role in the person-organization fit, as perceived by the job seeker. The person-organization fit is then a predictor of the job choice intentions a job seeker has. In this study the central concepts are not studied in this sequential order because the respondents groups available are incumbent juniors of the organization. So the focus lies on job choice on the one hand and person-organization fit on the other hand, both in the context of the little employer branding. Theoretically, the connection is that the employer branding provides input for the experienced level of person-organization fit, which is a predictor of job choice.

Related to the two sub-questions, different expectations can be formulated based on the literature described above. First, related to the sub question regarding the way in which job choice is established, the expectation is:

Expectation 1: At a company like ‘Organization X’ with little employer branding, the juniors employees are expected to have less input for the image of the company and therefore in their job choice the location and the nature of the work are expected to play a role.

When looking at the factors influencing job choice as described by Boswell et al. (2003) at the moment that a job offer had to be accepted, the four most influential factors are nature of the work, location, company culture and advancement opportunities. So these four factors could be expected to play a role in the job choice of the juniors within ‘Organization X’. When combining this with what Gatewood et al. (1993) state about that the image of a company is formed by the available information, it leads to expect that the job choice is based on the easy accessible information. In this case it is easier to form an image of the location and nature of the work than it is to find out the company culture and the advancement opportunities. Related to the second sub question, regarding how employees experience the person-organization fit, the expectation is:

Expectation 2: At a company like ‘Organization X’ with little employer branding, the junior employees are expected to experience less of a person-organization fit, because the lack of branding leads to less internalization of the company values.

As described by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), the branding of company contributes to the internalization of the company values by employees. Besides this, Morley (2007) described that the person-organization fit arises from the congruence between the values of the employee and the employer. Therefore the expectation is that the employer branding plays a role in the experienced person-organization fit.

3. Methodology



3. Methodology

This chapter is concerned with the way this research has been conducted and the explanation of the choices made within this research. First, the design of the research is discussed. Second, the different data collection methods will be reviewed. Third, the way of handling the data and analysing the data is illustrated. And finally the quality criteria used within this research are identified.

3.1 Research design

The design of this research is a case study, because different concepts are investigated within one specific organization. The results are very context-dependent and mainly directly applicable for the research organization itself. The theoretical perspective adopted in this study is called phenomenology, also known as the interpretative perspective. Within this view it is key that a social phenomenon is examined from the individuals' perspective and that the world as perceived by individuals is explored (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). Therefore, this research adopts the assumption as described by Boeije (2010) that: *"individuals have an active role in the construction of social reality"* (p.6). Following this assumption, it is crucial within this research that the respondents have the possibility to use their own formulation. In order to answer the research question it is important that respondents describe the experience they have with 'Organization X'. For example the image of the company can be different per person because it is constructed individually and individuals behave based on the social constructions they form. This research has the aim to gain insight into social processes where individuals play a crucial role. Inductive reasoning forms the base of this study. This means that theory will be used to get a better understanding of the decision making process that juniors go through and theory can also be used to give interpretation to the constructed realities of respondents. It is not the goal to establish a general applicable relationship, but to get more understanding of the context-dependent decision making process of individuals. This is the reason why a qualitative research method is adopted. When following this above described qualitative assumption, it is important that the respondents are given the opportunity to describe their realities (Boeije, 2010). It is important to mention that the research process within this study is not fixed but it's dynamic. This means that the different phases are not in a sequential order, but the different activities can continuously and alternately be executed. Boeije (2010) describes this as *"the qualitative research process is characterized by alternating between data collection, data analysis and sampling. These activities cannot be strictly separated, as the researcher jumps backwards and forwards between them"* (p.119). With this in mind, the different aspects of data collection and analysis will be described below.

3.2 Data collection method

For covering the social realities of the juniors within 'Organization X', the main data collection method that has been used within this research is semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Besides this, two additional sources have been used to gather data. These additional sources mainly served as input for the semi-structured interviews. So, following the chronological process of the research, the two additional sources will be described firstly and the semi-structured interviews will be handled secondly.

3.2.1 Document and (open) survey

The first data source is the existing material within the organization, namely the outcome of a workshop called “‘Organization X’ a better place to work”. Different sessions of this workshop had been organized for all the employees at the headquarter ██████████ and there was an attendance of 92 percent. The goal for this workshop was to define jointly what kind of company ‘Organization X’ should be and in which way people want to work together to make ‘Organization X’ a place everybody wants to be part of. The process and outcome of the workshops was documented in a PowerPoint presentation. The outcome of this workshop provides insight in what people in the ██████████ office think about the environment within ‘Organization X’ and about the way in which they work together. The results gave insight in the organizational culture and the positive and negative aspects of the work atmosphere. The limitation of these data was that it could not be specified by age group or function level, but the positive aspect is that it does provide some general findings. The nature of these results is qualitative. The workshop consisted of a group conversation with opportunity for everyone to give input and decide on the more/less important factors. The results are a summary of the different aspects named within these group sessions. The outcomes provide insight in the strengths and weaknesses of ‘Organization X’ experienced by the current employees when it comes down to the attractiveness of the organization. Some of these outcomes were used as input for the topic list for the semi-structured interviews. For example, a negative aspect of the work environment in the workshop outcomes is the *lack of clear structure, roles and responsibility* and also *lack of accountability*. These two negatives aspects suggested that asking for a work environment description in the interviews might lead to statements about the values, which are important for assessing the person-organization fit. So, in the interviews the respondents were asked to describe the work environment within ‘Organization X’ to get the view of the juniors within the company instead of the organization-wide view, with possibly statements about the values. Besides this, a question was added to the topic list about what ‘Organization X’ could improve to become a more attractive employer and the interviewer tried to have extra focus and ask more question to clarify whether aspects of the work environment mentioned by the respondent were experienced as positive or negative.

The second data source is a very short, exploratory survey. A group of fifteen students from the Erasmus university with a background in Law had an in-house day at ‘Organization X’ on the 23rd of March, 2016 and they answered some questions prior to their visit and some questions after their visit. The short survey distributed before the in-house day, contained the questions: “*What is the reason you signed up for the in-house day at ‘Organization X’?*”, “*What image do you have of ‘Organization X’ at this moment?*” and “*What do you find important in a future employer?*”. This survey was send by a ‘Organization X’ employer to the students via e-mail. Six out of the fifteen students answered this survey. The second survey distributed at the end of the in-house day contained the questions: “*What image do you have of ‘Organization X’ after the in-house day?*”, “*What do you find most attractive about ‘Organization X’ as employer?*” and “*What do you find least attractive about ‘Organization X’ as employer?*”. All of the fifteen students answered the survey at the end of the in-house day. The surveys were printed and handed out to the students by a ‘Organization X’ employee. The results of these two surveys also served as input for the topic list of the semi-structured interviews. An outcome of the survey prior to the in-house day was that the students didn’t have an image of the company or they described the image as “*a trading company*”. There was only one student that used a broader description, saying something about the size, the international character and the work rhythm within ‘Organization X’. Therefore, in the semi-structured interviews it was important the find out based on which

image and thus what aspects of the company, the juniors made the choice for 'Organization X' as employer. The three most frequently mentioned aspect in a future employer by the students were development possibilities, work environment and salary. For this reason, whenever respondents in the interviews were not mentioning anything about salary, the interviewer asked a specific question about salary to form an image of what role it played for the incumbent juniors.

3.2.2 Interviews

The data collection method of interviews gives insight in the considerations juniors make in choosing for an employer. As explained before, the choice for a qualitative method arises from the desire to get context-dependent information and especially about the reasoning behind decisions that junior job seekers make. This way of data collection enables the collection of detailed information, because respondents get the opportunity to describe their realities and it enables the researcher to ask further questions about subjects mentioned by the respondent. The choice for doing the interviews in a semi-structured way is based on two aspects. On the one hand it secures that some general topics are discussed and on the other hand it provides the freedom to respondents to speak up and give direction to the interview. The questions are not preconceived so there is a bigger chance of getting rich descriptions and gathering detailed data (Boeije, 2010, p.32).

In Attachment I you can find the topic list used for the interviews with the respondents. The three central concepts in the research question, namely job choice, person-organization fit and employer branding, guided the structuring of the topic list. The reason for this is that questions about job choice refer to a moment in the past, the questions about person-organization fit refer to the current situation and the questions about employer branding for prospective juniors refer to a moment in the future. More specifically, every interview started with an introduction of the researcher, the research and the expectation of the interview. Then, the first question to the respondent would be to shortly describe what it is that they do within 'Organization X' and when they started working at 'Organization X'. The choice for this opening question is based on the idea that it would be comforting for a respondent to start off with an easy question. It is important to note that every interview had a different process, depending on what the respondent said. Usually, the first topic of focus was job choice (see Attachment I, section 3 'The past'), starting with a question like: "*Why did you choose 'Organization X' as employer?*". This question is directly linked to the first sub-question of this research, and the aim of this question was to get as much thoughts of the respondent as possible without leading the answers in a specific direction. Depending on the extensiveness of the respondents' answer, follow-up questions about the start of the job search, the study background, the study location, the first contact with 'Organization X', the other companies the respondent applied for and the image of the company, were asked. Asking for the background of the respondent can also lead to the respondent giving an image of the influence of his/her personal life, which can impact the job choice decision made. Asking for the first contact and image can indicate how the low employer branding affects the input for the job choice. Two provoked open questions were also asked to the respondent, namely what role salary and what role location played in their job search, because based on the literature (Moy & Lee, 20002; Boswell et al.,2003) and based on the survey outcome the researcher found it interesting to form an image on these two aspects whenever a respondent didn't mentioned it himself/herself. Boswell et al. (2003) explicitly found that location plays a substantial role in the acceptance decision of a respondent. The second topic in

the interviews (see Attachment I, section 4 'Current situation'), linked to the second sub-question within this research, was two-fold, namely on the one hand asking open question about the work environment and the organizational culture within 'Organization X' and on the other hand asking open questions about the values within 'Organization X' and the values of the respondent. This is because the literature states that person-organization fit can be indicating by values (Morley, 2007) and sometimes also by organizational culture descriptions (Resick, Baltes & Shantz, 2007), which was also the case with the workshop outcomes. Because asking for values is usually difficult, some follow-up questions were asked as well, regarding the type of people a 'Organization X' (which could possibly provoke a statement about values or characteristics as well), regarding the job expectation (which could possibly provoke a statement about the expected fit when applying) and regarding the improvement 'Organization X' could make (which could possibly provoke a response about in which areas there isn't a fit between the respondent and the organization). The third topic within the interviews (see Attachment I, section 5 'Prospective juniors') focused on the future branding of 'Organization X', asking for the distinctive corporate image and the attractive aspects of the company for prospective juniors. This topic of focus was added to get information about the branding of the company and also these question help to let the respondent link the job choice topic to the values/work environment topics. The current employees at 'Organization X' can combine on the one hand why they in the past choose this company and on the other hand what they currently like about working at 'Organization X'. Therefore they can provide input for what should be the carried out as the employer brand of the company.

After the first 2 interviews, there has been assessed whether the necessary information was coming forward during the interview and the topic-list has been reviewed. There was only one small change made in the way the respondents were asked for the values. In the first two interviews, the researcher would ask the respondent for the central values within 'Organization X'. The question after this would be about to what extent the values within 'Organization X' resemble their own values. The result of this was that the respondent would respond affirmative very quickly and the response was formulated in a way as if it was obvious that there was a full resemblance. In order to stimulate respondents to critically view whether the resemblance between the values is so obvious and entirely present, a change was made. In the other interviews, an extra step was added in between these two question. In this additional question the respondent was asked to describe his/her own values in work context. The goal of this was to try to reduce the influence of the respondent saying automatically that their own values resemble the values within 'Organization X' and also to reduce the pressure of saying there is a resemblance.

3.2.3 Respondent selection

A sample refers to *"the cases (units or elements) that will be examined and are selected from a defined research population"* (Boeijs, 2010, p.35). Within this study the case being investigated is the part of the organization 'Organization X' based in Rotterdam. A specific type of sampling, purposive sampling, is often applied in qualitative research and also in this research. This entails the sample being selected in order to fit the requirements of the study. Bryman (2012) defines this as *"the selection of units (which may be people, organizations, documents, departments, and so on), with direct reference to the research question being asked"* (p.416). In this way the sampling is not done randomly but with the aim to ensure that the sampled participants are suitable to the research question. The purposive sampling approach used in this research is called criterion

sampling and this entails all the units being selected when meeting certain criteria (Bryman, 2012, p.419). Two further characterizations of the way of sampling can be made. First, the criteria for the selection of units within the case were formulated at the outset of the study and there were no criteria added during the process of the research. This is characterized as a priori sampling. Second, the sample in this study was selected at the beginning of the research and did not change over time. This can be characterized as non-sequential sampling (Bryman, 2012, p.418).

As mentioned above, criterion sampling was used as purposive sampling approach. In line with the research question central in this study, the focus of the sample is on junior employees within the office in Rotterdam of 'Organization X'. Within this case the units are sampled according to the following two criteria.

Within the list of employees situated at the Rotterdam office, the first selection was made based on the start date, because the first criterion is that the respondent must have entered the organization sometime in the last two years. For this selection June 2014 was used as boundary, so all the employees that started in May 2014 or later were included in this first list. The choice for this criterion is based on the thought that people need to have a reasonably fresh memory about the choice they made to start working for 'Organization X' in order to have a higher chance of accurate data. In other words, the accurate memory of people is limited and so for the reliability of the research it is important to set the limit at two years for entering the organization.

The second criterion used for selecting the units within the case is that the respondent must be in a junior position or must have started in the organization in a junior position. The reason for this is that this study aims to gain insight in the choice juniors make and therefore they should be spoken to. This selection was made in two ways, namely based on the system and based on the knowledge of the supervisor from the organization. The reason for this was that the supervisor indicated the system could possibly be not fully up-to-date (e.g. a junior position not being called a junior position) and also when employees have made growth during the past two years they might not be in junior role at the moment of the research. The first step was based on the system and entailed refining the list that was the outcome of the first criterion. This was done by selecting employees that have the denotation "junior" in their job title. The result of this was a list of eleven employees (including one intern). The second step, based on the knowledge of the supervisor, was complementing this list with people who, according to the supervisor, are in a junior position or entered the organization in a junior role. So, based on the knowledge of the organization supervisor, this list was complemented with an additional number of two employees. The bias of this is that the knowledge of the supervisor is subjective and so the researchers does not know if these four additions are actually the only four additions that could have been made. During the processes of interviewing and being present within the organization, two other employees were also added to the list because they were not in a junior function (anymore). These four employees either started in a junior function within 'Organization X' within the last two years and already made promotion, in the system they did not have a job title with the word "junior" when they were actually in a junior position or they had limited work experience according to the supervisor. From these four additional respondent, two were not included in this study because during the interview the researcher found out they had over two years of work experience. In order to be consistent in the group of respondents and in order to follow up on the scope 'Organization X' uses when selecting junior

employees (which is a maximum of two years of work experience), the data of these two respondent were left out. This made the number of respondents thirteen.

