THESIS PROPOSAL

Employer Branding Through Social Media
In the Generation Y Context

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OUTLINE

This thesis proposal represents a work in progress and intends to give an overview over the current state of my PhD project, which investigates the communication of the employer brand through social media in a generation Y context. This document presents in a concise form my work over the past year and will first present the background of my PhD project, the overall purpose and research question followed by the three sub-questions that are meant to structure my project and briefly present the three independent yet interrelated articles that will form the overall PhD thesis. I will then discuss the main concepts followed by the research design and methodology. The last part contains a more detailed description of the first article, which is in the final phase and will soon be submitted to a journal, as well as the overview of the research process, PhD courses and teaching activities.
1. Research problem

The “war for talent” (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Chambers et al., 1998; Elving et al., 2013; Girard & Fallery, 2010) and the globalization of the job market have motivated many companies to use marketing techniques in the recruitment process. The idea of applying marketing techniques to people management was first discussed in 1996 by Ambler and Barrow who used the term employer brand to refer to “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Employer branding includes communication activities to both external and internal audiences regarding the company’s offer that would make it distinctive among its competitors.

More and more researchers and practitioners have been focusing their attention on employer branding, studying this topic from different perspectives such as organizational behavior (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Cable & Turban, 2003; Cable & Yu, 2006), human resources management (Bondarouk et al., 2013) corporate communication Aggerholm et al., 2011; Shah, 2011), and branding (Elving et al., 2013; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). In organizational behavior, Cable and other scholars have focused on the effect that different factors had on organizational attractiveness and the intention to pursue specific jobs. In a study from 2001 for example Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) concluded that factors determining the attractiveness of an organization might not be the same as the factors that impact the intention to pursue specific jobs. Bondarouk et al. (2013) studied the difference between what academics and HR practitioners saw as necessary changes in the recruitment practice when considering the future development of employer branding through social media. While academics considered acquiring new skills in marketing communication and web-based applications a necessity, HR practitioners considered that networking and being updated on social media trends would suffice. Despite the variety of studies on employer branding from different perspectives, there is a scarcity of empirical evidence that focuses on the job seekers and their perceptions and attitudes towards employer brand communication, especially on social media platforms. Most studies focus on how companies should use social media platforms in their employer branding (Backhaus, 2004; Bondarouk et al., 2013; Girard et al., 2013; Laick & Dean, 2011; Love & Singh, 2011; Sivertzen et al., 2013), but questions remain unanswered about how employer branding is perceived by job seekers, e.g. what is their
reaction when they interact with employer branding messages on social media platforms? Furthermore, there are few studies on how companies manage their employer brand both at a strategic level (the patterns of decisions taken in a company in order to reach its recruiting goals) and at an operational level (routines), e.g. how much do companies engage in dialog with their audience in their employer brand communication? And how much of the employer brand is transmitted in one-way communication and how much it is co-created in two-way communications?

At the same time, technological advancements have led to significant media consumption changes, especially among Generation Y, for whom social media has become the main source of information, “providing access to information that was previously withheld or unavailable” (Lichy, 2012). The term Generation Y has been attributed to the population born between 1979 and 1998 and that most recently entered the job market. Napoli & Ewing (2000) suggest that the historical event Generation Y revolves around is the digital revolution, which made them rapidly and easily adaptable to innovation and change. Already in 1998, authors like for example Tapscott (1997) have started the debate around the new generation that was very familiar with and reliant on the new digital technology. Since 2011, social media has been the primary source of vacant positions and information about the prospective companies’ culture and work practices (Laick & Dean, 2011). In 2013 Facebook and LinkedIn were the most visited sites by students searching for jobs (Herbold & Douma, 2013). It is well accepted across both practitioner and academic literature that social media use is one of the most conspicuous attributes of Generation Y (Bissola & Imperatori, 2013; De La Llama et al., 2012; Lichy, 2012; Ryberg & Larsen, 2012; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). Considering the popularity social media technologies have among the young generation, it was only expected that companies would start providing information online, not only consumer-related information, but also recruitment-related.

