UNIVERSITETET I AGDER

Employer branding: A viable strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth?

A study on whether employer branding is a viable strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry
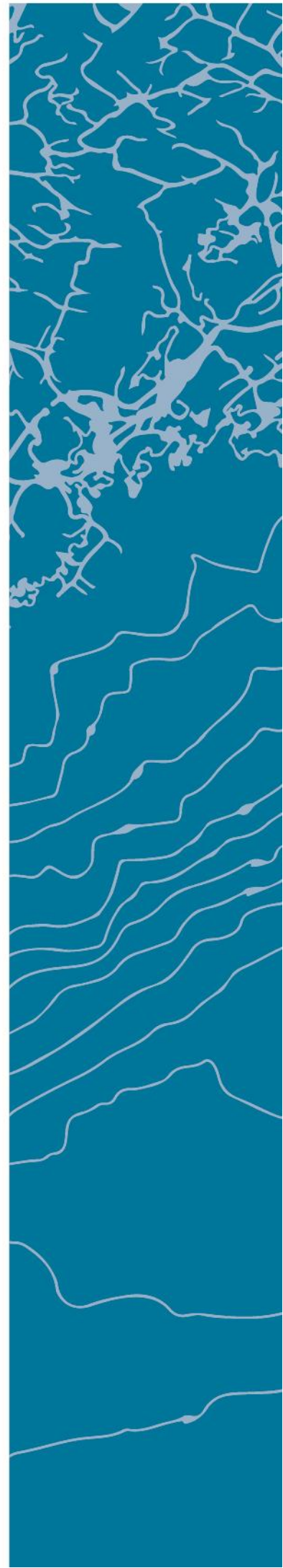
GRANNES, INGVE
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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate if, and explain how, employer branding may be used for recruiting Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry. This thesis looks at employer branding in light of relevant literature, theories, and frameworks. It looks at some of the challenges and possibilities in the industry, especially in the coming years, and how employer branding can help with recruitment of Norwegian youth. It uses Glencore Nikkelverk as a practical example of how implementations of the results can help recruitment for a firm in the Norwegian industry and better shape them for the future.

The study is a qualitative study, with an explorative research design in which we compare the results from nine different interviews to seek an answer to our research question. We used data triangulation in order to gather different perspectives on the subject. The collected data were retrieved through semi-structured interviews that took place in Agder county in order to gain a local perspective on the challenges.

Our findings show that there are multiple challenges in recruitment to the industry, and not all of them can be solved by a company. There are a lot of political and resource-related challenges, but the findings did also provide answers to the supportive questions which in turn can be used to develop an efficient employer branding plan.

Our findings further suggest that an employer branding strategy should focus on improving employer image towards the youth and use employer brand associations and relevant organizational attributes to do so. The most relevant organizational attributes were found to be compensation and organizational culture, as these were the two most mentioned by advisors in high schools providing vocational studies. The thesis also gives recommendations to which promotion/communication channels that can optimize an employer branding strategy. It was found that company visits/presentations and media/social media were the most influential.

Sammendrag

Hensikten med denne oppgaven er å undersøke om, og forklare hvordan, employer branding kan brukes til å rekruttere norsk ungdom til norsk industri. Denne oppgaven ser på employer branding i lys av relevant litteratur, teorier og rammeverk. Den ser på noen av utfordringene og mulighetene i bransjen, spesielt i årene som kommer, og hvordan employer branding kan hjelpe med rekruttering av norsk ungdom. Oppgaven bruker Glencore Nikkelverk som et praktisk eksempel på hvordan implementeringer av resultatene kan hjelpe rekruttering til en bedrift i norsk industri og bedre forberede den for fremtiden.

Studien er en kvalitativ studie, med et eksplorativt forskningsdesign der vi sammenligner resultatene fra ni ulike intervjuer for å finne svar på vårt forskningsspørsmål. Vi brukte datatriangulering for å samle ulike perspektiver på temaet. De innsamlede dataene ble hentet inn gjennom semistrukturerte intervjuer som fant sted i Agder fylke for å få et lokalt perspektiv på utfordringene.

Funnene våre viser at det er flere forskjellige utfordringer i rekruttering til bransjen, og ikke alle kan løses av en bedrift. Det er mange politiske og ressurs relaterte utfordringer, men funnene ga også svar på forskningsspørsmålene som igjen kan brukes til å utvikle en effektiv strategi for employer branding.

Våre funn tyder også på at en employer branding-strategi bør fokusere på å forbedre arbeidsgiverens image overfor ungdom og bruke employer brand associations og relevante organisatoriske attributter for å gjøre dette. De mest relevante organisatoriske attributtene som ble funnet var kompensasjon og organisasjonskultur, da disse var de to som ble mest nevnt av rådgivere i videregående skoler som tilbyr yrkesfag. Oppgaven gir også anbefalinger til hvilke promoterings-/kommunikasjonskanaler som kan optimalisere en employer branding-strategi. Det ble funnet at bedriftsbesøk/presentasjoner og media/sosiale medier var de mest innflytelsesrike.

Preface

This thesis is the final part of our studies at The School of Business and Law in the University of Agder. The extent of this master thesis is 30 credits, and is the result of a 2 year education in the masters program: "International business."