Besides the respondent in the category of junior employees, three interviews were done with HR employees to grasp the context of the research question, such as the recruitment process within 'Organization X'. These employees were based on function and availability. The HR employees interviewed held the positions of HR director Europe, HR business partner and external recruiter. This made the total number of interviews used in this study sixteen. In table 1 below you can find the division of respondents in function areas. In order to ensure anonymity the intern communications and the secretary are gathered under the category of staff.

EXPERTISE AREA	AMOUNT	POSITIONS
HR	3	HR director Europe HR business partner External recruiter
TRADE	4	Junior trader (3x) Logistics analyst
OPERATIONS	3	Junior operations officer (2x) Junior operations officer freight
RISK	2	Junior market risk analyst (2x)
ACCOUNTANCY	2	Junior VAT accountant VAT accountant
STAFF	2	Intern communication Secretary (personal assistant)

Table 3: Respondent selection, specified in number and expertise area

Out of the sixteen interviews, ten were in Dutch and six in English. The three HR interviews were in Dutch as well. The interviews in English were amongst others with respondents from France, Greece and China. Out of the group of sixteen respondents, four were female and two of those work in the area of HR. Except from the three respondents in the HR area, all the other thirteen respondents were below the age of 29. The start dates vary with the extreme being August 2014 and April 2016 and the average employer period of 13 months. The interviews took place in May 2016. The respondents were approached via e-mail. First they were sent an email by a HR director explaining the context of the research and asking for cooperation in an interview. After this the researcher could send meeting invites directly to employees.

In Attachment II you can find the anonymized respondents' list which will be used for quotations in the results chapter. In order to guarantee anonymity, there is a distinction made between three categories. Category 1 exists of respondents in the area of trade and operations, category 2 exists of respondents in the area of accountancy, risk and staff and category 3 exists of respondents in the area of HR. In this way there are more than two people in every category and in every category there are at least two people with the same interview language. The reason for the division of business areas within category 1 and 2 is that operations and trade are both concerned with the core business of 'Organization X'. Risk, accountancy and staff are less directly involved with this and this possibly leads to differences in the data of those respondents.

3.2.4 Interview setting

The interviews were held at the Rotterdam office in rooms with glass walls, separated from the work floor. The choice for this interview setting is based on the thought that the Rotterdam office is time and effort wise the most logical location and besides that it is a place that respondents know so probably feel comfortable. The separated rooms will give the respondent the privacy to speak more freely about his/her experience. Besides this, it also has a practical reason, namely the quality of the recordings will be better when there the background noise is limited. The downside of this is that the respondent is partly taken out of his/her natural setting behind their desk and could possibly feel less at ease because of this. All of the respondents were asked for permission to record the interview. The choice for asking to record the interviews is that in this way the quality of the data is increased, because the researcher can focus on the interview itself instead of focussing on making notes. Also, more literal sentences and phrases can be reserved when recording the interview. In this way literal quotes can be used in the study. The possible downside of recording is that it makes the respondent more aware of what they are saying and it can even influence the respondent in what they are saying. Because the topic of this study regards the organization as a whole and not a more delicate topic, for example the relationship with the supervisor, it is expected that the impact of this downside is limited. For all the interviews one hour was scheduled. Only one respondent could spend no more than 30 minutes in his/her agenda with me. On average, the interviews lasted 51 minutes, with the shortest recording being 29 minutes and the longest being 67 minutes.

3.3 Data analysis

Boeije (2010) emphasises in her definition of qualitative analysis the emerging character of it and he states: *“Qualitative analysis is the segmenting of data into relevant categories and the naming of these categories with codes while simultaneously generating the categories from the data. In the reassembling phase the categories are related to one another to generate theoretical understanding of the social phenomenon under study in terms of the research question”* (p.76).

Reporting the dynamism of the process is attempted in this section. Hereafter the different activities are described.

Prior to analysing the data, the data had to be prepared first, so the collected data through interviews were processed and preserved. As mentioned before, with permission of the respondent, all the sixteen interviews were recorded. Subsequently, all the audio files were transcribed. The transcription of the interviews was done in a way useful for answering the research question, namely an interpretative way. This means the transcripts do not include the seconds of silence and the “uh’s” and sometimes wrong beginnings of sentences are left out as well. Though, whenever the meaning of the respondent was not clear or if too much words had to be left out in order to make a correct sentence, the literal audio part was transcribed. The choice for transcribing in this way is based on two reasons. The first and most important reason for transcribing like this is that no essential information will be lost in answering the research question. For answering the question, it is not necessary that every pause is included in the transcript. It is relevant to keep the words used by the respondent. The second reason is a practical one, namely it saves time to not transcribe every pause and every “uh” in the audio file. The risk in this is that the researcher makes choices in leaving out silences or “stumble” words, that could have meaning when analysing on word level. In general, transcribing audio fragments means some loss of data, because body language and emotions are difficult to cover in a textual way. Though, transcriptions are necessary for analysing the data.

After the transcription of a part of the interviews, the coding of the data started. First, the data were coded in an open way (in vivo). Boeije (2010) refers to this as the segmentation fase. Three interviews were coded in an open way. The reason for this is to keep the codes as close to the data as possible. Second, the data were coded axially. This is what Boeije (2010) refers to as describing categories. This means that codes with the same meaning were combined and the codes were categorised. Examples of codes that were put together are 'function description' and 'current work', 'atmosphere' and 'work environment', 'no fixed patterns' and 'no fixed structure', 'development possibilities' and 'growth opportunities' and 'industry preference' and 'commodity trading interest' were combined to a more neutral term '(trading) business'. Also, Dutch and English synonyms were coded in the same English terms, like 'organisatiecultuur' and 'organizational culture'. After this, two more interviews were coded in an open way to review the axial codes and subsequently the rest of the interviews was coded axially. Third, the data were coded selectively. Boeije (2010) refers to this as the reassembling phase. This phase is about putting together and recombining codes. The aim of this was to identify the central concepts. The categorization of all of the codes resulted in a framework of codes, also referred to as a conceptual model (see Attachment III: Framework of Codes). The structure of the Framework of Codes can be explained by the research question. The three central concepts in the sub-questions of the research, namely job choice, person-organization fit and employer branding, guided the setup of the topic list. This structuring of the topic list led to data that are linked to these three concept areas as well and therefore the themes in the code tree are also organized based on this. The presentation of the results in chapter 4 will for this reasons also be structured by this this trichotomy. The choice of analysis is thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012, p.578). This form of analysing focusses on the most frequent subjects in the words of the respondents. It is a descriptive approach and can be used to identify, analyse and capture central themes or patterns. The themes are described as "*essentially recurring motifs in the text that are then applied to the data*" (Bryman, 2012, p.579). Bryman (2012) links four aspects to the concept 'theme', namely it's a category based on the data, it's related to the research subject, it elaborates codes present in the data and it's the link to theoretical understanding of the data. By reading the transcripts for several times the themes and subthemes are distinguished.

3.4 Quality criteria

There are some quality criteria that have been pursued in the execution of this research. In contrast to qualitative research, within quantitative research the commonly used quality criteria are reliability and validity. These criteria focus on consistency and correctness of measures and thus follow the assumption of measuring something (Boeije, 2010 p.169). In conformance with the qualitative research design and interpretative research perspective, the four quality criteria that have been pursued in the execution of this research can be compiled under the overarching term of trustworthiness. The concept of trustworthiness exists of four underlying criteria, as described by Bryman (2012, p.390).

The first criterion is credibility, which emphasizes the complexity of social reality of different actors. Due to the possible different accounts of social reality, the acceptance of one account of social reality is determined by whether it is credible to others. Within this research this criterion has been look after by the use of different sources of data. Not only interviews have been used as input for this research, but also documents within the organization and a short survey. This triangulation reinforces the establishment of the criterion of credibility.

The second criterion is transferability, which is concerned with the so-called “thick description” of a research context in order to provide the necessary input for others to judge about whether findings can be transferred to other settings. In order to grasp the uniqueness of the context and in that way meet this criterion, the context of the organization and the results of the research have been described in detail.

The third criterion is dependability, which can be paralleled with the quality criterion of reliability within quantitative research. Dependability can be reinforced by reporting in detail about research. The pursuit of this criterion within this research is done by the rich description of the execution process.

The fourth and last criterion is confirmability, which according to Bryman (2012) refers to *“ensuring that, while recognizing that complete objectivity is impossible in social research, the researcher can be shown to have acted in good faith”* (p.392). This criterion has been pursued by getting input from third parties in order to minimize the personal values of the researcher. Examples of this are getting feedback from the university supervisor, mainly asking open questions in interviews, letting fellow students listen to audio fragments whenever the recording was not clear and letting a fellow student code an interview and compare these to the researchers own codes.

4. Results



4. Results

As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, within this chapter the data is presented based on the structuring of the code tree. The questions during the interviews referred to three different moments in time. The first moment is the job choice the junior employees within 'Organization X' made and is thus a moment in the past. The second moment is the current situation regarding the work environment, culture and values (PO-fit) and thus the present. The third moment is in the future and it regards speculations of the respondents about future branding. In line with the research question, the concept employer branding is not only present in this last category but also plays a role in the data regarding the first and second moment in time. The choice for this separation in time moments is important for the accuracy of answering the research question, because statements of respondents about the organization about the situation prior to working for the company can differ from the experiences in the company while actually working there. The themes that are dealt with within these three moments in time are the themes that arose from the thematic analysis and that contribute to clarifying and answering the research question. The introduced aspects within the themes are not based on frequency, but on completeness, because the aim is to present all the different views of the respondents.

Because of the different languages in the interviews, the original quotes of the respondents are both in Dutch and in English. In order to prevent too much repetition of quotes within this chapter, the Dutch quotes are translated into English. Whenever this is the case, the quotes has no quotation marks, because it was not literally said by the respondent in that language, and it will also be indicated by the words 'translated quote'. In Attachment IV: Translated quotations the original Dutch quotes can be found. Besides the translations of some quotes, it's important to mention that not relevant or personal information counteracting the promise of anonymity is left out in the quotations used in this chapter. Square brackets like these '[...]' are used to indicate this. Sometimes in between these brackets an indication is given of what kind of word is left out, for example '[*another company*]'. When there are round brackets with an 'x' in between, like this '(x)', it was not possible to transcribe that audio part of the interview.

4.1 The past

This section of the results chapter is linked to the concept of job choice in the context of low employer branding. The low employer branding of 'Organization X' makes it interesting to find out how the respondents got to know this not very well-known company in the first place. So, before focussing on the reasons of job choice for 'Organization X', first there will be attention for the way in which the respondents got to know the company.

4.1.1 First acquaintance (with 'Organization X')

A distinction can be made between two ways of hearing about 'Organization X' for the first time. Out of the thirteen respondents, nine respondents found out about the company through family or friends. These were either family or friends working for 'Organization X' or just family or friends who were aware of the existence of 'Organization X'. The other four respondents got to know 'Organization X' through LinkedIn or through a vacancy webpage. On LinkedIn, 'Organization X' popped-up in the suggestions of the respondents according to the respondents, so they didn't search for 'Organization X' himself/herself. This first experience with

'Organization X' either via friends/family or online provides input for the image the respondent forms of the company and can play a role in the job choice decisions of the respondent. One respondent, who got to know 'Organization X' through a friend, explains what his/her friend told him/her and says:

"I received really good feedback about the company, about the things they are selling, the way they work, how close they are, a lot of things" (R9).

Within the group of respondents that found out about 'Organization X' for the first time through family or friends, five respondents explicitly indicate they visited the webpage as well to form an image of the organization. The higher number of respondents with a first acquaintance with 'Organization X' through family or friend might be explained by the little publicity and awareness of the organization as a result of the low employer branding.

4.1.2 Job choice factors

A broad and open question all the respondents were asked was "Why did you choose 'Organization X' as employer?". In this question there was no guidance with a specific factor, but the respondent was just openly asked to describe why they made the job choice for 'Organization X'. Within the thirteen interviews, seven different factors are mentioned by the respondents as reasons that play a role in their job choice for 'Organization X'. These seven factors are: the international character, the size of the company, the (trading) business, the job position, the organizational structure, the growth possibilities and the organizational culture. All these different aspects and the frequency of the aspects will be illustrated below.

First of all, **the international character** of the company is mentioned by nine of the respondents. It seems logical that for the six non-Dutch respondents, the international aspects of the company is a requirement for them to function in the organization. Because Dutch is not their mother tongue, a company should have English as operational language. Also, some of the vacancies specifically asked for a, for example Russian, Spanish or French speakers. An anonymized quotation illustrating this is:

"I saw this opening at 'Organization X', as a [...]. Specifics were basically you would need to be a [...] speaker, which I am obviously" (R6).

This shows how the international aspects is very linked to the company and the work itself. Besides the non-Dutch respondents, different Dutch respondents also emphasized their preference for an international company. One respondent first explained some things he/she did during the period of studying, thereafter the respondent states:

I really wanted to work in the international trade, because in that way I felt like I could combine my experience and really be working with something that's international instead of something maybe more regional (R5) - (translated quote 1).

This respondent links the preference for an international company to his/her prior experience. Two other respondents link their international preference to the language aspects of it. One quote illustrating this is the following:

It's really an international company, that's appealing to me [...]. Also, I find it more pleasant to work in English than in Dutch. [...] So, I really like the international atmosphere, that I get to know people from Africa or Portugal, just then at table during lunch (R12) – (translated quote 2).