In the past few years the topic of Generation Y’s distinct behavior has been widely discussed, including but not limited to behavior in the workplace and job search process. The discussions have been ongoing in the practitioner literature (Armour, 2005; McCrindle, 2010a, 2010b) as well as in academic journals (Choi et al., 2013; Josiam et al., 2009; Harvey J. Krahn & Galambos, 2014; Lichy, 2012; Smith, 2010; Treuren & Anderson, 2010). The “Net Generation” (Napoli & Ewing, 2000; Tapscott, 1997), as Generation Y is also called, is portrayed as being different than other generations in behavior, attitudes, media use and so on (Krahn & Galambos, 2014; Napoli & Ewing, 2000). Differences in work attitudes and behavior between Generation Y and other generations are important for
organizations in order for them to understand whether and how they should tailor their strategies to attract and retain the Yers. The choice to focus on Generation Y across my PhD project is based on the fact that companies are currently facing the challenge of replacing a large pool of employees, namely the Baby Boomers who are retiring, with a young pool of applicants that recently entered the job market and are part of the “Net generation” (Napoli & Ewing, 2000). By using social media in the recruitment process, companies adjust their recruitment and employer brand communication (K. Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) according to the intended audience.

2. Research questions

The aim of my PhD project is to study employer brand communication through social media in the context of Generation Y from different angles in order to gain a holistic view of the use of employer branding as a strategic tool. The overall research project will be studied through sub-questions that will serve as support and specifications for the main research question. The sub-questions are tentative and should be regarded as guidelines for the study. The sub-questions are organized in three articles, which will be briefly presented in the following sections.

1. Can Generation Y be considered a homogeneous group in the job search process and what are the differences between Generation Y and other generations in the job search process?

2. What are the employer brand perceptions and attitudes of Generation Y job seekers towards employer brand communication on social media?

3. How do companies manage their employer brand communication on social media both at a strategic and operational level?

The current literature on employer branding is very fragmented. As stated in section 1, in order to gain a holistic understanding of this concept, scholars have to search within different fields. Thus, with the intention of creating a link between human resources management and corporate communication, the first sub-question sets the scene for a better understanding of the importance of specific employer brand communication in the recruitment process for different generational cohorts. The second sub-question will then analyze the external perspective, and will look at how communication of the employer brand is perceived within different social media platforms to understand where and how is it best to
communicate the employer brand. The third sub-question will focus on the internal aspect of how the employer brand is managed inside an organization, both at a strategic level, but also at an operational level, with the aim of understanding to what extent companies engage in a dialog with their stakeholders in the employer brand communication. The overall structure of the PhD project is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Overall structure of the project

Article 1: Are there generational differences in the job search process?

Article 2: Employer Brand Perceptions Through Social Media Communication in the context of Generation Y

Article 3: How Do Companies Manage Their Employer Brand On Social Media?

General discussions and conclusions

Article 1 – Are there Generational Differences in the Job Search Process?

The first part of my project consists of a quantitative study that provides a better understanding of the importance of employer brand communication in the job search process. Two groups of job seekers (Generation Y and other generations) are compared based on four constructs representing different elements in the job search process: job search self-efficacy, job search methods, ideal job and ideal employer. The results show that there are no significant differences between the two groups regarding job search self-efficacy, job search methods and ideal job. However, significant differences were identified regarding the ideal employer construct. This study provides empirical evidence to support the importance companies should attribute to a differentiated employer brand communication based on generational differences. The findings from this article are explained in more detail in Section 5.
Article 2 – Employer Brand Perceptions Through Social Media Communication in the context of Generation Y