We would like to thank our advisors Torunn Skåltveit Olsen and Gro Johansen, for the support and guidance throughout the process of completing the thesis. They have always been constructive and took the time for us despite having other obligations. We are grateful for the conversations on Zoom and communication on e-mail and that both of you were available and reliable when we needed help. In addition, we would like to thank the nine people who agreed to the interviews. We would not have been able to do this research without your help, and for that we are grateful.

We would like to thank the University of Agder for their assistance during the corona pandemic, which has had an impact on education during the past two years. They have provided access to essential articles and information, as well as providing us with a complete and relevant masters degree. We got all the necessary information along the way, and there was never any doubt on what to do.

We would also like to thank our friends and family for all the support given to us over these two years, especially the friends we made during the masters program. Lastly we would like to give special thanks to Daniel Liland, who has been a part of our "team" in all of the courses in the masters program. We are very grateful for your contributions both on a professional and a personal level.
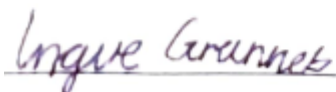
Now we wish you an interesting read.

Statement

Declaration of authorship:

We declare on our word of honor, that we are the sole authors of this master thesis. The work was completed using only the cited sources. All information taken directly from source material or ideas based on information taken from source material have been clearly identified through the cited references.

01.06.2022

Signature:

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1. Introduction and research question

The Norwegian education system has struggled to get the Norwegian youth to study vocational studies. Luckily, this trend now seems to change, as there has been an increase in people applying for vocational studies in recent years (Udir, 2022). There has been a push in the media to get more students to apply for vocational studies, which is now paying off. Cappelen et al. (2020, p. 42) state that there will be a surplus of more than 50 000 jobs in the Norwegian industry by 2040, making it important to market vocational studies to the youth. The timing is good for companies like Glencore Nikkelverk to market themselves for this new "wave" of applicants for vocational students and capitalize on the trend.

To cope with the increasing difficulties of recruiting new relevant employees, many companies suggest focusing more on employer branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer branding is "a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders regarding a particular firm" (Sullivan, 2004, cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 1). However, a lack of research connects it to the youth, particularly Norwegian youth. It is, therefore, interesting to look at how employer branding can be used as a tool for corporations to recruit and attract Norwegian youth. The research question is developed in cooperation with Glencore Nikkelverk to satisfy a need in the industry and is designed based on a lack of current literature. The research question is related to previous employer branding and youth recruitment research.

The city of Kristiansand in Agder and many other areas are struggling with retaining and engaging a new workforce, seeing a decline in the young population over time (Agder fylkeskommune, 2020). Agder, a county in southern Norway, is shaping up to be the frontrunner for "the green transition" due to Norway's "battery coast." The battery coast, also known as "the energy coast," refers to the shift towards a greener battery technology and the extended effects.

The university of Agder is initiating a collaboration with local business and industry to develop battery expertise within research, education, and co-creation. Agder has the potential to become an "energy hub" in Norway, attracting companies within the battery sector to the area and students to the local universities (Wehus, 2021). Therefore, local companies have a

unique advantage when it comes to being an early adapter to the transition and thus going forward as an example for the rest of Norway, which will positively affect their brand. Another aspect is that the establishment of the battery coast and their goal is for Agder to become one of the leading tech environments in Norway (Wehus, 2021), will further increase the competition for labor, which is an incentive for companies to look at ways to increase their attractiveness.

This thesis seeks to answer the question:

> *"How may employer branding be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry."*

This thesis will use a local company called Glencore Nikkelverk as an example in this study. Glencore Nikkelverk, like other companies, has difficulties recruiting Norwegian youth. To explore solutions to these difficulties, this thesis will look at how employer branding can be used to attract Norwegian youth, seeing as Glencore Nikkelverk is a local company in Agder and a part of the battery sector (due to nickel being an essential component of a battery), the timing of both the recruitment challenges and opportunity was a good foundation for this thesis. It provided a relevant and interesting research problem.

To help find an answer to the research question mentioned above, the following supportive questions have been created. These questions seek to give a deeper insight into the research question.

- *What challenges does the Norwegian industry have in recruiting youth?*

  This question was chosen to clarify some of the existing problems in recruiting youth from various perspectives and hopefully can provide some common ground that can be used as a basis to find a solution to the challenges.

- *What can be done to improve the recruitment according to the relevant parties?*

  This question was chosen to provide insight into what relevant parties think should be done to improve recruitment. It will provide different perspectives that can help companies, the education system, and parties alike to see what needs to be done and give an overview of areas of improvement.

- *How can businesses like Glencore Nikkelverk market themselves to attract youth?*

    This question was chosen to get an insight into what companies like Glencore Nikkelverk and others in the Norwegian industry can do to market themselves efficiently. They need to know what and how to communicate. Answers to this question will help provide data to use in the development of an employer branding strategy.

There are multiple recruitment strategies for companies offering different perspectives on most effectively recruiting employees. The thesis looks at how employer branding can help attract Norwegian youth. It will look into what channels are most effective in reaching Norwegian youth and how to avoid as much "noise" as possible to present a clear message.

The introduction part of this thesis is followed by a theory chapter presenting and defining relevant theoretical literature and frameworks. The methodology chapter explains the research design, data sample, and data collection. A results and discussion chapter consists of findings and a discussion of the supportive and research questions. Results are followed by a conclusion. Lastly, a presentation of potential future research will be given.