Another respondent also emphasizes the preference for an international company, but this respondent also makes a link to the second factor, namely **the size of the company**. The following quote exemplifies this:

Right away when I did my studies, I figured, I want to work big and international. [...] The diversity that you have with an international company is more appealing to me, otherwise you're in the office with only three other colleagues, then you always have to deal with the same people and only Dutch customers. I like it when you also have contact with Spain, Argentina, then you can use English again and also experience other cultures. So that's what I like about such a big international company (R8) – (translated quote 3).

In this quotation the respondent brings forward that the international character is linked to the diversity the company has and the amount of colleagues you have. This respondent prefers to work in a company where the amount of colleagues is not limited to for example three others. Another respondent more explicitly emphasizes the company size as aspect, when contrasting 'Organization X' to other companies he/she was talking to during his/her job search:

"One of them was a (x) company and another one was a technology company, a smaller one. I didn't want to start my career in a small company, even in the technology company the dynamics, was a small company, not so international" (R9).

There are two more respondents emphasizing the size of the company. One also refers to not wanting to be in the office with only three other colleagues and one also referring to wanting to have a career start in a bigger company. The international character is not only linked to the company size but also to third factor, **the (trading) industry**. A quote illustrating this link between the first and the third aspect is the following:

I can really manage myself in international setting and I like it as well, and that was at some point like, you should do something with that. And I have always done my studies in English as well, so I actually read primarily in English. I, myself, really like that and there aren't that much industries where that's, where you are really faced with that, in the financial market that should be possible in general, but then it's going towards some kind of non-tangible product really quick (R5) – (translated quote 4).

A bit further in the interview, this same respondent adds to this:

I really wanted to work in this commodity business, that was really my specific focus, that was the thing I wanted to work in (R5) – (translated quote 5).

In these two quotes, the respondent illustrated how his/her wish for an international environment and working with a tangible product are unified within the commodity trading industry. Also emphasizing the commodity trading interest, one respondent says:

"The part that it's commodity trading and very commercial that were my main drivers. I always wanted to have career where I could have an impact or basically you see there everyday something that you do" (R6).

In total there are eight respondents referring to the (commodity) trading business as either the one preferred option or as one of the few preferred options of industries to work in. Six of the respondents mentioning this aspect belong to category 1 (see Attachment I) and are thus working in either Operations or Trade. For them, the choice of business has direct implications for the kind of tasks they are performing. In contrast to for example someone working in Risk or Communication, who's tasks are less directly influenced by the kind of business. When explaining the reason for preference for commodity trading these six respondents all refer to the tangible aspect of it compared to other forms of trading. One of the two respondents from category 2 mentioning the trading business, gives as reason to want to work in this business that it's good for your CV. The other one out of the two respondents says the following:

"I choose the industry, and it must be asset management or investing area, banking area, finance area" (R11).

There were also two respondents that initially did not mention the (trading) business as reason to choose for 'Organization X', but when the respondent was asked what other kind of companies he/she was in contact with during his/her job search, one of them stated the following:

"So, I was in discussion with other companies [...], but this, given that it's a trading company, it was the one that I liked the most" (R10).

This shows that although it was not a reason at the top of the respondent's mind, it actually later on played a role in forming the job choice. This also happened with another respondent that stated that at 'Organization X' *"the business is more interesting"* (R13) than at the other company he/she had an offer from. Besides the interest for the business of the company, seven people also explicitly mention the choice for **the job position** itself. With this fourth job choice factor respondents refer to the content of the job. It seems self-evident the job itself plays a role in the job choice of people, but it was striking how much importance some respondents gave the job position. Out of the seven respondents that mention the job content, two have the job content as main aspect in their job choice. One of these two respondents said:

"Not that I was specifically going for 'Organization X', to put it clear. But I was specifically going for the interesting opening within 'Organization X'" (R6).

Later on in the interview, this same respondent adds the following comment:

"To be honest the vacancy was really interesting and that was the main point. And playing from the point of the opening, then I considered of course what is 'Organization X', what is the company, et cetera et cetera. So I wouldn't apply to 'Organization X', let's put it this way, if there would be no such opening" (R6).

This respondent strongly emphasizes the importance of the role to him/her and so does one of the other respondents. The other five respondents mentioning the job content do this when contrasting the role at 'Organization X' to a role at another company. A first example of this is the following quote:

"I liked the position. I liked the experience of learning more about [job specifics], so that was the reason that I applied for the job. Because the other interviews were more or less, they were also international companies, well-paid jobs, they didn't have this issue, but it was less my interest" (R9)

Afterwards this respondent explains in a bit more detail how the importance of the role played a part in the job search.

“Since it was my first job, I was pretty much looking for everything. I didn’t look by company, I looked more by the job description [...]. The first thing I looked for was the job itself and not the company” (R9).

Another respondent contrasting the job at ‘Organization X’ to another job states:

“I had for the same point for example another offer from a bigger company but more for an operational role so I decided to take this one because it seemed to me more interesting” (R13).

The fifth aspects, mentioned by four respondents when explaining their job choice for ‘Organization X’, is **the organizational structure**. This aspect exists of two sub-dimensions, which are flat hierarchy and few fixed patterns. Two respondents refer to the flat structure of the organization. One of these two respondents states, when describing his/her job search:

And well, at some point you have a list on which you orientate and then there are just a few left where you really want to work. And ‘Organization X’ was one of them, just a really flat structure, that’s what I heard pretty fast from people (R3) – (translated quote 6).

This respondent emphasized the flat structure and also identifies what his/her source of information is, namely other people. The organizational structure is also referred to three times in the context of a low amount of fixed patterns (once by the same respondent and twice by other respondents). Two quotes regarding this:

And I went to see a lot of other companies as well and I just didn’t want get stuck in a fixed pattern at a structured multinational, where you have 2 years of this, two years of that and after 2 years you have this step and after two years you have that step. And here, that’s not the case (R1) – (translated quote 7).

Another respondent mentions the (not)fixed aspect in the context of other companies:

“If I’m very honest with you, I was not too interested in the job offers I got in [city in home country]. I simply didn’t think it was so fair, because when they tell you, that regardless of how well you perform, the three initial years will be as stable as it can get and you will not have any weekends, you will have to work during the weekend” (R10).

This quote links the fifth aspect of structure to the sixth aspect of **the growth possibilities**. Within this quote the relation between organizational structure and the impact of that on the performance of individuals is brought forward. There are five other respondents stating something about the growth possibilities within ‘Organization X’ as aspect of their job choice. One of these five also refers to growth possibilities in combination to the structure of the organization. This respondent makes a comparison to another company and says:

I suspected that, [other company] is in my opinion, how I see it, really a school. There you do this 2 years, then you do that 3 years, then at some point you do something else. It goes

really slow I think. Whilst, I'm pretty ambitious, I want to go pretty fast. That's the feeling I got with 'Organization X', if you perform well, you can go very fast. Here, age does not matter (R3) – (translated quote 8).

Reinforcing what this respondent is saying, there is another respondent that describes the growth possibilities like this and who names this growth aspect within 'Organization X' as the main reason he/she chose for 'Organization X'. One other respondent confirms this as well, also mentioning that you don't have to rotate within the company for a few years but within 'Organization X' you can start executing right away to really become what your job title states. Someone else describes the first conversation with 'Organization X' employees and then says:

In that conversation I actually got pretty enthusiastic, big organization, there are a lot, in my opinion, growth possibilities. You can really further your career here at 'Organization X'. That are aspects why I chose 'Organization X' (R2) – (translated quote 9).

Also emphasizing the career prospect, one other respondent states:

"So at that time, I searched for several vacancies and I do get two offer at that time, so in the end I choose 'Organization X' [...] because this is more related to, because I think the career prospective will be better" (R11).

There is only one respondent referring to the seventh aspect when explaining the job choice, which is **the organizational culture**. This respondent describes the organizational culture as enterprising. This respondent first said that the most important reason for choosing 'Organization X' had to do with the growth possibilities, because if you perform well, you can grow fast, but after this statement he/she mentions some more aspects, saying:

Well, it's a very enterprising culture and it's a very flat organization. Which all facilitates the main reason I just indicated (R1) – (translated quote 10).

He/she links the possibility of growth to the culture and structure of the organization.

4.1.3 Salary and location

Besides the natural responses of the respondents as indicated in the objective and subjective factors, the respondents were also asked what role salary and location played in their job choice for 'Organization X'. When explicitly asking respondents this, it becomes clear that the impact of these two aspects was not dominant over other aspects. First, **the salary** is an aspect that respondents find important but not extremely important. Some respondents state that they could have gotten a higher salary at another company and also some respondents state that you have to prove yourself first to an organization before being rewarded. This can be shown by some examples.

"It was good enough, but it wasn't the highest I could get at that point" (R6).

"It's something really important of course. Okay, it's not my number one priority, but it's played of course. You want to see that what you do and the way you're involved, gets

recognized, One way to do it, is with the position and the other way is by the wage, because I'm not working as a hobby" (R9).

Your starting salary here is lower than what I could get at other companies. Quite a bit lower. I took that for granted because I think this is cool, because I know that that will follow of course, it's an exponential process, if you do well, you will earn well, but you need to have the trust that you'll get there (R1) – translated quote 11).

Second, **the location** also didn't have a dominant role over other aspects. Here are two examples illustrating this.

"If you want to put the negative point, that's because it's in Rotterdam [laugh both]. I didn't really like the location. [...] So, for me personally, 'Organization X' situated in Rotterdam is not the best location. But I mean, it has always been here, before I was there so [laugh both]. I don't really have the credit to compete. For me it wasn't a deal breaker, although it wasn't preferred point there" (R6).

It didn't, because I was living in Amsterdam and I didn't want to move to Rotterdam (R1) – (translated quote 12)

In this last quote the interviewer asks what role location played in the job search of the respondent and the respondent answers with the quote. Further in the conversation he/she tells that he/she is now living in Rotterdam.

In sum, the salary and location were not mentioned by the respondents as reasons to choose for 'Organization X' as employer, so the quotes mentioning something about this are all provoked. Based on this, it is possible to conclude that people do not think of this when answering the job choice question. This can either be explained by the fact that these aspects do not have a big influence or by the fact that these aspects are so obvious to the respondent that they just not think of mentioning it. The quotations where respondents explain they could have gotten a higher salary somewhere else indicates that the importance of these aspects is not that big.

4.1.4 Other companies

In the next sections, the above mentioned factors for choosing for 'Organization X' will be contrasted with other companies the respondents applied for in order to shine light on the preference of the respondents regarding the organization type and the role of employer branding in this.

When asking the respondent what other companies they were looking at or applying to during their job search, the four respondents working in trade mention they looked at or applied to the competitors in the field, Glencore and/or Cargill. Three of the four deliberately made the choice for 'Organization X' and one applied for the competitors but didn't get through, so 'Organization X' was second/third choice. No quotes about this will be given in order to guarantee anonymity of the traders. The other nine respondents (not in trade) mentioned a wide range of other companies they applied to, for example Randstad, Unilever and Ambitious People. Some respondents do not specifically mention names of other companies. The different requirements

mentioned for these companies were **the international character, the size of the company, the business** (e.g. something like finance is mentioned) and **the job position**. When looking at the factors for choosing for 'Organization X', four parallel the reasons why respondents applied for the other companies as well. In the quote used in the previous section this already becomes clear, for example in these two quotes:

"The other interviews were more or less, they were also international companies, well-paid jobs, they didn't have this issue but it was less my interest. So I had to compare, I preferred to be in [job specifics], more than find another job that exactly looked, that I didn't find really useful" (R9).

"I didn't want to start my career in a small company, even in the technology company the dynamics, was a small company, not so international" (R9)

"All the companies I searched was either, pension or found or banking or trading company" (R11).

Another new quote is the following; when the interviewer asks the respondent what kind of organization the respondent was looking at, the respondent says:

"Whatever organizations, most of the big international companies" (R13).

These overlapping factors can be referred to as more factual and easy accessible aspects to find out, because a job seeker can visit the webpage of 'Organization X' and find out the size of the company and see that it's an internationally operating organization in a financial area, specifically trading. By visiting the vacancy webpage the specific job position can be viewed as well. The international character, the size and the business type are pretty constant factors. The job openings is a more dynamic, changeable factor.

4.1.5 Summary

The first time that current juniors heard of 'Organization X' is in most cases (nine out of thirteen) via someone. In these nine cases the first image of 'Organization X' was constituted by input from family or friends. The input of the family and friends also plays a role in the job choice. When looking at the seven job choice factors mentioned by the respondents, the most frequently mentioned aspects as consideration in their job choice are the international character, the (trading) business and the job position. The growth possibilities are also mentioned quite frequently and this would be fourth most mentioned aspect. All the respondents mentioning this aspects got to know the company through someone. Although the frequency is not the only factor which should be looked at for determining the importance, it caught attention that the more factual aspects are mentioned more frequently. The company size, the organizational structure and the organizational culture are mentioned less frequently, but also play a role in the job choice of juniors. When comparing 'Organization X' to other companies the juniors applied to, it comes forward that the requirements of the respondents for these companies and for 'Organization X' seem to overlap in international character, size and business area and the difference could be found in the job position. On the one hand, this emphasizes the importance of these aspects in the branding because in the job search of every respondent at least one of these

aspects plays a role. On the other hand, this emphasizes the importance of focussing on other job choice factors for more distinctiveness of the organization.

The low employer branding of the company seems to have as a results that the respondents get to know the company through someone and (at least partly) base their information on this person. Besides the source of information used by the respondents, the factors that play a role in the job choice decisions are mainly factual and similar to aspects of competitors.

4.2 The present

In order to gain insight in the experienced person-organization fit, it is important to illustrate the (work at the) organization and in particular the values of on the one hand the company and on the other hand the respondents. In this section, the first aspect handled is the values of the organization, based on a focused question about values, namely "*What values are central within 'Organization X'?*". Second, this section deals with the values of the respondents, based on the focused question "*What values do you have in work context?*". The third part focusses on the work environment and culture descriptions of the respondents. These descriptions contain statements about the values as well but are not based on questions about values. The fourth part deals with the congruence (fit) in values between the company and the respondents. The basis for this is the question "*To what extent do you feel there is a fit between the values within 'Organization X' and your own values?*".