This second part will be a qualitative study of the perceptions of Generation Y job seekers of employer brand communication through social media. The data will consist of in-depth interviews, with experimental elements, with job seekers within the Information Technology (IT) industry focusing on 3-5 companies. The IT industry has a close relationship with potential employees, a community-like relationship, and this can be seen in the dedicated sections for developers that companies have, where specialists contribute and help improve products. In addition, Aarhus University has one of the best Information Technology programs in Denmark thus, allowing me to collect data from individuals with similar ages, background, exposed to employer brand communication from similar companies that they will recognize. The experimental elements consist of visual aids in the form of manipulated print screens from social media platforms that will present employer brand communication in different forms (e.g. as advertising, recommendations, discussions etc.) to identify which forms of communication are perceived as employer branding and which are perceived as commercials or user generated content. Other aspects I am interested in include identifying how attitudes and behavior changes when people are presented with different types of employer brand communication (intention to pursue a job, choice, like/dislike etc.). According to Cable and Turban (2003) individuals use reputation as a signal for job attributes and thus, not only employer brand communication, but also other information, comments or recommendations on social media can influence the perception one has about a company. In this study I intend to identify the most credible and reliable sources of information about companies as employers on social media. In addition, I will investigate if and how stakeholder-to-stakeholder communication influences corporate reputations as employers.

Article 3 – How Do Companies Manage Their Employer Brand On Social Media?

The last study will focus on the management of employer branding, both at a strategic and operational level. The data will consist of in-depth interviews with employees and managers in charge of employer branding and, if possible, observations from meetings. The research design will consist of multiple case studies focusing on the IT industry. In continuation of the previous study, where the most credible sources of information about companies as employers will be identified, and created an understanding of the stakeholder-to-stakeholder relationship concerning the employer reputation, I intend to study the internal aspects of employer brand communication. The study will investigate whether and how
companies listen to and continue to co-create their employer brand through social media, both at a strategic level, and in the daily routines of an organization.

3. Preliminary literature review – main concepts

In order to understand the context and the main concepts I started with a preliminary traditional literature review. I carried out a preliminary conceptual review which “aims to synthesize areas of conceptual knowledge that contribute to a better understanding of the issue” (Jesson, 2012) while being able to compare and contrast the different uses of the same terminology by different authors.

With the intention of answering the individual research questions and, at the same time, provide a framework for the entire project, I distinguish between primary and secondary concepts. The primary concept refers to those concepts that will constitute the overall framework of the PhD project, while secondary concepts refer to the concepts used in specific articles as support concepts or concepts that derive from the primary concepts as shown in Table 1. The main concepts presented in the following sub-sections represent the primary concepts that stand as pillars for my entire project. Each article, as part of the PhD project, will then focus one or more of the primary concepts, employing secondary concepts to obtain a more in-depth understanding of that particular topic.

Table 1. Main concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporate communication</th>
<th>Employer branding</th>
<th>Social media</th>
<th>Theory of generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• identity</td>
<td>• job search self efficacy (JSSE)</td>
<td>• social networking sites</td>
<td>• Generation Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• image</td>
<td>• job search method</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Generational differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reputation</td>
<td>• ideal job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ideal employer</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

The concept of corporate communication is the theoretical backdrop for my entire project, whereas the theory of generation has a contextual function and is detailed in the first article. In the following sub sections I will continue to explore employer branding and social media, as they are the main concepts of this project.

3.1. Conceptualizing employer branding

Initially, employer branding emerged as an alignment between marketing and human resources management (HRM) (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010). Now, the concept is discussed in several disciplines, underlining the importance of the topic. In
business administration, employer branding is discussed within marketing, organizational behavior and human resources management; within corporate communication there are scholars discussing the topic in relation with corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate social responsibility (Aggerholm et al., 2011). Likewise, in an organization, the person or group of specialists in charge of the strategic planning and implementation of employer branding are allocated to different departments: marketing, human resources, communication (Minchington, 2014).