2. Theory

There is a difference between employer brand and employer branding that should be commented on (Theurer et al., 2018). Employer brands can be seen as what the employer offers in physical and psychological benefits. It helps differentiate a firm and its offerings and environment from its competitors (Theurer et al., 2018; Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). On the other hand, employer branding is a process in which the employer seeks to improve or create an identity for potential employees (Backhaus, 2004; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). This thesis will focus mainly on employer branding as a recruitment strategy. Furthermore, it will present the theory in Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and will supplement their theory with newer research as well.
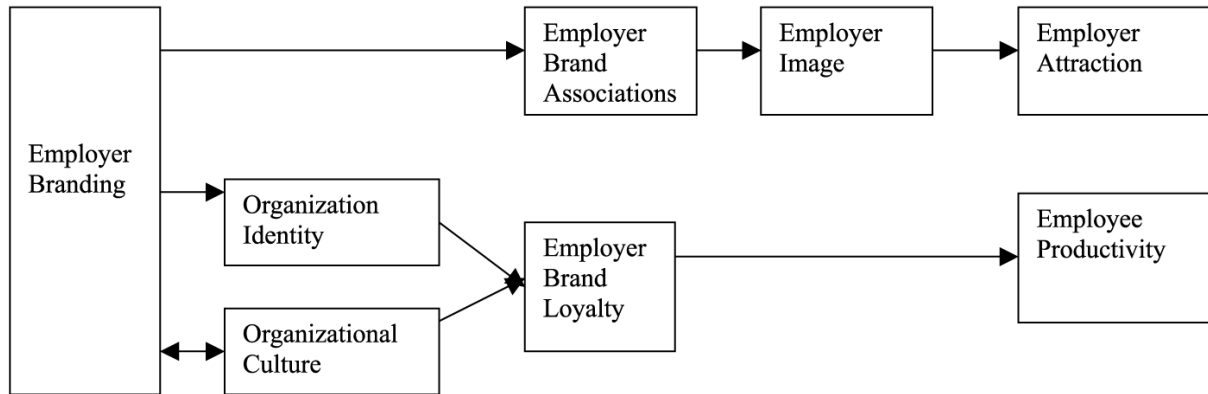
2.1 Employer branding

Employer branding was a term first introduced in the 1990s. However, the term's creator is uncertain (Rosethorn & Bernard Hodes Group, 2009). The theory of employer branding has a basis in the specialism of recruitment communications that emerged in the 1960s (Rosethorn & Bernard Hodes Group, 2009).

Employer branding is a relatively new and unexplored field of research. It is often used as a subsection within Human Resource Management (HRM). To illustrate, a search on the Isi Web of Science with "Employer branding" yields only 321 (as of 25.02.2022) hits, with only 10 of them being prior to 2010. A search for "Human resource management" yields 22,422 hits on the Isi Web of Science. Despite employer branding being a new field of research, it is fundamentally not a new phenomenon. Arachchige & Robertson (2011) states that employer branding is adapted from marketing theory and used to recruit and keep the best possible workforce and has become increasingly more favored by organizations developing their image as an employer. Within employer branding, one specific article stands out from the rest. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) is one of the most cited articles within the field, with 2663 known citations according to Google Scholar. It is also used as a basis for several other articles, including Chhabra & Sharma (2014).

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) used the framework presented in Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and used it as a basis for their own conceptual framework. Both of these frameworks will be

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presented and discussed in this theory chapter. Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) framework does, however, differ a bit, which will be highlighted in the comparison part of the theory chapter.

2.2   Backhaus & Tikoo's (2004) framework

(Conceptual framework, Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004)

Employer Branding

Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) defined employer branding as a long-term strategy that can boost employer attractiveness, employer image, employee acquisition, and employee retention (Sullivan, 2004, cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Branding gives the company a form of employer image. For a company to have an employer branding strategy, it needs to have developed a value proposition, market its value proposition and have proper internal marketing within their companies to ensure that its brand promise is incorporated into its organizational culture (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Backhaus & Tiko (2004) highlight that value proposition is an essential aspect of employer branding and the value proposition is what an employer offers to their employees (Sullivan, 2002, cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004)

Organization Identity

Employer branding leads to Organization identity. Identifying with the company one works for is essential. Developing an identity for the organization has some value (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer branding helps develop such an identity of the firm as an employer. Further, the identity includes the value systems, policies, and behavior of the firm, which

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assists them in attracting, motivating, and retaining employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). As such, employer branding is an essential tool for developing the organization's identity.

Organizational Culture

Employer branding leads to Organizational culture. Much research has shown that organizational culture is essential in attracting and retaining competent employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). As such, organizational culture also plays a vital role in employer branding. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) specifies that the organizational culture should be developed and maintained in a company through internal marketing. Organizational culture may also help provide future employees with pre-employment information, helping them ascertain which organizations are a good match or a bad match (Backhaus & Tiko, 2004). Cable & Judge (1996) stated that their beliefs in an organization's culture would strengthen and affect the validity of their self-selection process. This may indicate that organizational culture is essential not just for the individuals' well-being in the firm but also for the long-term recruitment strategies for organizations. Organizational culture in turn affects employer branding, which affects organizational identity and employer brand associations as well.

Employer Brand Loyalty

Employer brand loyalty is affected by organizational identity and organizational culture. According to Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), employer brand loyalty contributes to increasing the employee's productivity. Brand loyalty refers to a consumer's attachment to a brand (Aaker, 1991). Like consumer brand loyalty, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) specify employer brand loyalty as the employee's commitment to their employer. Employer brand loyalty is often used to influence organizational culture and organization identity as illustrated by the arrows in their framework (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). As explained earlier, employer branding influences organizational culture and organization identity, which makes employer branding influence employer brand loyalty. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) explains employer brand loyalty as the commitment an employee has towards their employer.