4.2.1 Values 'Organization X'

When asking respondents what values are central within 'Organization X', it stands out that eleven out of the thirteen respondents seem to find this a difficult question. This is based on that these respondents either ask the interviewer what is meant by values or they say that they find it a difficult question and they need time to think before answering this question. One respondent found the question so difficult that he/she didn't want to answer because he/she really didn't understand what the interviewer was asking for. The answers to this question are very varied. It is difficult to distinguish central themes in the answers of the respondents. One categorization is that some respondents refer to the values within 'Organization X' that the individuals within the company have and some respondents refer to the values of the company as a whole. First, the values attributed to employees at 'Organization X' that respondents mention, which are **proactivity, transparency, respect, humility, enterprising** and **international**, will be discussed. Second, the values attributed to the company as a whole, which are **commerciality, transparency, performance, good work environment, trustful (little bureaucracy)** and **professionalism**.

The first value of the organization, based on the employees at the company, is in the area of being proactive and working hard. Three respondents refer to this and the value of **proactivity** can be illustrated by the following two quotes:

You especially need, looking at characteristics, then someone especially needs to be proactive. I think that's the most important thing, And self-confident, for sure. Otherwise I don't think you'll last. It can differ per department of course [...]. Think those are the two most important ones (R1) – (translated quote 13).

Yes values, hard work. I don't know if I'm saying it correctly, but drive, be driven. Show initiative (R4) – (translated quote 14).

One other respondent describing the values of 'Organization X' mentions **transparency** and states:

"What values. You have to be clear, you have to be, people have to trust you, because they had this issue with fraud and stuff like that. So, this is the top priority, that you always have control of what you're doing, always be clear in what you do and transparency, that's really important from what I found so far" (R9).

Two other respondents refer to **respect**. A first quote about this is:

Respecting each other. They said it at some point, we have this code of conduct and everything is in there (R8) – (translated quote 15).

The context of this quote is that this respondent is trying to remember the official four values as formulated by 'Organization X'. Another respondent mentions respect and also shows the variety of values mentioned:

"Uh values, in what terms, okay, I think there is respect. I can see it, at least in my team and in my co-workers, people that are around me, working with, I can see respect, understanding and this is all important stuff. [...] I see that if you perform your work properly and you're helpful and polite, it's coming back to you [...]. Uhm what other values. There is the value for your personal life and the balance between work and social life. It is nice that people are, when you tell that you need something or you have some obligation they're always helping to this, I mean helpful and flexible. That's also important. Basically that" (R13).

One respondent explicitly refers to what he/she calls **humility** or humbleness. This respondent first says:

What I really like and find nice about the commodity world is that there is some sort of, in Dutch we don't have a good word for it, but in English humility. That's the case and in the commodity world that's very important because most probably you're wrong 40% of the time, because the market is just too big and your estimate is just wrong now and then (R5) – (translated quote 16).

After this quote the respondent adds that therefore you must be able to recognize your mistakes and not be arrogant. Continuing to describe the values a bit later the same respondent starts about the **enterprising** and **international** 'values':

They'd of course really wanted to have an extreme high integrity, but unfortunately in 2014 there has been a big mistake, so I think that's where they want to go. It's something that I think is important, absolutely and I also think the majority here thinks that and carries it out [...]. Besides, I don't think there is such a loud mouth culture. So, pretty much what you

bring to the table is what you're valued on [...]. It's definitely enterprising, International is it as well, constantly all languages (R5) – (translated quote 17).

Some other respondents refer more to the values of the company as a whole, but they also sometimes mention values attributes to individuals. When one respondent was asked what values are central within 'Organization X', the given answer is:

It's definitely a commercial company, you can notice that. The traders and the commercial roles are viewed as most important, that's my impression [...]. Uh, that's a difficult question. Haven't really thought about it a lot. Uh, definitely respect. Everyone just treats each other with respect. Transparency as well. At least, they try, it's not always easy (R3) – (translated quote 18).

This respondent refers to the **commerciality** as value of the company, refers to respect of the people and refers to **transparency** as performed by the company ("they try"). Another respondent mentions the **performance** of the company and the performance of the individuals in it.

Hm, that's one of the problems they have as well, that it's not very clearly communicated. Yes, the values, I can sum up the list, but what really the value is. Really a big market share, but then you're very much talking about the financial picture. Further, just nice programs. Well, I think that at 'Organization X' you can become very big by occupying the markets in the right way and that kind of things. That, in the end, is a very important thing at 'Organization X'. And what they are enouncing to the outside world, you can probably read that in the corporate social responsibility report I think (R3) – (translated quote 19).

The next two respondents also refer to the performance aspect and one also mentions the **work environment** and the other one mentions the **trustful (little bureaucracy)** within 'Organization X'.

"What kind of values, I think 'Organization X' is a company that tries to be the best at what they do. I think a good working environment, a good relation with co-workers, those are values that they tend a lot to express in this company. For example, to give you a very, very simple example. If I am in the mood for a coffee now, and I want to get a coffee for myself, well we have a nice office, there is coffee everywhere. If I would get a coffee only for myself, people will ask me, so selfish coffee today? [laugh both] So, I don't know, as I said before, it works a lot like a family, they try to have a nice work environment" (R10).

"I believe people here are very trustful with each other in terms of, let's make an example in [other company] if I would have to sign some documents, I would have to go through a lot of people and sometimes I would have to explain, it was more of a bureaucracy there. Here the product process is led less, there is less of a (x) through bureaucracy and people signing stuff and you can just explain to the person, that would be enough. It's not that every change you need to write big amendments [...] but for the rest. I mean the values, it's important to perform here, but you don't have to be sharp at 9. Chill down but you have to work as well, you have to perform. Let's put it this way, as long as you deliver as long as you perform well, it's all good" (R6).

One other respondent refers to the **professionalism** of the company and the involvement with the company. This respondent states:

"I think they try to be more and more, how can I say that, professional and square because at the beginning it was a small company and now the company is getting bigger and bigger so they try to, with this program and a better place to work and stuff like that, they try to make people understand that we're part of one big company and that we have to follow some rules, some, so they try to implement some procedure like that. I think it's good. So yes, to be good, good people, but work way and try to be involved in the company on a daily basis. I think they try also to make the people talk a bit more with the manager, they try to, I know for example, it's a small thing but very important, they made again this appear, just take a drink in the kitchen, it's very good to see other people of the other departments, that's good things also" (R7).

4.2.2 Values respondents

When individuals describe their values in work context, the answers are widespread as well. The things that respondents mention as values linked to the organization as a whole are **respect, work atmosphere, salary, flat bureaucracy, dynamism, development** and **making money** as company. The thing that respondents mention linked to people are **respect, team work, integrity, dedication, responsibility, open-minded-ness, initiative, trust, enterprising** and **humbleness**.

One respondent focusses mostly on the employer when describing the value **respect, work atmosphere** and **salary** and states:

What I find important values, yes, that an employer has respect for the employees, a nice work atmosphere, that the salary matches the work you're doing, the time you're putting into it (R2) – (translated quote 20)

One other respondent puts very much emphasis on the company **making money**, but also refers to some other values and says:

Well, respect. You need to respect each other. But in the end, it's of course about one thing only, which is making a lot of money. That's what a company is for. And I truly believe in that and that's what a company is for in the end, making money. And in that way people can work and afterwards everyone can do what he wants with the money. So, that's what I really believe in [...]. But in a respectful manner, integrity and all that, you know it should be stolen or anything. You can see that. We'd rather cancel a shipment than deliver it, when we know it's not good. So, that you can really notice (R3) – (translated quote 21).

Two other respondents also mention **respect** as value, but more in the context of them as an individual. One of them says:

"Again respect and integrity, I want to do my job professionally, I mean to, how to say uh, when I feel that somebody trusts me and gives respect to work, I want to give it back. I'm

usually the type of person, it gives you back what gets from you, I like things to be much equal, I make of course a, I try to, but then I'm usually trying to deal with people the way they did with me" (R13).

Some respondents also mention that being **responsible** is something that is important. Some describe it as **dedication** or as **initiative** and some link it to **team work** and **flat bureaucracy**. The is illustrated by the following four quotes.

"Important values, what I learn in my job or? Yeah, in the job you learn to be dedicated to your job, that's the most important thing that I learn. We need to be 24/7 a day online to be able to solve an issue, to serve an issue, so, be very reliable to my work and think twice before say something and stuff like that" (R7).

"I think you have to be responsible. That's the value you definitely need to have. I think team work, you need to be a team player. As I said, you need some open-mind-ness, to every new challenge. That's a tough question, I never really thought too much about it" (R10).

"Well as I said, I really appreciate the fact that it's very minor, not minor, but quick, there is no focus on the problem of bureaucracy, often bureaucracy is everywhere in a big organization, this is good. Secondly, the fact that there is good team spirit, at least within our department. Also, because you come to work with people every day and if you don't like the people, don't like the atmosphere, it's not really fun to work. But here it's, I come here with an interest. I trust my colleagues, it's fun, there is a lot of communication going on outside the office as well, some events, [...] But, definitely team spirit and the flat bureaucracy is important" (R6).

I'd say, definitely take initiative, [...], if you don't take the initiative to solve things or to understand what you're doing, then it'll go wrong very fast [...]. Moreover, you want to have a good time as well [laugh both]. I'm not a robot, you want to have fun, chat with your colleagues. The desire to grow, so not being, complacent, how to say, not getting used to what you're doing, but daring to take on more things, more responsibilities (R4) – (translated quote 22)

One other respondent mainly focusses on the connection with colleagues saying:

"Well, trust is the number one. I want to trust the people that are around me. I like trusting people next to me and I really like that people trust me. That's the most important to me. As I said, you work with some people for 10 hours per day, I like the work environment to be good, I want people to trust me, to depend on me, I want to be there for them if they need anything in the system. [...] So, yeah, the most important for me is trust" (R9).

One respondent ascribed importance to a **dynamic** and **enterprising** environment, so that there is room to develop yourself.

For me it has to be, the environment should be dynamic and a bit enterprising. There has to be space as well to develop yourself, that's the most important thing. And preferably in a

way that fits you and not a standardized way for everybody. Everyone needs a different approach, I think it's very nice that that's possible here (R1) – (translated quote 23)

And finally one respondent also refers to this enterprising aspect, but also refers to **humbleness** and integrity.

That's kind of funny, because they overlap quite a bit. Because I think so I try [...], humbleness, the more you have that, the more, in English, facilitates the learning process. [...]. I also think, if you can have integrity as a human that is an incredible advantage, also in your personal life. I think entrepreneurship is important, because I think that if people are sorting things out for you, very little is happening. People are just concerned with themselves so if you don't want to grab your own luck, then, someone else will do it for you, at your expense or you're out or whatever. So, that's part of it as well (R5) – (translated quote 24).

Striking about this quote is that the respondent starts by stating that the values of the company and the values of the individual overlap.

4.2.3 Values additions

When respondents are describing the work environment and the culture at 'Organization X', they also name some aspects that define the work at 'Organization X' and that could also be interpreted as the values present within 'Organization X'. Besides presenting the answer on the question about what values are present within 'Organization X' and what values the individuals have themselves, in this part some additions will be made based on the stories of the respondents about the culture and work environment. Throughout the stories of the respondents, the following aspects are highlighted: international, dynamic, relaxed, flat structure, development opportunities, commitment, responsibility and initiative. These last three refer more directly to values of people within 'Organization X' and the first five are more organization descriptions.

The **international** aspect can be seen as both an organization and as a person-related aspect but here it is categorized as an organizational aspect because the amount of international people present in 'Organization X' is an actuality. One respondent describes the international aspect of the Rotterdam office and the involvement of this in the work in the following quote:

“Organization X' is a very international company, that is something that is also very nice. I could have mentioned it in the beginning, but I would say that actually maybe over 40 percent of the people working here at the Rotterdam office are foreign. Maybe more than 40 percent, maybe more than half. And that creates a lot of cultural diversity and you share experiences with people from all over the world. I think also, pretty much everyone's job involves contacting other offices, so you are a lot in contact with offices in South-America, the US, in Asia” (R10).

One other respondent says the following:

“I like to work in this international environment also, because okay, we are in the Netherlands, but most of the people kind of speak in English” (R7).

Besides this international characterization of the company, almost half of the group of respondents mentions the **dynamism** of the work environment. One quote illustrating this:

What I like the most is that, no day is the same. [...] So nothing is the same, every day is different, that's very diverse, I like that a lot (R4) – (translated quote 25).

On the other hand, one other aspect mentioned frequently to describe the work environment is that's the atmosphere is quite **relaxed** or laid-back.

"I think it's, I would not say relaxed, but I mean it's quite good and nobody seems stressful, [...] I think the atmosphere is very nice, it's quite relaxed and international, so it's very pleasant to work here. That's the most important aspect" (R7).

It can be busy or stressful sometimes, but there are relaxed times as well (R8) – (translated quote 26).

The people working in trade also emphasize the importance of having to act immediately and that it's about seconds in this industry. The organizational aspect of **flat structure** is something which is mentioned by ten out of the thirteen respondents. This organizational aspect strongly contributes to the **development opportunities** and the person-related aspects as described by the respondents. Two quotes illustrating the flat structure are:

"The hierarchy is flat, but not that I can approach anyone. Of course I mean, you can approach CEO and Vice president but there, the hierarchy is flat enough for it to function. The good thing here actually, almost no-one has their separate cubical, separate offices. Only like CEO, the vice president, very big guys, but still it's like it's very open. Which is a definition of the culture, I think. It's very open in terms of, if there is a problem, it can be discussed" (R6).

It's all extremely horizontal by the way. I think the first two months or so, the CEO sat next to me during lunch, just saying like, hi how are you? (x). Then I thought like okay. That doesn't happen very often (R5) – (translated quote 27).

This flat organizational structure is linked to development opportunities in the way the respondents describe it. The development opportunities can be seen as the outcome of the organizational aspects in combination with the personal aspects. Therefore, in the following quotes about person-related aspects this link with development opportunities will be illustrated and different values will be handled. A first quote linking the organizational structure to **initiative** and **responsibility** is the following:

The most fun part is that it's so flat. That's what I thought in advance and that came true. You can really get a lot of responsibilities very fast. Especially if you're going for it, you have a proactive attitude, then you get more and more work pushed into your hands, like oh you can do this as well and this and of course in the beginning that's quite a lot, but if take on everything you'll notice it can go very fast. And also because of that flat structure you have very good contact with everyone, you can easily drop in, everyone is just very normal (R3) – (translated quote 28).