Even though all these disciplines and sub-disciplines have different fundamental principles and visions about what an organization is and about the relationships between organizations and their stakeholders, they all consider employer branding as a competitive advantage, a “value creating process” (Aggerholm et al., 2011). In this project, I conceptualize employer branding within the corporate communication paradigm, focusing on stakeholders, identity, image and reputation. In its early state, employer branding was conceptualized based on a more mechanistic view of communication and this aspect is easily identifiable in all the definitions and characteristics. In 2004 Backhaus and Tikoo defined employer branding as “the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors” (p. 502), underlining the idea of a built identity and brand that the employees and prospect employees will identify and, based on it, will differentiate the company from its competitors.

In 2010 in a review of employer branding and the organizational behavior theory, Edwards (Edwards, 2010) describes employer branding as a representation of an organization, where the current and prospective employees are considered “the branding targets”.

The concept of employer branding also draws on identity image and reputation; in a very simplistic and linear manner, an organization has an employer identity that is projected to external stakeholders (prospective employees). The “snapshot” perceptions of the external stakeholders represent the employer images, while the long-term, cumulated images represent the employer reputation in a time-based view. In a value-based approach, meanwhile, employer reputation is the collective evaluation of the company as an employer. Christensen and Cornelissen describe its dependence on linear communication model as one major disadvantage of the corporate communication paradigm (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2010). As a consequence, stakeholders frequently construe corporate products and messages in a distinct manner than its original purpose (Cova, 1996). However, more recently, Cornelissen talks about the “current state” (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 12) of corporate communication “where the difference lies in the outright dismissal of the view that
stakeholders can be managed and controlled in their views” and where “organizations need to ‘engage’ individual stakeholders through different platforms in addition to addressing broader audiences, or entire stakeholder groups” (Cornelissen, 2014).

Stakeholder engagement is a topic discussed also by other corporate communication scholars that identify as well the static and linear aspects of employer branding and re-conceptualize it based on the “ontological turn in the overall understanding of the organization and its members” (Aggerholm et al., 2011, p. 106). Aggerholm et al., (2011) consider employer branding as a “communicative, relationship building and cross-disciplinary process (…), which creates long-term relationships between an organization and its potential and existing employees” (p. 106).

3.2. Social media

Social media is one of the buzzwords of the past few years. Mersey talks about social media as a new media channel with new characteristics, where messages ought to be tailored based on the target audience (Mersey, 2009). In HR management practitioners and scholars take a particular interest in the use of social media as a new tool for recruitment (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Bissola & Imperatori, 2013; Brecht et al., 2012; Herbold & Douma, 2013; Janta & Ladkin, 2013; Madera, 2012; Manroop & Richardson, 2013; Sivertzen et al., 2013; Volmar, 2010; Woloshin, 2009). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as Internet based applications based on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. In this study, the author will not focus on the technological determinism of social media, but rather on the communicative and participative aspects of the phenomenon.

The advances in technology, especially the increased use of social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube, have shifted the information flows in companies. The traditional information stream had a more “command and control” (Cornelissen, 2014) approach while social media have made the boundaries between content providers and consumers less visible. Whereas the blurred boundaries challenge corporate communication, they also present an opportunity in creating new ways a company can reach and engage more directly with its stakeholders. Regarding the formation of a company’s reputation, social media now enables internal stakeholders such as employees to directly interact with other stakeholders without any gate-keeping, reducing considerably the company’s control over the information stakeholders have access to. This can contribute in both a positive and a negative way to the formation of reputation. Social media enables, as well, easy communication
among individuals and groups of stakeholders, improving thus the social-constructivist nature of reputation.

In the past few years more and more companies have introduced social media in their communication strategy, including employer brand communication (Bondarouk et al., 2012; Girard et al., 2013; Margarita, Vasquez, & España, 2011; Marsden, 1994; Ollington, 2013; Weekhout, 2011). The 2013-2014 recruiting analysis made by Ballisager, one of the largest recruiting agencies in Denmark, shows an increase from 3% in 2011 to 23% in 2013 in the use of LinkedIn as a recruitment tool among the Danish companies, while 12% of the companies also post available jobs on Facebook.