Older research suggests a correlation between organizational commitment and organizational culture. O'Reilly (1989) states that organizational culture is the basic assumptions and values learned by employees in an organization that is passed on to newcomers. Research by Deal & Kennedy (1982, cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) and Peters & Waterman (1982, cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) suggest that commitment and culture are tied together. This was
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further supported by Goodman et al. (2001), which showed that specific types of culture lead to a heightened commitment among employees. This indicates that developing and maintaining a healthy organizational culture is positive for employee commitment and employee attraction.

Employer brand loyalty also correlates with organizational identity. Organizational identity is defined as central, enduring, and distinctive of an organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). People usually seek to identify with an organization and will instinctively do so if they find that the organizational identity is exciting and relatable (Dutton et al., 1994). Positive identity leads to self-esteem (Dutton et al., 1994), which ultimately will lead to identification with the organization, increasing the employees' organizational commitment (Crewson, 1997). The managers of the organization can vastly influence the organizational identity. Some strategies that can influence identity are molding insiders' perceptions through goals, policies, and practices (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer branding will help influence employer brand loyalty (organizational commitment) through culture and identity. This can positively impact current and future employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Employer brand loyalty in turn affects both organizational identity and organizational culture from within, further affecting employer branding etc.

Employee productivity
According to Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), one end goal of employer branding is to create employee productivity. An employee who shows brand loyalty or organizational commitment will also show higher productivity (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Research indicates this is vast. Satisfied employees tend to have a higher performance level (Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985, cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). They also provide a higher level of customer satisfaction. Employees with a positive attitude seem to have the same effect (Rucci et al., 1998). Rucci et al. (1998) also found a correlation between an employer brand and improved employee attitudes.

Employer branding is an excellent way to influence employee productivity as it helps you influence organizational culture and organization image. As discussed in the research, employer brand loyalty does impact the employee productivity of a firm (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). As such, increasing brand loyalty is essential to increasing employee productivity.
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Employee productivity is not as crucial in attracting employees based on the presented research. However, it is helpful to retain employees and increase the organizational image and culture. As such, employee productivity may indirectly influence the recruitment of new employees.

The correlation between employer branding, organization identity, organizational culture, employer brand loyalty, and employee productivity is illustrated in the lower part of Backhaus & Tikoo's (2004) framework.

Employer Brand Associations

Brand associations are defined as thoughts and ideas that a brand name evokes in consumers (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer brand associations are expected benefits connected to the specific employer in question. These benefits can be but are not limited to salary, leave allowances, and other benefits (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Symbolic benefits are also a part of employer brand associations. These can be prestige through the company you're working for and social approval you perceive to gain through working for the firm (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Within recruitment, potential employees will be attracted to an employer through the perceived benefits they can receive by working for the firm (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Employer Image

Brand image is defined as "an amalgamation of the perceptions related to the product-related/non-product related attributes and the functional/symbolic benefits encompassed in the brand associations that reside in consumer memory" (Keller, 1993, cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer image can be seen as a product coming from people associated with an organization's employer brand (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). An image is presented to the consumer through the employer's brand strategies, where the idea is to create an image of the organization to be an excellent place to work (Sullivan, 2004, cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) further state that employer image like employer brand associations can be split into functional and symbolic benefits. Functional benefits are the physical benefits gained by working at a firm, such as a salary, leave and vacation days, and benefits for working there (phone, computer, healthcare, etc.). As mentioned, symbolic benefits are benefits that relate to the prestige of the firm you work for.

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According to Sullivan (2002, cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), employer image is part of the value proposition of what an employer has to offer potential employees. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) illustrates this in their framework that the employer image is developed through the employer brand associations, which again is an outcome of the employer's branding. As such, an organization needs to emphasize what kind of image they want to present through proper brand associations. This will help you attract the optimal people for your organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). This is further exemplified by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), referring to an example where the firm Railtrack increased its attraction of competent, qualified employees by emphasizing the association's flexibility and opportunity. This led to an increase of qualified applicants by 30 percent.

Developing and building a suitable employer image has positively affected numerous researches, both old and new. Employer image emphasizes attraction toward potential employees in older literature (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer brand associations and employer image connect somewhat through people associating themselves with the firms they are checking. If the personality and identity traits of the organization fit with your views about yourself and your identity, you will automatically feel attracted to the specific organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Employer Attraction

Employer attraction is one of the final steps of employer branding, according to Backhaus & Tikoo (2004). Employer image will further attract applicants (Belt & Pallillo, 1982, cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). As mentioned, people tend to try and relate an organization's image to their own. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) calls this person-organization fit. If the organization's image has a fit with the individual applicant's image, there will come a more significant attraction towards that organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) further emphasizes that social identity theory is relevant to employer attraction. This builds on a study made by Tajfel (1982). Social identity theory suggests that individuals need and tend to seek membership within certain social groups. Membership is derived from one's self-concept (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), and the reputation of the group we identify with contributes to our self-concept (Underwood et al., 2001). Lastly, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) argues that as brand awareness increases, so too does the positive identification development of consumers towards the brand. To use social identity theory, a consumer or applicant connects to the brand due to the positive membership feeling with said brand. This will lead

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to a heightened self-image of a potential employee (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Dutton et al., (1994) mention that people will associate with the organization as long as they have an attractive and exciting organizational image.