The respondent continues with the downside of this, which is according to him/her that sometimes the structure is a bit hard to find, which can make it difficult for someone to find his/her way around. Another respondent talking about the responsibility says:

I just like that as a junior here, I worked here [...] months and everything went well, then they said, okay go do [...]. And then you know, you have no idea. Go do it, sort it out. They really give you responsibility and trust and then you have to see yourself if you, you're thrown in the ocean and see if you can swim. That's how it goes every time. If you, if you succeed, you'll get the next thing and in that way they give you more and more and see what you can handle. That really fun. And that's really 'Organization X', because I don't think you could get that at a lot of other employers [...]. And so that's a result of the flat organization and of trust (R1) – (translated quote 29).

This respondent explains that the combination of a flat organizational structure and trust lead to junior employees getting responsibility. This same respondent says a bit later:

The [work] demands 24/7 100% commitment. And if you're not able to give that, then you'll never get very good at it. That's just part of the requirements. I have to say that if you're hiring a junior, of course you have to view whether someone likes it and is motivated, but that commitment can grow. See, I slowly got sucked in and before I knew I couldn't stop looking at my BlackBerry. First you're working from 9 to 6, [...], then you get some more responsibility. And it is related to responsibility especially, because if you get your own responsibility for own things, you'll keep an eye on it. Then it gets real (R1) – (translated quote 30).

So this respondent first links flat structure and trust to responsibility and now links responsibility to commitment. The next respondent talks about the low amount of bureaucracy within 'Organization X' which leads to responsibility for the individual as well. This respondent says:

It's less bureaucratic actually than a big organization, I get a lot of responsibility, and can watch over someone's shoulder, I think that the access I get here, that's really, really awesome for me. [...] It's a bit a cliché, that in the commodity world they say, we're going to throw you in the ocean and see if you can swim [...] but that's the case. What I notice, if you take initiative and have an enterprising mind-set, than it gets rewarded I think (R5) – (translated quote 31).

The next respondent makes a more obvious link to the learning aspect of this environment, describing the work environment as:

Busy, interesting, exciting, flexible, fun, instructive, very instructive and you really get the chance to show what you can do and how far you can go. So, it's not like you come in here and you're limited to one task and that's what you'll be doing the rest of your life. You really get the opportunity to grow in your role and get more responsibility as well, so you really get opportunities (R4) – (translated quote 32).

One more respondent emphasizing the responsibility within 'Organization X' contrasts this with another company and says:

Here you are thrown to the wolves. The first day you have fight for your own opinion right away. But you learn a lot from that and you get a lot of responsibility right away. [...] Here, you learn by making mistakes. I think at [other organization] you do not learn by making mistakes, but first you'll get educated very well and after that you start acting. And I think that, on the one hand that's very good, but you could also give a lot responsibility and just before it goes wrong, push the button like, stop, we're not doing that. We do that differently. (R3) – (translated quote 33).

This respondent explains that within 'Organization X' you learn by making mistakes, in contrast to another company where you get well educated first before you may start acting.

There are less respondents from category 2 accountancy/risk/staff (see Attachment II) who explicitly mention this process and who refer to responsibility and the development that can come along with it. Though, it is mentioned by those respondents as well only less frequently and less explicitly. Besides this, two facts indicate the existence of development opportunities and responsibility because within this category 2 accountancy/risk/staff there are two respondents that made promotion and got into another higher role within the time they've been working at 'Organization X' (which is not more than two years). Two quotes that indicate that responsibility and growth also plays a role within category 2 are:

"I think, it's a great environment. If you do great, you have direct access to all kinds of people. [...] For 'Organization X' it's more important what you are delivering than what course you did, what university you went to, how many years you are working here, if you completed your 3 or 5 years contract already. 'Organization X' I think, is dynamic and it's effective in that sense. And it's very good for the employees of course, it creates very good opportunities. A lot of chances to grow" (R10).

"Well, what kind of culture? Definitely it's integrity, definitely it's responsibility, they give you responsibility to feel like you own the work what you're doing. (x) what you're doing, but this is my stuff, so I like that they give you responsibility, that you are in charge of what you're doing" (R9).

4.2.4 Fit between values

The respondents were asked to what extent the values within 'Organization X' resemble their own values. Even though this is an open question, eight respondents answered the question by saying "yes" or saying that there is resemblance. Three respondent do not explicitly say there is resemblance but they describe the same values for the company as for themselves. One respondent responds with hesitation on the question whether there is resemblance.

One respondent describes the values as arising from the people and therefore linked to each other:

"I think if, the values are coming from the people I think. People here, the majority that I have met, they meet one value for me. If it was not like this, I wouldn't be here. I'm not used to stay where I don't like to be" (R13).

One respondent even states:

I think there is a 100% resemblance. As I said, 'Organization X' really offers the chances to grow, to show what you can do (R4) – (translated quote 34)

The one respondent responding with hesitation says:

Mwah, respect is present at human level, but I think you have to work really hard and that that's just taken for granted [...]. I don't think that's, you have to work hard and the salary that you get in return, that's not ideal (R2) – (translated quote 35).

4.2.5 Summary

In the introduction part of this thesis the four values as formulated by 'Organization X' are mentioned, which are integrity, commitment, respect and accountability. When asking the respondents to describe the values present within 'Organization X' the answer is very widespread and there is not a clear shared view on this by these junior respondents. The values as formulated by the company on the webpage (four values) do not seem to resound within the company. The difference between what the company states and what the respondents state and the variety in answers of the respondents indicate there is not one shared image of the company. This is possibly explained by the low of employer branding, because the company values have not been branded externally and internally.

When asking the respondents to describe their own values the answers are again very widespread. The values of the respondents seem to differ in some ways, which might again be the results of low branding. When the company values are not present during the recruitment of the employees, the employees are not attracted to the organization based on shared values.

When comparing the values of the company as described by the respondents to the values of the respondents for assessing the fit, the congruence in values is not extremely clear. Though, almost all respondents say they experience a fit. The third paragraph with the additional values, where the work environment and culture is described, gives more understanding of this. Three explicit values named by the respondents are commitment, responsibility and own initiative. Also the flat structure within 'Organization X', the international, dynamic and relaxed character are mentioned and the development opportunities come forward. The structure of the company seems to enable the responsibility that's given to the respondents. The respondents say they take this responsibility, they take initiative and they are committed. So, in the actual practise within the company there seems to be a match between the respondents and the organization. This increases the understanding of the experienced person-organization fit by the respondents. Although there is a lack of awareness of which values within the company are central and a lack of the branding of these values to the outside world.

4.3 The future

Besides asking the respondent for a moment in the past and the present, the respondents were also asked to speculate about future graduates looking for a job. Different questions were used such as, *What would make 'Organization X' an attractive employer to junior job seekers?, Why could junior job seekers choose 'Organization X' (over other companies)? and What is distinctive about 'Organization X' as an employer compared to other companies?*

In distinguishing the attractiveness of 'Organization X' the comments of the respondents are varied, but the one most commonly mentioned aspect is the (development) opportunities and learning possibilities within 'Organization X'. This will be referred to as **(development) opportunities** from now on. Six of the respondents mention this aspects. Linked to this and mentioned by three respondents is the **responsibility** aspect. Four respondents talk about how every day is different and that changes occur a lot within 'Organization X', in other words it's a **dynamic environment**. Also three respondents name the **international environment** as attractive factor. The business or **industry** is also mentioned as attractive factor by three respondents. Throughout all the interviews almost all respondents at some point mention the impressiveness or beauty of the office where they are located in Rotterdam. When specifically asking for the attractive factors of 'Organization X', two respondents name this again, saying the **building** is an attractiveness factor.

In this first quote the respondent refers to the opportunities within 'Organization X' that you get because they give you trust from day one:

"You have better opportunities here than comparing to similar companies, because as I said the structure more straight forward. You get more exposure and more trust from the first day of work basically. Here on the first day of work, I was [...]. At other similar companies you would have to trough certain traineeship programme or whatsoever, not in terms that it's bad to have traineeship programme but in terms that you might spend another year [...] when you don't want to do that. So here you can do what you're interested in doing. It's pretty straight forward" (R6).

In this second quote the respondent is also referring to the learning aspects of this work environment. He/she explains that you learn more because it's not coming automatically to you.

"A lot of things, I think it's a good company to work in as a junior, because of what I described before, this challenging environment and you have to learn things, I mean, nothing comes to you automatically or you don't have, you're not coming here getting a manual, this is how you do your job and this is the button that you press. You have to find it yourself. And this makes you a bit complete I think, better process your mind your experience, you are ready, I mean you are getting it the hard way, not the hard way, you know what I mean, not in a bad way but in more challenging way. It's good if you are young and you want to start a career and have motivation, you can use that really well in a big company like this" (R13).

The respondents talks about opportunities and learning and mentions the international environment:

'Organization X' would be an attractive employer to them because 'Organization X' offer a lot of opportunities. Especially to new employees [...]. You get the opportunity to develop yourself and to learn new things, even if you don't know much about it [...], that will be taught. The learning process and learning curve is included within 'Organization X'. For sure, if you like an international environment then this is the perfect environment for you. And the work is fun as well, very varied. You will never be staring outside the window in a boring mood, you will always have something to do, there's always something to learn (R4) – (translated quote 36)

Another respondent mentioning all different aspects to choose for 'Organization X' says:

Uh yes, a big company, a lot of growth possibilities, which I am still convinced of. Yes, a nice, beautiful office, that as well I think. Every day is different. That are the values that I find important. It's very flexible, I just think it's important that every day is different, that there's a pleasant work atmosphere, that there is a nice office, that there are a lot of growth possibilities. Those four things, I think (R2) – (translated quote 37).

Another respondent is referring to the international environment and the responsibility that an employee can get within 'Organization X':

You get the opportunity to yourself to go on a journey to learn everything and that's possible because it's so small, so that's something that I find attractive. To me it's attractive that the work is primarily in English, but I don't know if that's the case for everybody. Let me think. You usually get real responsibilities right away, just, here, you can do it. So that's what I like, but that's again personal. So if you're looking for that, then 'Organization X' is a good organization for you (R12) – (translated quote 38).

The next quote refers to the international aspect as well and also to the dynamism, the chances and the building.

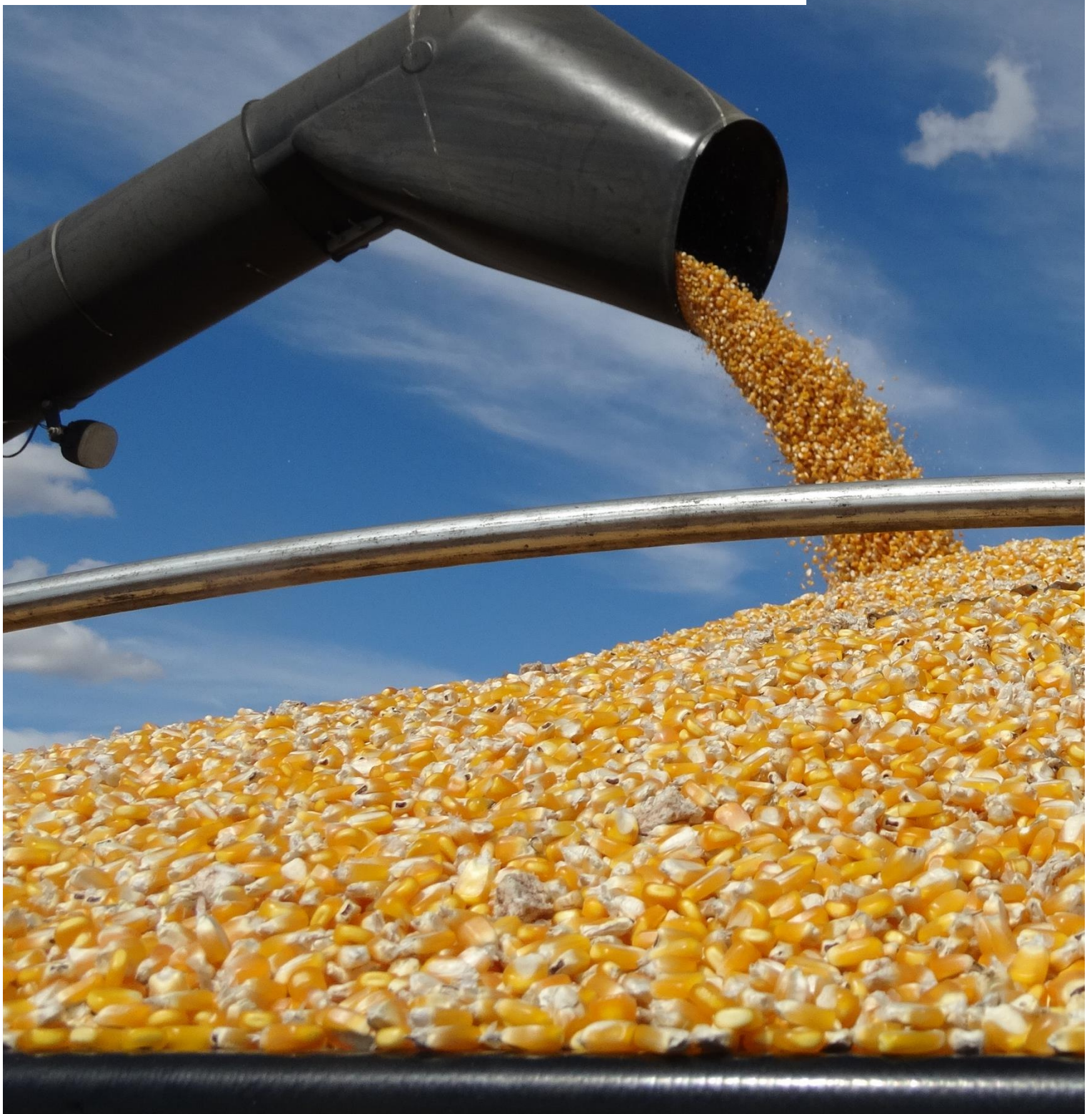
"I think the fact that the work is very dynamic, you get great chances if you work for them, you get to travel a lot in many cases, which, I don't know anyone who doesn't like to travel. Again, the multicultural environment. I think if you're someone that speaks languages and that is fascinated by different cultures, different languages, different ways of being, it's super interesting. In my case I think it's very interesting. I also think the sector itself is very good [...] We are now in the biggest office, in the biggest building in the Netherlands, I think. Something to be proud of. This building is in every picture of Rotterdam. We can kind of be proud to be work in a nice place like this. It motivates you a lot" (R10).