4. Research design

The existing literature on employer branding comes from different disciplines, with different research traditions and approaches hence with different philosophical fundamentals and methodologies. This PhD project seeks to connect fragmented parts within the academic literature focusing on employer brand communication within social media. In order to achieve this goal, I constructed a research design that will help me study this concept from different perspectives: the job search process, the reputation of a company and the co-creation of the employer brand. Considering the above-mentioned, I place myself as a researcher within the social constructivist paradigm, intending to accept and utilize a constructed employer brand in the current socio-economic and cultural context, where social media become part of our everyday life and are used increasingly in the job search process.

4.1 Social constructivism in career studies

Career studies are coming from psychology and behavioral fields and focus, among others, on the job search process, self-efficacy in job search, job choice decision-making and job search methods. Career studies have a long tradition in a positivist approach in their epistemology, only in the past decade have scholars (Cohen et al., 2004; Young & Collin, 2004) considered social constructivism as an epistemological approach for career studies. The starting point of my project is not a fixed, objective entity external to individuals and influencing them, but rather a reality that is constructed by the individuals through their social practices. Considering this way of understanding reality, career is thus not conceptualized as an organized construction that an individual occupies for a certain period
of time, but “it is constituted by the actor herself, in interaction with others, so she moves through time and space” (Cohen et al., 2004). Individuals, though, do not have the complete power to construct their careers, but rather they are part of their own environment and construct their reality through an iterative and on-going process together with the other social actors.

The social constructivist approach to career research has consequences not only for the way we define the main concepts, but also for the research design and methodology. Cohen et al. (2004) suggest we should first understand the social and cultural aspects of career and then deepen our understanding of “the relationship between individual agency and social context”. Therefore, I argue that understanding generational differences in the job search process is crucial for understanding the co-creation of recruitment communication between organizations (at a strategic and operational level) and stakeholders (prospective employees).

4.2. Research design and methods

Current research on employer branding comes, as mentioned, from different disciplines. Thus, previous studies are both qualitative and quantitative in nature. In order to link the knowledge from different fields, I feel I must consider the quantitative and qualitative results and work with the two methodologies to reach a holistic understanding of the topic. Taking these factors into consideration, I will use mixed methods in my project.

Despite the fact that cultural anthropologists and field sociologists have been using a mix of what is known today as qualitative and quantitative data since the beginning of the 20th century (Johnson et al., 2007), only in the past two decades have mixed methods been established in the social sciences as a third methodological movement (Teddlie & Charles, 2009). As argued by Johnson et al., (2007), various scholars have used various terms to refer to mixed methods, including blended research, mixed research, integrative research and so on. In the same paper, Johnson et al., (2007) identified nineteen definitions of this relatively new methodology and summarized them in one that will be considered also in this project. As such, “mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson et al., 2007).
A major debate surrounding the topic of mixed methods research is the incompatibility thesis initiated by Kuhn in 1962 and continued in later editions (Kuhn, 1970). Kuhn’s thesis states that qualitative and quantitative data, and thus methodologies, are incompatible and therefore cannot be mixed. The philosophical dispute between the positivist/post-positivist and the constructivist paradigms is still ongoing. However, the more recent literature on this topic (Greene, 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Teddlie & Charles, 2009; Yin, 2006) suggests that it is possible to use not only both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in a single project but also different typologies, and that there are different manners of mixing the two for example Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) present four approaches to combining qualitative and quantitative data and Hall (2012) presents three possibilities for the mixed methods research.

This project is divided, as mentioned in Section 2, in three parts, which will consist of three individual peer-reviewed articles. From a methodological point of view, the first article uses quantitative data and analysis providing the context for the next articles. The following two articles will use qualitative data and analysis and thus, will be situated within the constructivist paradigm. The first part of my project is designed to describe the situation and provides empirical support for investigating the topic of employer branding in depth. The other two parts of the research project will be conducted in a qualitative, constructivist manner. In order to better present the approach I will use in this project, I decided to use the illustration proposed by Johnson et al. (2007) (see Figure 2) to show where my project is situated within the Qualitative Dominant subtype of mixed methods research.