The correlation between employer brand associations, employer image, and employer attraction is illustrated in the upper part of Backhaus & Tikoo's (2004) framework.

2.3   Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) framework

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) summarizes the employer branding process by analyzing factors like the organizational attributes such as values, culture, the brand's current image, and other factors alike. This analysis can then lead to the identification of value propositions, which can be used to create and formulate an employer branding strategy. Once the design is made, the company has to find the correct marketing channels, both externally and internally, meaning for both the existing and prospective employees. Implementing this employer branding strategy will increase employer attractiveness for prospective employees and brand loyalty for current employees. This process has been illustrated in a theoretical framework they built using Backhaus & Tikoo's (2004) original framework.
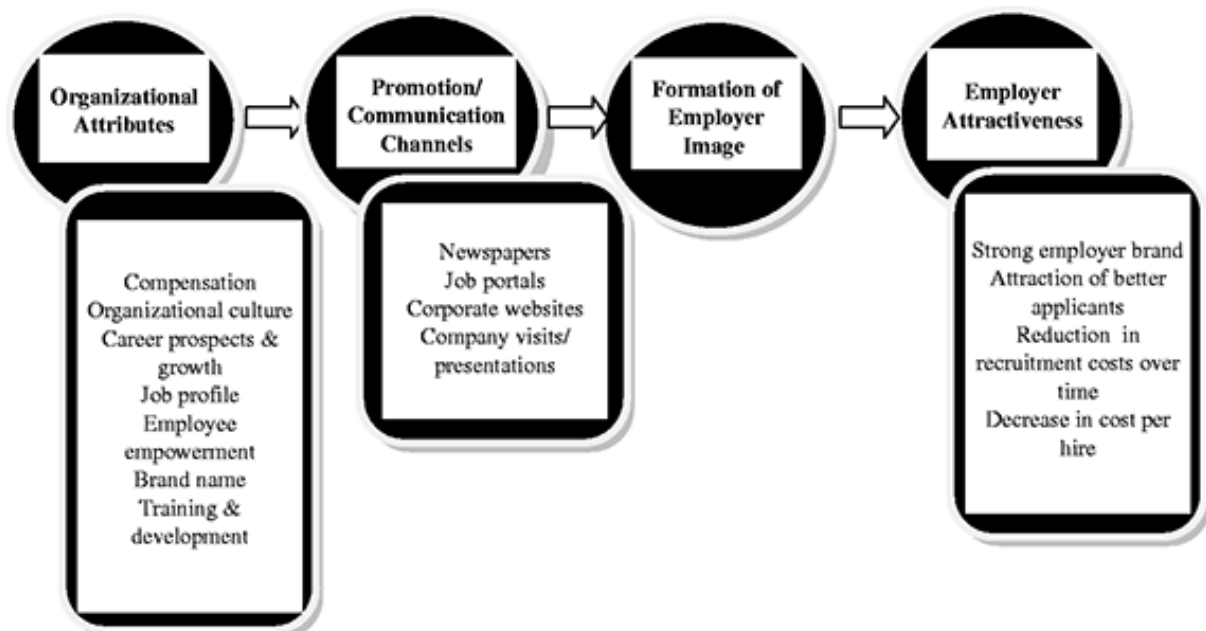
(Conceptual framework, Chhabra & Sharma, 2014)

Organizational attributes

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Chhabra & Sharma (2014) puts a focus on an aspect called organizational attributes. According to Chhabra & Sharma (2014), these attributes are the basis of what a job seeker is evaluating when looking at a potential employer. Chhabra & Sharma (2014) is looking into pointing to lots of different attributes, and this section will look over and explain each one.

The specific attributes that are mentioned by Chhabra & Sharma (2014) can be seen in the framework above. These are compensation, organizational culture, career prospects & growth, job profile, employee empowerment, brand name, and training and development. In addition to these attributes, it should be mentioned that attribute interest changes based on the length of education and the type of education. For example, someone who studied commerce might have a different attribute interest than someone who studies humanitarian studies (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Age is also a contributing factor among the attributes.

Rynes (1991) points out that organizational attributes are crucial in applicant attraction. According to Srivastava & Bhatnagar (2010), a positive first impression of the organization is vital to ensure post-interview appeal. This includes job acceptance. In an organization where organization impression is low, the likelihood of interest and acceptance are notably lower than otherwise (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014).

The first of the attributes mentioned by Chhabra & Sharma (2014) is compensation. Compensation can be defined as "all forms of financial returns and tangible services and benefits employees receive as part of an employment relationship (Milkovich et al., 2013). Compensation was added to the form of organizational attributes as it is widely known as a factor in job search and job acceptance. Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) research shows that around 15 percent of their study group specifies that compensation is the most influential organizational attribute. The study is done amongst students in India, and results are expected to vary a bit from different age groups and different countries/cultures.

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) mentioned the second attribute, organizational culture. Organizational culture is defined as "the deeply rooted values and beliefs that are shared by personnel in an organization" (Sun, 2008, p. 1). Organizational culture was added to the form of organizational attributes due to its high relevance in Backhaus & Tikoo's (2004) article. A study by Rynes & Miller (2003, cited in Chhabra & Sharma, 2014) highlights that the way an organization treats its employees is paramount in attracting new employees and retaining
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existing employees. Organizational culture is an important aspect of making employees feel welcome and a part of the organization (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2013). Such organizational culture is vital for creating a strong employer brand and long-term employer attractiveness.