The last respondent puts the emphasis on the industry and also makes a link to the company size, saying:

"Well, the industry, it's a really interesting industry. [...] So, what would be a good reason for students to come to 'Organization X'? If you're interesting in this industry, this sector, it's a nice place to start. It's a really good place. It's not a multinational like Cargill, where you feel like a tiny part. It's a big company but not so big that you can't do a lot of things, do specialized thing. It gives you quite a bigger range" (R9).

In sum, the factors mentioned by the respondent as reasons to choose for 'Organization X' as employer and thus factors determining the distinctiveness of the company are the development opportunities, the responsibility, the dynamic environment, the international environment and the building.

5. Conclusion



5. Conclusion

Based on the represented data in the results chapter, in this chapter the conclusions of this study will be presented guided by the sub-questions of this research. In the first part of this chapter these sub-questions will be answered. In the second part of this chapter the recommendations for the organization will be presented.

5.1 Research question

This study focusses on the job choice and experienced person-organization fit of junior employees within 'Organization X', both in the context of low employer branding. The research question guiding this study is: **How is the job choice of junior employees for 'Organization X' established and how do junior employees at 'Organization X' experience the person-organization fit, both in the context of little employer branding?** In order to answer this question, the two sub-questions will be answered.

The first sub-question of this study is the following:

How is the job choice of incumbent junior employees for 'Organization X' as employer established in the context of little employer branding?

The data represented in the results chapter under "The past" give the input for answering this question. The theoretical expectation that is linked to this sub-question is expectation 1. This expectation states: *At a company like 'Organization X' with little employer branding, the juniors employees are expected to have less input for the image of the company and therefore in their job choice the location and the nature of the work are expected to play a role.*

As shown in the results chapters, the most respondents got to know 'Organization X' through someone. Family and friends are more often named as source of first acquaintance than the webpage of the company or a job vacancy webpage. These family and friend also provide input for the job choice decisions made. The factors that played a role in the job choice of junior employees for 'Organization X' are varied. The most common factors that are mentioned are the international character, the (trading) business, the job position and the growth possibilities. This last aspect is only mentioned by respondents that got to know the company through someone. These four most frequently mentioned aspects in job choice for 'Organization X' can be compared with the most influential factors as mentioned by Boswell et al. (2003) for the acceptance decision of graduates. The four most influential aspects according to their research are the nature of the work, the location, the company culture and the advancement opportunities. When comparing these outcomes, it appears that within this study the nature of the work is given importance as well, because the business, the position and the international character refer to this. Advancement opportunities can be compared with the growth possibilities and then the location and company culture are given less emphasis within this study. One could argue that the international character of the company has implications for the company culture as well, but the most direct link is the work itself. According to the respondents

in this study the location had no decisive role in job choice. A possible explanation for this is that the respondents are all pretty mobile, because half of them are internationals with the desire to work abroad and the Dutch juniors almost all mention the preference for an international company.

In the results chapter the reasons to choose for 'Organization X' are compared with the requirements respondents had for other companies they applied for or were looking at. Because respondents found the international character, the company size and the industry important for these other companies as well, it becomes clear that if 'Organization X' want to be more distinctive they should focus on other aspects as well. As Myrden and Kelloway (2015) described, for attracting talents in high competition with other employers there should be more attention for an unique and identifiable employer brand. The respondents in this research focus on the international character, the (trading) business, the job position and the growth possibilities in their job choice, which raises the question of how important employer branding is when those are the aspects which is focused on. In the introduction of this study, where the aim of the organization to attract more talents in the current war for talent is explained, it becomes clear that the current situation is not the desired one and therefore keeping it this way does not provide enough distinctiveness.

The low employer branding of this organization means the organization is not very well-known and this seems to have an effect on the way in which people get to know the company, which is through someone. The low employer branding also means there is a less clear employer image spread inside and outside the company and the role of this in the job choice of juniors seems to be that the organizational culture is not mentioned as reason to choose for the company, but the aspects the international character, the job position and the industry are mentioned instead. Depending on the source of information the respondent had when making their job choice, (if this was family/friend) the development opportunities plays a role in the job choice as well.

The second sub-question of this study is the following:

How do incumbent junior employees at 'Organization X' experience the person-organization fit in the context of little employer branding?

The data presented in the results chapter under "The present" give the input for answering this question. The theoretical expectation that is linked to this question is expectation 2. This expectation is: *At a company like 'Organization X' with little employer branding, the junior employees are expected to experience less of a person-organization fit, because the lack of branding leads to less internalization of the company values.*

When looking into the data of all respondents regarding the questions about values, the answers are very widespread, so there is not really a central view according to the respondents. There is not one clear shared image, because of the big variety in answers by the respondents and because of the difference between what the juniors state and what the company itself states. The lack of an shared imaged can be explained by the low employer branding with findings from previous studies. As stated in the theoretical framework, both Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) and

Edwards (2010) emphasize the importance of having an internal and external focus of the employer branding. In that way, current and potential employees are aware of the identity of the company as employer. More employer branding leads to more internalization of the company values (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), this lack of internalization of the company values is possibly the reason of the widespread answers of the respondents in this study with low employer branding. So, the company values are less internalized as a results of the low employer branding. In contrast with this and with the expectation, almost all respondents emphasize they experience a fit between the values of the company and of themselves. An explanation for this can be found in the data of the respondents when they are describing the work environment, the organizational culture and the atmosphere. As emphasized by Resick, Baltes and Shantz (2007) the fit between the person and the organization can also be distracted from the congruence with the organizational culture. In the work environment descriptions there are some recurrent aspects. The recurrent values that come across there are commitment, responsibility and initiative. So, the low employer branding seems to have as consequence that the awareness of the values that are central within the organization is not that high. Therefore people are less able to recall and name these values, but possibly do experience a person-organization fit.

5.2 Recommendations

Within this paragraph, two practical recommendations are made to the research organization 'Organization X'. The results and the conclusions of this study served as input for these recommendations and the aim is to formulate recommendation which contribute to wish of the organization to attract more talented junior employees.

The first recommendation is to focus in the employer branding on at least the international character, the (trading) business, the job position and the growth possibilities and complement this with information about the organizational culture. The incumbent juniors within 'Organization X' mention the international character, the (trading) business, the job position and the growth possibilities most frequently as reasons to choose for 'Organization X'. This show on the one hand that these aspects are important and thus should be present in the company branding of the organization. On the other hand is leaves space for other aspects in the company that the organization wants to emphasize in order to be more distinctive. For example even more emphasis on the development possibilities, because this is only mentioned by a part of the respondents, or more information about the organization culture. This is also consistent with the distinctive aspects as mentioned by the respondents in the third part of the results chapter, where the development opportunities and international, dynamic environment is emphasized. Therefore the first recommendation is to put forward the four aspects as mentioned by the respondents in this study as reasons to choose for 'Organization X' and to add to this by putting forward more (distinctive) information about the organizational culture as well.

The second recommendation, linked to this, is to emphasize the accurate company values in the employer branding. The current values as formulated by the company do not fully resound within the company, so focussing on this in the internal employer branding will make the values more internalized. By branding the accurate values, there is higher chance of attracting more juniors that also fit the organization. Besides, by executing more employer branding activities, the internal values will be reinforced and prospective job seekers will get a more positive employer brand image because of the additional information they receive. Based on the stories

of the different respondents, suggestions for values that seem present within the company are responsibility, commitment and initiative. There is a chance that the company-wide values differ from the juniors in Dutch context, so for the branding within the Netherlands the above formulated values might be suitable. By focussing on the accurate values in the branding, such as responsibility, more input will be given to job seeker about the development opportunities which come along with the value. In that way the suggestions made in section 3 of the results chapter is imbedded.



6. Discussion



6. Discussion

Within this chapter first, the choices made within this research will be critically viewed and so a reflection on this study will be given. Second, several suggestions for future research will be made.

6.1 Reflection

This studies aims to add to the literature regarding job choice, person-organization fit and employer branding. The results show this research gives an in practise insight in the job choice of junior job seekers and their experienced person-organization fit, in the context of low employer branding. This research adds to the existing literature because here is explained how employer branding affects the image of an organization and in that way plays a role in the job choice and also how employer branding can play a role in the experienced level of person-organization fit by not distributing one clear image. With the low employer branding of this company, the distinctive character that the organization can expose is limited and thus the reasons to choose for this company resemble the requirements for other companies as well. And the low employer branding seems to put less focus on organization culture as reasons of job choice and more on aspects describing regarding the nature of the work. Little employer branding affects the image of the company and seems to be linked to the variety in person-organization fit description.

Regarding the methodological choices made within this research, four guiding principles as discussed in the quality criteria section have been pursued. Despite the focus on the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, this research is faced with restrictions as well. Four restrictions of this research will be described here.

First of all, there is methodological bias in this study. By interviewing the current juniors, the gathered data is based on the stories of people that decide (to stay) to work for 'Organization X' and probably experience a fit in a way. The stories of the juniors that decided to leave 'Organization X' are not captured. This bias is limited because the employment period within the group of current juniors varies from two to twenty-one months.

Secondly, it's important to realize that the values of the juniors might not represent the values of the company as a whole. The values of the company as described by the juniors, may also not be a reflection of how the broader group of employees within 'Organization X' would describe the values. This restriction is limited because there were no striking differences between the organizational environment descriptions in this study and in the workshops outcomes.

Thirdly, the data gathering through the interviews has some restrictions. Two different moments in time were examined in this research, namely the job choice in the past and the person-organization fit in the present. Respondents did not always clearly made a difference between these two moments in the answers they gave, thus it was sometimes difficult to assess which data belonged to which moment. The questions about values also may have led to less accurate data. In general the term value is a pretty abstract concept and the researcher noticed some people had difficulty understanding what was meant by this concept. This does not necessarily mean that the data is less accurate, but it might be useful to think of ways to illustrate this concept in further research when asking respondents for it. A risk with these questions about values and with interviews in general is that respondents give socially desirable

answers (Bryman, 2012, p.227). And transcribing the English interviews with foreign respondents (with sometimes a strong accent of their mother tongue) led to some loss of data, because sometimes the audio files were not clear enough for the researcher to transcribe it. It did not entails big fragment of the interviews.

Fourthly, the short survey as source of data was hard to compare with the results in this study due to the data collection method. With the survey no additional questions of the researcher could be asked to discover what was meant and there was also no control in how seriously the students were taking the survey. Therefore not much emphasis was put on these findings, but it was just used as input for the interviews.

6.2 Future research

Based on the conclusions of this study, different suggestions for future research can be formulated. First, it would be interesting to execute this kind of study in a context, where the employer branding is high, to illustrate the differences of these contexts and get more input for the importance of employer branding. Second, it would also be interesting to repeat this research within the same company over a certain period of time. In this way the starting juniors can be interviewed right after they started, so there is less time in between the actual job choice and the interviews. And a second interview about person-organization fit can be held after, for example, one year. It might also be interesting to investigate more deeply how the company is able to recruit employees who fit the environment with little employer branding, which seems to be the case in this study. Third, looking at the results of this study, the aspect of job position was mentioned often. It might also be interesting to focus on the concept of job choice in combination to person-job fit and employer branding, in order to see whether low employer branding possibly leads to more focus on person-job fit in the job choice of job seekers. Fourth, the importance of employer branding to retain employees would be interesting to study as well. Within this research the employees who left the organization are not included, as described in the methodological bias. By looking at that group, the findings in this research regarding employer branding and person-organization fit could be complemented.

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Attachments

Attachment I: Topic list

Name respondent:

Job title:

Start date:

1. Introduction

- Info about researcher and research, goal of interview, expected time, ask permission for recording, handle data anonymous.
- Questions?

2. General background

- Current job position
- Start date at 'Organization X'

3. The past

- Job choice (why 'Organization X?')
- Considerations in job choice
 - How did you start your job search?
 - Other companies you applied for? Contrast (job at) 'Organization X' with other companies. Why choose 'Organization X' over other company?
- First acquaintance (How did you find out about 'Organization X' for the first time?)
- Image of the company before working at 'Organization X'

4. Current situation

- What is it like to work at 'Organization X'? (Aspects of the work context you like best and aspects you would like to see improved)
- How would you describe the organizational culture/atmosphere within 'Organization X'?
 - Which aspects of organizational culture are important to you?
- Values
 - What values do you find important in work context?
 - What values are present/central within 'Organization X'?
 - To which extent do the values within 'Organization X' resemble your own values?
- Type of person at 'Organization X' (characteristics)
- Job expectation: to what extent did the expected practice match the actual practice within 'Organization X'?
- What should 'Organization X' change to become a more attractive employer to you?

5. Prospective juniors

- What do you think makes 'Organization X' attractive for prospective juniors?
- What is the distinctive corporate image that would help 'Organization X' attract talented juniors?
- What would make prospective juniors choose 'Organization X' over direct competitors? (Speculate: image of 'Organization X' in labour market?)