Using a more complex typology by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009), this project follows a partially mixed sequential dominant status design that “involves conducting a study with two phases that occur sequentially, such that either the quantitative or qualitative phase has the greater emphasis” (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). In this case the project starts with a quantitative study followed by the qualitative two-part study. Considering the above-mentioned, I place myself mainly within the constructivist paradigm.

5. Initial findings – Are there generational differences in the job search process?

The first part of my PhD project has the aim of contextualizing the entire project, identifying the role and importance of targeted employer brand communication explicitly for Generation Y. In order to determine whether or not it is important to communicate the employer brand differently to different generations, I propose to identify generational differences in the job search process. Four constructs were identified in the literature to be representative for the job search process, namely job search self-efficacy, job search method, ideal job and ideal employer, and were tested for significant differences between Generation Y and other generations.

Data was collected between January and March 2014 using an online questionnaire targeted at job seekers in Denmark. The link to the survey was distributed in the monthly email newsletters of two unemployment funds, the newsletters of the Aarhus University Career Center and Alumni Office, as well as via social networking sites, on LinkedIn and Facebook groups dedicated to job seekers. The unemployment funds were chosen because they provide access to a large pool of job seekers of different ages and backgrounds, especially to those over 35 years old, while the Career Center and Alumni Office in Aarhus University provided access to a large pool of applicants within the age group 18-35 years old, both with and without previous work experience. After eliminating the incomplete responses, the sample consists of 334 cases, ranging in age between 19 and 63 years old. The sample was divided in two groups based on age. Group 1 consists of respondents born between 1979 and 1982 (younger than 35 years old at the time of data collection), consistent with the birth years corresponding to Generation Y as identified in the literature (Cogin, 2012; Krahn & Galambos, 2014; Luscombe, Lewis, & Biggs, 2013; Shaw...
& Fairhurst, 2008; Treuren & Anderson, 2010). Group 2 consists of respondents over the age of 35 representing other generations. Table 2 describes the socio-demographic characteristics of the two groups.

Table 2. Sample population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample characteristics</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not student</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to identify the potential differences between the two groups, I developed four hypotheses concerning significant differences between the two groups regarding job search self efficacy, job search method, ideal job and ideal employer. In testing the hypotheses I used two independent sample t-tests and the comparison of means. The results showed no significant differences in ideal job, job search self-efficacy or job search methods. However, significant differences between Generation Y and other generations were found regarding their ideal employer, where Group 1 granted significantly more importance to international job and pay and advancement attributes, whereas Group 2 rated significantly more important the job characteristics and people and culture attributes. Considering that the two groups showed significant differences in ideal employer attributes, it could be hypothesized that these differences, or other differences, could also appear within the same group, for example Generation Y, when splitting it into two sub groups according to age. Therefore, Group 1 was divided into two sub-groups: Group 1_A consisting of respondents under 27 years old and Group 1_B consisting of respondents between 28 and 35 years old. The same hypotheses as above were tested on the two sub groups to determine whether there are intra-generational differences within the job search process. If this were the case, the theory of generations could not be applied for the job search process, as the differences would not be caused by differences in generation, but rather by differences in age. I decided to do a robustness test and compare the two subgroups within Group 1 (Generation Y sample) to test for the homogeneity of the group. The two independent samples t-tests showed no significant differences between the four tested constructs (job search self efficacy, job search methods,
ideal job and ideal employer). Thus, the empirical evidence supports the homogeneity of the group, highlighting that Generation Y is a homogeneous group.

The results of this initial study provide empirical evidence to support the theory of generations within the job search process showing that, despite having similar goals, similar levels of confidence or job search methods, Generation Y is interested in other attributes in an ideal employer than other generations. By confirming for intra-generational differences within the same constructs of the job search process, this study eliminates the possibility that the differences in ideal employer characteristics are merely caused by age. Regarding the practical implications, this study provides empirical evidence to support a tailored employer brand communication in the recruitment process. Companies that intend to attract a young pool of applicants ought to focus on communicating those employer attributes that are attractive for this generation. For instance, in order to attract Generation Y applicants, characteristics such as international opportunities, higher pay and advancement possibilities are much more appealing than communicating the organizational culture.