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) mentioned the third organizational attribute, career prospect and growth. Career prospect & Growth can be defined in analogous terms. A career prospect can be thought of as the potential for furthering your career within a specific company, while growth can mean the potential to grow within the company. Both indicate the possibility of developing oneself within the company and retaining for an extended period of time. Career prospects & growth were added to the form through a focus group of preferred organizational attributes. Although it is not deemed paramount by Chhabra & Sharma (2014), it is deemed essential and with some significance.

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) mentioned the fourth attribute, the job profile. A job profile is defined as "the set of competencies, motivations, and values needed in the abstract to cover a position effectively" (Gagliarducci & de Gennaro, 2021). Likewise, as career growth & development, a job profile was developed as an attribute through a focus group.

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) mentioned the fifth attribute, employee empowerment. Employee empowerment was found through the same focus group as the others. Chhabra & Sharma (2014) defines employee empowerment as "the process of enabling employees to make decisions and appropriate actions regarding their jobs up to certain predefined levels".

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) mentioned the sixth organizational attribute, the brand name. The brand name was found through an analysis of Backhaus & Tikoo's (2004) framework. A brand name is defined as "a brand name that conveys relevant benefit information in a particular product context" (Lee & Ang, 2003). Although not mentioned in Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) article, the context hints toward them discussing the specifics of employer brand name. Employer brand associations are directly related to this, which are the thoughts that a brand name evokes in a person (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The brand name was found by Chhabra & Sharma (2014) to be the second most crucial aspect amongst their respondents, with around 30 percent finding it to be the most desirable to potential employers. The brand name is highly discussed in the literature, and researchers agree that it is an important aspect

both for employees, potential employees, and consumers. As such, employers need to focus on it.

The seventh and last organizational attribute mentioned by Chhabra & Sharma (2014) is training and development. Training and development were added due to a study made by Terjesen et al. (2007). In the study, Terjesen et al. (2007) included investing heavily into training and development of the staff as one of five key elements for employer attractiveness amongst university students. Training and development have not been mentioned explicitly by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) as an important factor toward employer attractiveness. As such, it is a new aspect. Training and development can be defined in analogous terms. It can be defined as training new and existing employees to perform their job better or developing them to become a better version of themselves and learn new skills. Training and development were also part of the focus group that helped decide on the final seven factors that were deemed important for employer attractiveness.

Promotion/communication channels
The second part of Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) framework consists of promotion and communication channels. The definition of a promotion/communication channel lies in the word and is a channel that can be used to promote or communicate a specific message. In the article of Chhabra & Sharma (2014), the message that you want to promote/communicate is the organizational attributes of the organization to help reach a higher employer attractiveness towards potential employees. The proper way to promote the employer brand is something lacking and not clearly discussed within Backhaus & Tikoo's (2004) framework. This is one of the reasons Chhabra & Sharma's framework is more relevant for this thesis. However, promotional and communication channels are constantly changing and updating. What you want to promote, who you want to promote it to, and which geographical location you are promoting it in, are all questions which might change the usage of promotion/communication channels. This section will present the promotional channels introduced by Chhabra & Sharma (2014). However, as the article is from 2014 and the intended receivers of the attributes are not precisely the same as the ones the thesis presents, there can be discrepancies between the research and the results.

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) suggest four different channels to promote their organizational attributes. These four channels are newspapers, company visits/presentations, job portals, and

corporate websites. Communication channels can be from both informal and formal channels. Informal channels are channels such as word of mouth and talking amongst acquaintances. These channels are basically not controlled directly by the organizations. Formal channels are the channels that an organization controls, for example, web-based channels, newspapers, presentations, and others that are mentioned in Chhabra & Sharma (2014).

The first communication channel mentioned by Chhabra & Sharma (2014) is newspapers. Although Chhabra & Sharma (2014) uses newspaper communication channels as part of their framework, no actual research seems to be done on it. However, newspaper ads are talked about in research. Newspaper ads for recruitment can be seen as a thing of the past, but there is some possibilities for gaining attention (Allen et al. 2007)

The second communication platform presented by Chhabra & Sharma (2014) is job portals. Job portals were found to be the most efficient recruitment channel among the proposed channels. In the study by Chhabra & Sharma (2014), their respondents analyzed the promotion channels to see which they preferred. Their findings showed that 32 percent responded that job portals were the most preferred of the results. Job portals seem to be an excellent place to promote organizational attributes. A job portal is defined as "a kind of web portal that provides an efficient way for searching the Internet or the web for vacant job positions available" (Sehgal et al., 2013). In Norway, job portals are widely used to secure new job applications.

The third communication channel presented by Chhabra & Sharma (2014) is corporate websites. Corporate websites easily explained are the websites affiliated with the corporation that is hiring. Corporate websites are a great place to ascertain information about the company and learn about the company's thoughts and beliefs. However, Chhabra & Sharma (2014) shows that only 12 percent of people prefer to use company websites when applying for jobs. Thus, the article suggests that companies should put more emphasis on their websites as it gives them the possibility to interact more closely and get to know the organization (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014).