6. Conclusion

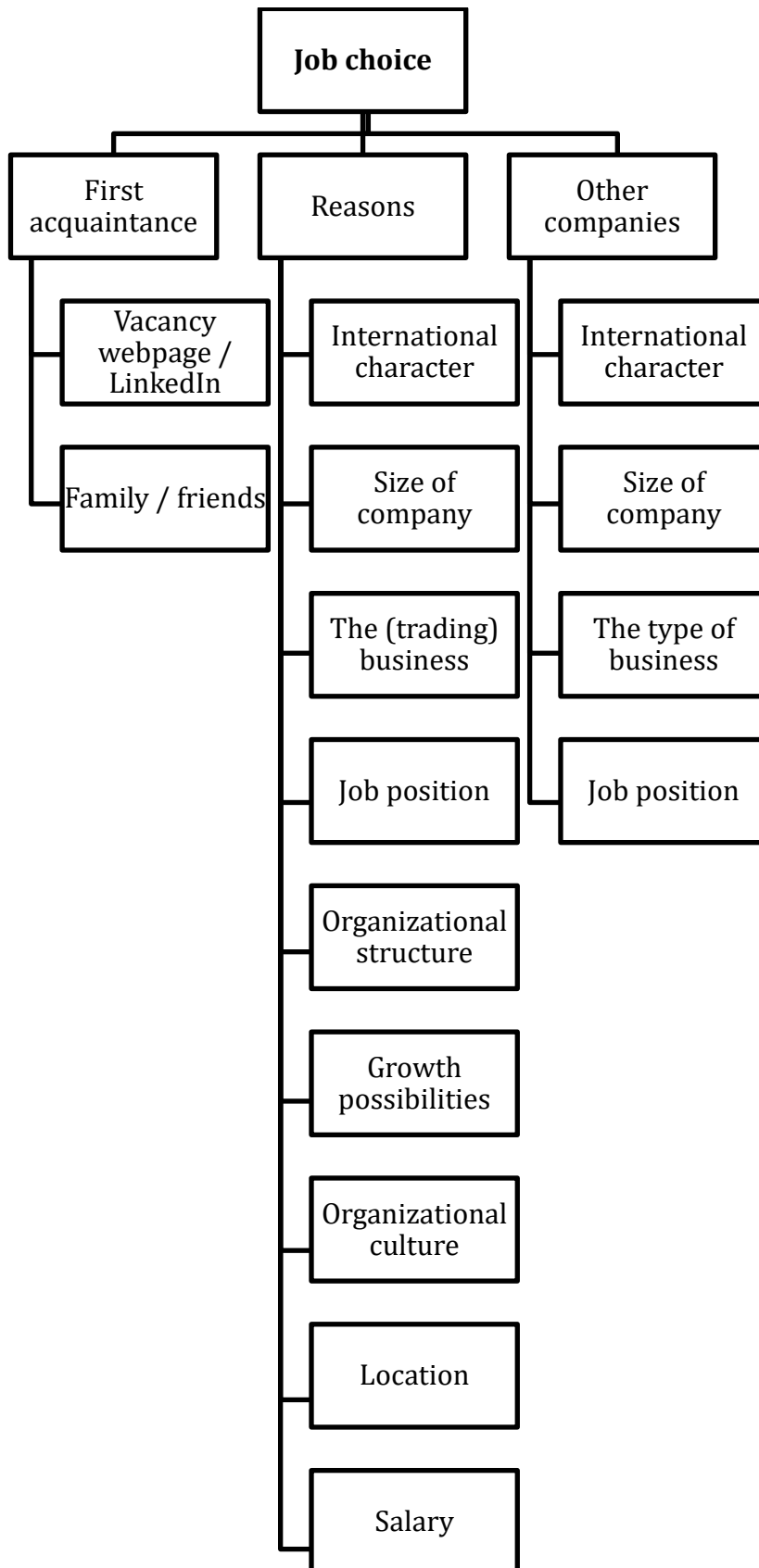
- Repeat aim of research and ask for comments/additions
- Clarify how they get results of the research

Attachment II: Respondents list

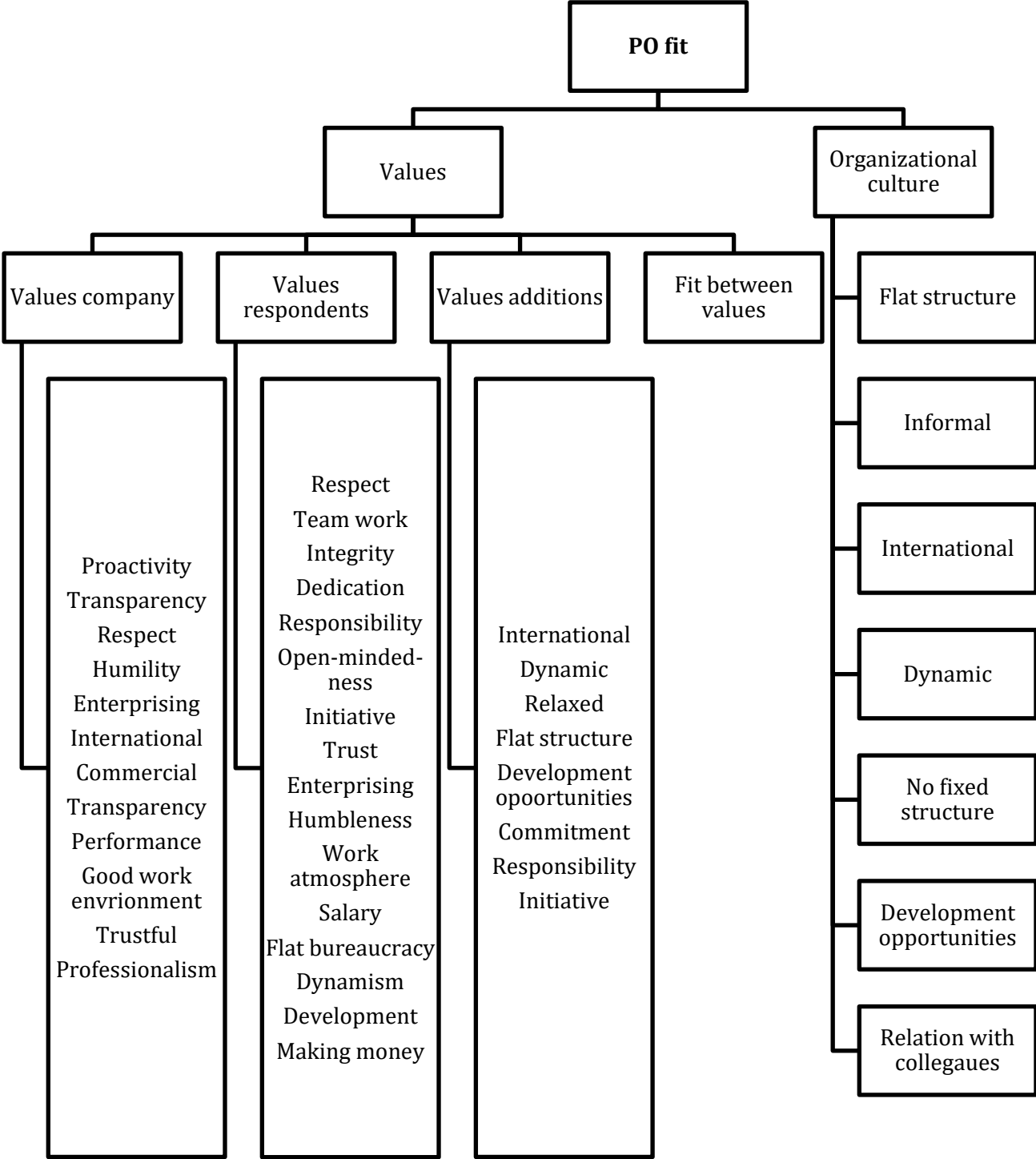
RESPONDENT	AREA	LANGUAGE
RESPONDENT 1	Trade/Operations	NL
RESPONDENT 2	Trade/Operations	NL
RESPONDENT 3	Trade/Operations	NL
RESPONDENT 4	Trade/Operations	NL
RESPONDENT 5	Trade/Operations	NL
RESPONDENT 6	Trade/Operations	EN
RESPONDENT 7	Trade/Operations	EN
RESPONDENT 8	Accountancy/Risk/Staff	NL
RESPONDENT 9	Accountancy/Risk/Staff	EN
RESPONDENT 10	Accountancy/Risk/Staff	EN
RESPONDENT 11	Accountancy/Risk/Staff	EN
RESPONDENT 12	Accountancy/Risk/Staff	NL
RESPONDENT 13	Accountancy/Risk/Staff	EN
RESPONDENT 14	HR	NL
RESPONDENT 15	HR	NL
RESPONDENT 16	HR	NL

Attachment III: Framework of codes

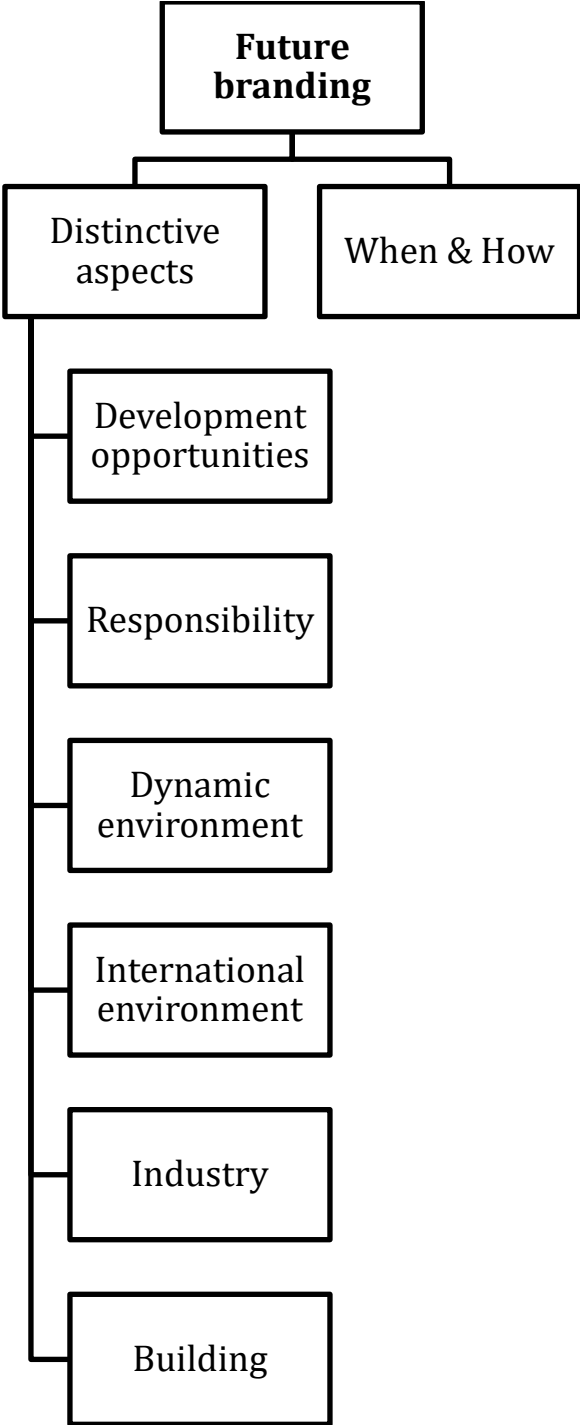
Framework of codes (1/4)



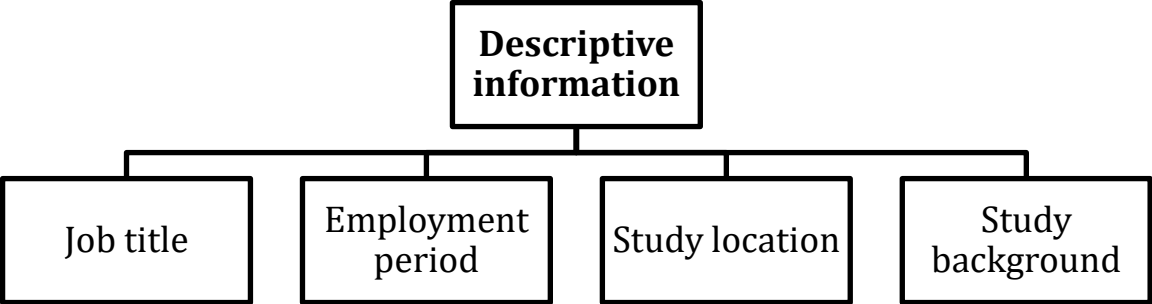
Framework of codes (2/4)



Framework of codes (3/4)



Framework of codes (4/4)



Attachment IV: Translated quotations

Nr.	Quotation
1	<i>"Ik wou echt heel erg graag in de internationale handel gaan werken, omdat ik op die manier m'n ervaring (x) voor m'n gevoel kon combineren en echt met m'n werk bezig kon zijn met iets wat internationaal was in plaats van misschien iets wat meer regionaal zou zijn" (R5).</i>
2	<i>"Het is echt een internationaal bedrijf, dat trekt me sowieso. [...] Ik vind het ook prettiger om in het Engels te werken dan in het Nederlands. [...] Dus de internationale sfeer vind ik heel leuk, dat ik mensen leer kennen die uit Afrika komen of Portugal, net aan de tafel met de lunch" (R12).</i>
3	<i>"Ik had gelijk toen ik m'n opleiding deed, had ik al zoiets van ik wil groot, internationaal gaan werken. [...] De diversiteit die je hebt met een groot internationaal bedrijf dat trekt me toch meer aan, anders zit je maar met drie collega's op kantoor, dan heb je altijd met dezelfde mensen te maken en alleen maar klanten van Nederland. Ik vind het dan leuk als je ook contact hebt met Spanje, Argentinië, dat je dan weer Engels kan gebruiken en ook andere culturen kunt meemaken. Dus dat vind ik dan weer leuk aan zo'n groot internationaal bedrijf" (R8)</i>
4	<i>"Ik kan echt wel mezelf wel redden in internationale setting en ik vind het ook leuk en dat is toen in een keer zo van, daar moet je iets mee willen doen. En ik heb altijd mijn opleiding ook in het Engels gedaan allemaal, dus ik lees eigenlijk voornamelijk in het Engels. Ik vind dat gewoon zelf, voor mezelf, heel leuk en er zijn niet zo heel erg veel industrieën waar dat, waar je daarmee heel erg in contact komt, in de financiële markt zou dat over het algemeen kunnen, maar dan ga je heel erg snel naar een soort van, niet tastbaar product" (R5)</i>
5	<i>"Ik wou heel erg graag deze grondstoffenwereld in, dat was echt zeg maar specifiek mijn focus, dat was echt het gene waar ik graag in wou werken" (R5).</i>
6	<i>"En nou, dan heb je op een gegeven moment een lijstje waar je je op oriënteert en dan blijven er nog maar een paar over waar je echt graag wil werken. En daarvan was 'Organization X' wel een, gewoon een hele vlakke structuur, dat hoorde ik al vrij snel van mensen" (R3).</i>
7	<i>"En ik ben bij veel andere bedrijven ook wezen kijken en ik wilde eigenlijk gewoon niet in een stramien vast komen bij een vaste multinational, waarin je 2 jaar dit, dan 2 jaar dat, en na 2 jaar dan heb je die stap en na 2 jaar kun je die stap maken. En hier heb je dat niet" (R1).</i>
8	<i>"Ik had wel het vermoeden dat, [organization X] is naar mijn mening, hoe ik het zie, echt een school. Daar ga je eerst 2 jaar dat doen, dan ga je 3 jaar dat doen, dan ga je op een gegeven moment weer iets anders doen. Dat gaat denk ik heel langzaam. Terwijl, ik ben best wel ambitieus, ik wil best wel snel gaan. Dat gevoel kreeg ik bij 'Organization X' wel, als je het hier goed doet, dat je heel snel kan gaan. Leeftijd maakt hier niet zo veel uit" (R3).</i>
9	<i>"Ik ben in dat gesprek eigenlijk best enthousiast geraakt, grote organisatie, er zijn veel,</i>