The next step in my project is to conduct a preliminary literature review on employer branding focusing on the perception of the employer brand on social media. In order to provide empirical evidence on this topic, I will conduct in depth interviews as described in Section 2.
6. References


7. Study Plan

Overview over the research process

| Semester 1 (Fall 2013) | • Preliminary literature review  
| | • Establishing a tentative theoretical framework  
| | • Developing the questionnaire for the first article  
| | • Collecting empirical data  
| | • PhD course: Publishing in International Journals (SDU) 9-11 Oct., 2 ECTS  
| | • PhD course: Digital Analysis of Qualitative Data (CBS) 11-13 Nov., 3 ECTS  
| | • PhD course: Planlægning og gennemførelse af seminar- og holdundervisning; Center for Undervisning og Læring 2 Oct. |
| Semester 2 (Spring 2014) | • Continued with the preliminary literature review, focusing on secondary concepts used in developing the first article: job search self efficacy, job search process, job search method, ideal job, ideal employer  
| | • Data analysis  
| | • Writing the first article: *Generational differences in the job search process*  
| | • PhD course: Publish or Perish: Preparing, Writing and Reviewing Business Research (SDU) 17-18 Feb., 24 Jun., 30 Sep., 5 ECTS  
| | • PhD course: Research Paradigms in Strategic Communication. From Public Relations and Organizational Communication to Corporate Communication (AU BSS) 5-8 May, 5 ECTS  
| | • Research Seminar – NORDKOMM, Denmark, 21-23 Feb.  
| | • Teaching activities – Integrated Marketing Communication tutorials, BA MMC |
| Semester 3 (Fall 2014) | • Continued writing and revising the first article  
| | • Preliminary literature review, focusing on employer branding, social media, perception of branding communication  
| | • Will develop interview guides  
| | • Will start collecting data for second and third articles  
| | • PhD course: Methodology for Quantitative Research (SDU) 29 Sep – 3 Oct., 5 ECTS  
| | • PhD course Advanced Qualitative Research Methodologies: Ethnography, Case Studies, Grounded Theory And Action Research (AU BSS), 24-28 Nov., 5 ECTS  
| | • PhD course: Introduction to Philosophy of Science (AU BSS), 26-29 Jan 2015, 5 ECTS |
Semester 4 (Spring 2015)
- Continue literature review on main and secondary concepts
- Continue data collection
- Initiate data analysis for the second article
- Writing the second article: *Employer Brand Perceptions Through Social Media Communication*
- Visiting PhD: University of Innsbruck, Institute for Organization and Learning, 1 March – 31 May 2015
- Conference: Corporate Communication International (NY USA) 2-5 Jun. 2015

Semester 5 (Fall 2015)
- Finish writing the second article and submit to a journal
- Writing the third article: *How Do Companies Manage Their Employer Brand On Social Media*
- Writing the overall theoretical framework and research design for the PhD thesis

Semester 6 (Spring 2016)
- Finish the discussion and concluding chapters
- Write up the thesis
- Proof reading

PhD courses – Total 30 ECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>No. of hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA MMC Integrated Marketing Communication</td>
<td>Teaching + examination</td>
<td>Feb. – Jun. 2014</td>
<td>275 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA CC Social media</td>
<td>Internal censor</td>
<td>Jun., Aug. 2014</td>
<td>18 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA MMC Communication in a Marketing Perspective</td>
<td>Teaching + supervision + examination</td>
<td>Sep. 2014 – Jan 2015</td>
<td>280 hours</td>
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<td><strong>Total teaching activities</strong></td>
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<td><strong>573 hours</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Total teaching obligation – 600 hours