	<i>naar mijn mening, doorgroeimogelijkheden. Je kan hier wel echt carrière maken binnen 'Organization X'. Dat zijn wel aspecten waarom ik voor 'Organization X' heb gekozen" (R2).</i>
10	<i>"Nou goed, het is een hele, wel ondernemende cultuur en het is een hele platte organisatie. Wat allemaal faciliteert wat de hoofdreden is wat ik net aangeef" (R1).</i>
11	<i>"Je startsalaris hier is lager dan dat ik bij andere bedrijven kon krijgen. Wel aardig wat lager. Dat heb ik voor lief genomen omdat ik dit cool vind, omdat ik weet dat het wel komt natuurlijk, het is wel een exponentieel verhaal, als je het goed doet, ga je ook goed verdienen, maar je moet wel het vertrouwen dan hebben dat je daar gaat komen" (R1).</i>
12	<i>"Niet, want ik woonde in Amsterdam en ik had geen zin om in Rotterdam te wonen" (R1).</i>
13	<i>"Je moet vooral, als je eigenschappen kijkt, dan moet iemand vooral proactief zijn. Dat is denk ik het allerbelangrijkste. En zelfverzekerd, zeker. Anders denk ik niet dat je echt standhoudt. Kan per afdeling verschillen hoor [...]. Denk dat dat de twee belangrijkste dingen zijn" (R1).</i>
14	<i>"Ja values, hard werk. Ik weet niet of het goed zeg, maar drive, be driven. Initiatief tonend" (R4).</i>
15	<i>"Respect voor elkaar. Ze hebben het een keer gezegd, we hebben zo'n code of conduct en daar staan alles in" (R8).</i>
16	<i>"Wat ik heel erg leuk en mooi vind aan de grondstoffenwereld is dat er een soort, in het Nederlands heb je er geen goed woord voor, maar in het Engels humility. Dat is zo en in de grondstoffenwereld heel erg belangrijk omdat je zit waarschijnlijk toch 40% ofzo van tijd ergens naast, omdat het gewoon te grote markt is en je schat het af en toe gewoon verkeerd in" (R5).</i>
17	<i>"Ze zouden natuurlijk heel erg graag willen dat ze een extreem hoge integriteit hebben, maar er is helaas in 2014 toch een grote fout geweest, dus ik denk dat ze daar heen willen. Het is wel iets dat ik wel denk dat het wel gewoon belangrijk is, absoluut, en ik denk ook wel dat het grootste merendeel hier het ook echt wel vindt en ook wel uitdraagt [...]. Ik vind overigens daarbij dat er helemaal niet zo'n hele erge loud mouth cultuur is. Dus redelijk gewoon van wat breng jij naar de tafel en daar word jij ook gewaardeerd [...]. Het is absoluut ondernemend. Internationaal is het ook gewoon, constant alle talen" (R5).</i>
18	<i>"Het is sowieso wel een commercieel bedrijf, dat merk je ook. De traders en de commercial roles worden als most important gezien, dat is mijn indruk[...]. Uhm, dat is wel een moeilijke vraag. Heb ik nog niet veel over nagedacht. Uhm, sowieso wel respect. Iedereen gaat gewoon met respect met elkaar om. Transparency ook. Dat proberen ze althans, dat is niet altijd even makkelijk" (R3).</i>
19	<i>"Hm, dat is ook een van de problemen die ze hebben, dat het niet heel erg duidelijk gecommuniceerd wordt. Ja, <u>de</u> waarden, ik kan het rijtje wel opnoemen hoor, maar wat echt de waarde is. Toch wel een groot marktaandeel, maar dan praat je heel erg over het financiële plaatje. Verder, gewoon wel leuke programma's. Nou ik denk dat bij</i>

	<i>'Organization X' kan je heel groot worden door markten goed te bezetten en dat soort dingen. Dit is uiteindelijk een heel belangrijk dingetje bij 'Organization X'. En wat ze dan uitspreken naar buiten, dat zou je in het corporate social responsibility report wel teruglezen denk ik" (R3).</i>
20	<i>"Wat ik belangrijke waarden vind, ja dat een werkgever respect heeft voor de werknemers, prettige werksfeer, dat salaris overeenkomt met het werk dat je doet, de tijd die je erin steekt" (R2).</i>
21	<i>"Nou ja respect. Je moet wel respect voor elkaar hebben. Maar uiteindelijk draait het natuurlijk om één ding, dat is veel geld te verdienen. Daarvoor is een bedrijf. En daar geloof ik ook wel heilig in en dat is ook wel, daarvoor is een bedrijf bedoeld uiteindelijk, geld verdienen. En daarmee heb je mensen aan het werk en daarmee kan iedereen daarna doen met het geld wat ie wil gaan doen. Dus daar geloof ik wel heel erg in [...]. Maar wel op een respectvolle manier, integriteit en al die, weet je het moet niet gestolen zijn ofzo. En dat zie je ook wel terug. Wij schrijven liever een lading af dan dat we het leveren terwijl we weten dat het niet goed is. Dus dat merk je echt wel terug" (R3).</i>
22	<i>"Ik zou zeggen, zeker initiatief tonend, [...], als je zelf niet het initiatief toont om dingen op te lossen of te begrijpen wat je aan het doen bent, dan gaat het heel snel fout [...]. Verder wil je het ook een beetje gezellig hebben [lachen beide]. Ik ben geen robot, je wilt het wel gezellig kunnen hebben, babbelen met je collega's. De wens hebben om ook door te groeien dus dat je niet te lang, complacent, hoe zeg je dat, dat je niet gewend raakt aan wat je aan het doen bent, maar durft meer dingen aan te nemen, meer verantwoordelijkheden tot je te nemen" (R4).</i>
23	<i>"Voor mij moet het, de omgeving moet dynamisch zijn en een beetje ondernemend. Er moet gewoon ruimte zijn ook om jezelf te ontwikkelen, dat is het allerbelangrijkste. En het liefst op een manier die bij jou past en niet een standaard weg voor iedereen. Iedereen heeft een andere aanpak nodig, ik vind het wel mooi dat dat hier kan" (R1).</i>
24	<i>"Dat is wel grappig, want die overlappen dus best wel. Want ik vind dus ik probeer [...], humbleness, hoe meer je dat hebt, hoe meer je, in het Engels, facilitates the learning process. [...] Ik vind ook, als je integriteit kan hebben als mens dan is dat ook een ongelooflijke pre, ook in je persoonlijk leven. Ik vind ondernemerschap belangrijk, want ik denk dat als mensen dingen voor je gaan uitdokteren dat er heel weinig gaat gebeuren uiteindelijk. Mensen zijn toch met zichzelf bezig dus als je niet je eigen succes wil pakken dan tja, dan doet een ander het wel voor je, over jou heen of dan lig jij eruit of whatever. Dus dat zit er ook wel in" (R5).</i>
25	<i>"Wat ik het meest leuk vind is dat, geen enkele dag is hetzelfde. [...]. Dus niks is hetzelfde, elke dag is anders, dat is heel afwisselend, dat vind ik heel fijn" (R4).</i>
26	<i>"Soms kan het druk of stressvol zijn, maar je hebt ook wel relaxte tijden" (R8).</i>
27	<i>"Het is allemaal extreem horizontaal trouwens. Volgens mij de eerste twee maanden ofzo dat de CEO naast me kwam zitten tijdens de lunch, gewoon zeggen van he, hoe is het met</i>

	<i>je, (x). Dat ik echt dacht van oké. Zoiets gebeurt niet zo snel” (R5).</i>
28	<i>“Het leukste is dat het zo vlak is. Dat is wat ik van tevoren dacht en dat is ook uitgekomen. Je kan echt heel snel heel veel verantwoordelijkheid krijgen. Zeker als je ervoor gaat, je hebt een proactieve houding, dan krijg je steeds meer werk in je handen geduwd, van oh dit kan je ook, dit kan je ook en tuurlijk in het begin is dat best wel veel, maar als je het allemaal aanpakt dan merk je gewoon dat je heel snel kan gaan. En ook door die vlakke structuur heb je met iedereen heel goed contact, je stapt overal even naar binnen, iedereen is gewoon heel normaal” (R3).</i>
29	<i>“Ik vind het gewoon leuk dat je als junior hier, ik werkte hier [...] maanden en alles ging goed, toen zeiden ze van, oké ga maar [...] doen. En dan weet je, je hebt geen idee. Ga maar doen. Zoek het maar uit. Ze geven je ook echt verantwoordelijkheid en vertrouwen en dan moet je zelf maar kijken of je, je wordt gewoon in het zwembad gegooid en kijk maar of je blijft drijven. En zo gaat het steeds weer. Als je dat, ja dat lukt dan en dan krijg je weer de volgende en zo geven ze je steeds een beetje meer en kijken ze wat je aan kan. Dat is echt leuk. En dat is wel echt ‘Organization X’, want dat, denk ik niet dat ik dat bij veel andere werkgevers zou kunnen krijgen. [...] En dat is dus een gevolg van de platte organisatie en van vertrouwen” (R1).</i>
30	<i>Het [werk] vraagt gewoon 24/7 100% toewijding. En als je dat niet kunt geven, dan zul je er ook nooit heel goed in worden. Dat is gewoon onderdeel van het eisenpakket. Moet ik wel zeggen dat als je iemand junior aanneemt, tuurlijk moet je kijken of iemand het leuk vindt en gemotiveerd is, maar die toewijding kan ook komen. Kijk, ik ben er ook zachtjes in gezogen, en voor ik het wist kon ik niet meer van m’n BlackBerry af kijken. Eerst werk je gewoon 9 tot 6, [...], dan krijg je iets meer verantwoordelijkheid. En het komt ook met verantwoordelijkheid, voornamelijk, want als je eigen verantwoordelijkheid krijgt voor eigen dingen, dan houd je het wel in de gaten. Dan wordt het echt” (R1).</i>
31	<i>“Het is minder bureaucratisch eigenlijk dan een grote organisatie, krijg ik heel veel verantwoordelijkheid, en ook heel veel dingen meekijken, ik denk dat de toegang die ik hier krijg, dat is echt, echt voor mij echt wel top. [...] Het is een beetje een cliché, dat in de commodity wereld wordt gezegd van we’re going to throw you in the ocean and see if you can swim [...] maar het is wel een beetje het geval. Wat ik merk, als je initiatief neemt en ondernemend ingesteld bent, dan vind ik dat het beloond wordt” (R5).</i>
32	<i>“Druk, interessant, spannend, flexibel, gezellig, leerzaam, hartstikke leerzaam en je krijgt ook echt de kans om te laten zien wat je kan en tot hoever jij het zelf kan schoppen zeg maar. Dus het is niet alsof je binnenkomt en je bent beperkt aan één taak en dat blijf je gewoon doen voor je hele leven. Je krijgt echt de kans om te groeien binnen je rol en ook nog om meer verantwoordelijkheid erbij te krijgen, dus je krijgt echt de kansen” (R4).</i>
33	<i>“Hier word je voor de leeuwen gegooid. De eerste dag moet je meteen vechten voor je eigen mening. Maar daar leer je wel heel veel van en je krijgt je meteen heel veel verantwoordelijkheid. [...]. Je leert hier wel heel veel door fouten te maken. Ik denk, bij [andere organisatie] leer je niet van fouten, maar je wordt eerst heel goed opgeleid en dan ga je pas iets doen. En ik denk dat, aan de ene kant is dat ook heel goed, maar je kan</i>

	<i>ook heel snel verantwoordelijkheid geven en net voordat het fout gaat, op de knop drukken van he, hier stoppen, dit gaan we even niet doen. Gaan we anders doen” (R3).</i>
34	<i>“Ik denk dat het 100% overeenkomt. Zoals ik al zei, ‘Organization X’ biedt echt de kansen om door te groeien, om te laten zien wat jij kan” (R4).</i>
35	<i>“Mwah, respect is er op dat menselijk vlak wel, maar ik vind dat je heel hard moet werken en dat dat maar een vanzelfsprekendheid is [...]. Ik vind dat niet, je moet hard werken en voor het salaris dat daar tegenover staat, dat is niet ideaal” (R2).</i>
36	<i>“‘Organization X’ zou een aantrekkelijker werkgever voor ze zijn omdat ‘Organization X’ heel veel kansen biedt. Vooral aan nieuwe medewerkers [...]. Je krijgt de kans om jezelf te ontwikkelen en om nieuwe dingen bij te leren, ook al weet je niet zo heel veel van [...], dat wordt allemaal bijgeleerd. Het leerproces en leertraject is inbegrepen binnen ‘Organization X’. Sowieso als je van een internationale omgeving houdt dan is dat de perfecte omgeving voor jou. En het werk is gewoon leuk, heel afwisselend. Je zal nooit in een saaie bui naar buiten naar het raam zitten kijken, je hebt altijd wat te doen, er valt altijd wat te leren” (R4).</i>
37	<i>“Uhm ja een groot bedrijf, veel doorgroeimogelijkheden, waar ik nog steeds van overtuigd ben. Ja, een leuke, een mooi kantoor, dat denk ik ook wel. Elke dag is anders. Dan heb ik meer de waardes die ik belangrijk vind hoor. Het is heel flexibel, ik vind het gewoon belangrijk dat elke dag anders is, dat er een prettige werksfeer is, dat er een mooi kantoor is, dat er veel doorgroeimogelijkheden zijn. Die vier dingen, denk ik” (R2).</i>
38	<i>“Je krijgt toch wel de kans om zelf op een soort journey te gaan om alles te leren kennen en dat kan omdat het zo kleinschalig is, dus dat vind ik wel een aantrekkelijk iets. Voor mij is het aantrekkelijk dat er voornamelijk in het Engels wordt gewerkt, maar ik weet niet of dat voor iedereen is. Even nadenken. Je krijgt ook vaak meteen echt responsibilities, gewoon hier, you can do it. Dus dat vind ik wel leuk, maar dat is weer persoonlijk. Dus als je daar naar op zoek bent, dan is ‘Organization X’ wel een goede organisatie voor je” (R12).</i>