The fourth and final communication channel presented by Chhabra & Sharma (2014) is company visits/presentations. It was found to be highly preferred by the respondents, as 29 percent of them said it was their preferred channel of communication with companies. As
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such, it is the second most preferred organizational attribute among their respondents. Company visits/presentations are briefly explained as a visit to a specific institution with representatives from the company, which can be found in both universities and schools, or a visit from the institution to the company. The visitation can, in other words, go both ways.

Formation of employer image

As mentioned by Chhabra & Sharma (2014), Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) states that an organization's image is based mainly on the value proposition that one can offer. The article also mentions that employer image significantly increases employer attractiveness. Further mentioned by several authors is that an organization's image as an employer influences the attractiveness of applicants (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Organizational attributes are based on the employer brand associations mentioned in Backhaus & Tikoo (2004). Employer brand associations are used to shape the organization's employer image.

Terjesen et al. (2007) posit that the choice of whether or not an applicant applies comes down to the image of the employer and how the organization chooses to communicate this through publicity and promotion channels. This has led to many organizations cultivating their employer brand to increase their image and applicant awareness (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Chhabra & Sharma (2014) found a clear correlation between a brand image and the likelihood to apply in their own study. This indicates that employer brand image does in fact influence an applicant's willingness to apply. It is also in accordance with prior studies such as Backhaus & Tikoo (2004).

From the research conducted by Chhabra & Sharma (2014), it seems clear that different population groups have different interests in different organizational attributes as well as different promotion and communication channels. This makes it different based on the image you want your organization to represent. Different images might attract a different applicant crowd. As stated by Chhabra & Sharma (2014, p. 8), "Unless employer value propositions are communicated in the right way to the right audience, time and money invested will not yield the desired results."

Employer attractiveness

Employer attractiveness is the last and final part of Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) framework. Employer attractiveness is defined by Berthon et al. (2005) as "the envisioned benefits that a
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potential employee sees in working for a specific organization." It is the end product of the proposed employer branding strategy they have researched. The primary purpose of their paper was to study which organizational attributes are most attractive among final year management students, and which channels these attributes should be communicated through for best reach and most impact. The importance of employer attractiveness is to attract the most skilled and relevant employees to your organization (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014), Both in a field where there are many workers seeking jobs or few workers seeking jobs.

The importance of employer attractiveness is to seek to be an attractive employer and have candidates be attracted to the company (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). As such, managers often use employer branding strategies to attract and retain employees (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Minchington (2007, cited in Chhabra & Sharma, 2014), like Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), weights that you can use employer branding both for internal and external approaches. Internal approaches will help retain employees, while external approaches will help attract employees (Sullivan, 1999).

In light of the conceptual framework created by Chhabra & Sharma (2014), they give an explanation of how the framework was formed. The explanation says that:

> Employer branding starts with the analysis of the organization's values, culture, competition, HR and other policies, strengths, brand's current image, trends and the like. This leads to the identification of value propositions based on which the employer branding strategies are formulated. Once the strategies are formulated, the communication channels for internal and external marketing are identified for positioning the brand propositions in the minds of the prospective and existing employees. This leads to employer attractiveness for the potential employees and employer brand loyalty for the current employees. Chhabra & Sharma (2014, p. 4)

According to Wilkinson (2009, cited in Chhabra & Sharma, 2014), the world of employer branding has reached a point where all information is constant and never-ending. Due to the arrival of the internet, job portals, and social networks, applicants can find the information they are looking for at any time. However, such networks need to be maintained constantly to ensure that the attraction of employees is not lost (Wilkinson, 2009, cited in Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). At the same time, Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) research shows that attraction
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is not necessarily preferred through these channels. Job portals, as mentioned, is the most preferred channel, but company visits/presentations are the second most wanted.

Lastly, as explained by the framework, a good strategy for employer branding can lead to a better employer image, which can attract more employees. Maintaining it well, may help reduce the costs of recruitment and thus decrease the overall cost per hire (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014).

2.4   Comparison of the two frameworks

Compared to Backhaus & Tikoo's (2004) initial framework, Chhabra & Sharma's framework has a more "straightforward" approach, almost a step-by-step guide to effectively developing an employer branding strategy using it as a recruitment strategy. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) highlights eight areas; Employer branding, organization identity, organizational culture, employer brand loyalty, employee productivity, employer brand associations, employer image, and employer attraction. The subsections of each step are factors directly related to the proposition that a company can use to create an employer branding strategy.

However, only employer brand associations, employer image, and employer attraction relate directly to the recruitment aspect of the framework, which is the more relevant part of this thesis. The others lead to productivity and employer retention, which are excellent and essential benefits of employer branding but are not suitable for the thesis as a means to recruit the Norwegian youth. Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) framework only highlights four subsections, but all relate to using employer branding as a recruitment strategy.

As mentioned, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) puts no emphasis on the communication channels that can be used. This is something that clearly sets Chhabra & Sharma (2014) apart from them. However, the organizational attributes are discussed to a certain extent in both of the articles.

A difference in theory between Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and Chhabra & Sharma (2014) is the importance of organizational culture. Chhabra & Sharma (2014) listed organizational culture as the most preferred attribute among their respondents, with around 31 percent listing it as their most preferred attribute. Chhabra & Sharma lists organizational culture as the

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essential attribute of an organization in light of recruitment. On the other hand, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) only gives it partial relevance (although still significant) in the way of employee motivation and internal marketing. Both articles signify the importance of internal marketing and employee retention.

Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) also mentions compensation as a factor often thought about by employees. It is an essential aspect of both employer brand associations and organization identity. They further specify the importance of meeting such promises among benefits, including but not limited to compensation (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). However, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) gives little to no insight into this specific attribute. Although this is true, Lievens & Highhouse (2003) includes it in their definition of instrumental and symbolic attributes, which was discussed in Backhaus & Tikoo (2004).

The brand name is something that correlates a lot with the theory and findings presented in Backhaus & Tikoo (2004). Career prospect & growth are one of the instrumental attributes an organization can offer. This has some similarities with the physical and symbolic benefits of Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), but it seems clear that it is not weighted much within their framework.

Employee empowerment has been mentioned to strongly influence performance by several different sources in the literature (Baird et al., 2020; Ignore, 2009). Ignore (2009) specifies that employee empowerment is also essential regarding employee commitment. Employees who feel empowered will have a more significant commitment to their employer (Ignore, 2009). Even though Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) does not mention it, it supports their section about employee commitment, which relates to brand commitment and employee productivity. Although highly discussed in theory, a few respondents in Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) article focused on it as an essential attribute. It had the lowest interest among the respondents, with only 1 percent. Chhabra & Sharma (2014) discussed the possibility of employee empowerment being less well known amongst the respondents and added that an organization that is able to market themselves as employee empowering, and not just show it within their organization, would have a competitive advantage over others as it is not common among organizations.

Meyer et al. (2022) highlighted that job profiles can have an impact on employee motivation and thus impact the organizational output. Chhabra & Sharma (2014) did not further emphasize the attribute. Thus it is deemed the least important among the selected organizational attributes. It is not mentioned by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) either. However, a job profile can have some impact on employer attractiveness, especially employee motivation.

Lastly, companies should be mindful of giving contradicting information between their websites and other employment platforms or promotional platforms (Brouer et al., 2015). For example, between websites and social media. Websites that post consistent information were found to have a higher employer attraction rate, as well as more agreeableness, compared to companies that don't (Brouer et al., 2015). Although no official research has been done on it, it is apparent through web-based activity and universal knowledge through portals like the website Finn.no and recruitment bureaus that job portals are an important platform when it comes to recruiting employees. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) discusses in detail the importance of affiliating with an organization and how that can lead to both employer attractiveness and employee commitment. This can be done more easily through a company website

Social media as a communication/promotion channel
Something not mentioned by Chhabra & Sharma (2014) or Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) is the usage of social media to promote or communicate about the employer brand of an organization. An important part of social media is the social environment that forms a range of acquaintances, cities, and interests that characterize how and why people connect through social networks (Vetráková et al., 2018). The usage of social media to attract employees and improve brand name can be understood through the Honeycomb framework presented by Kietzmann et al., (2011). It highlights seven blocks that should be used to become a good presence on social media, so-called honeycomb blocks: Conversations, identity, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Scott (2010, cited in Vetráková et al., 2018) further states that some rules should be respected when creating a company's social media account: Be interesting, offer interesting and valuable information, be transparent and authentic, and encourage people to get in touch with the enterprise, participate, and experiment. Tanwar & Kumar (2019) found that social media plays a significant role in becoming an employer of choice (EOC). Two of the main factors

that helped become an EOC were a good HR representative and a good strategy, including a social media presence (Tanwar & Kumar, 2019).

There are many types of social media and it might not be relevant for the company to be on all of them. Knowing which audience you are targeting and what message you want to distribute is key to proper resource management (Kotler et al., 2016). This paper will not go into detail on what the different social media are used for, but some media that are most frequently used in Norway, according to IPSOS (2021) and Medietilsynet (2020) are Facebook, Snapchat, Messenger (Facebook chat), Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok.

2.5   The literature in newer times

Both Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and Chhabra & Sharma (2014) have got some support in newer times. Several articles have also built upon the findings of Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and extended the theory of the two articles. Xie et al. (2015) stated that individuals often find organizations interesting if they have congruence between the organization's identity and their own. Since individuals' identities and organizations' congruent identities positively affect employee attraction (Backhaus & Tiko, 2004; Xie et al., 2015), developing an individual's identity has importance for employee attractiveness. Reegård et al., (2019) further stated that social and geographical aspects often impact identity creation among Norwegian youth. The social aspect, such as friends and family, has significant importance, while the geographical aspect, such as location and geographically substantial differences such as work opportunities, develops a specific identity.

As mentioned in Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), research still believes that organizational culture can help attract and retain competent employees (Lin et al., 2018; Bendaravičienė & Krikštolaitis, 2016). Schein (2010) specified that organizational culture could affect an employee's post-entry performance. This may indicate that organizational culture is essential not just for the individuals' well-being in the firm but also for the long-term recruitment strategies for organizations. Lin et al. (2018) further explain how employer branding can help people understand an organization's organizational culture through employer branding. Employer branding may give insight into values and beliefs that can help with interviews and what one might expect and what is expected (Lievens et al., 2007; Wilden et al., 2010). As

employer branding can improve the organizational culture, it has the opportunity to increase employee retention. Retention of employees helps further the organizational culture, which in the end can save companies much on talent attraction (Alnıaçık & Alnıaçık, 2012; Alnıaçık et al., 2014; Monteiro et al., 2020). Alnıaçık & et al.(2014) suggests that the employer branding strategy should change somewhat based on different cultures and across countries. Although this is specified across countries, research indicates that it impacts all geographical scales.

People often prefer organizations that focus not only on their product brand but also on their employer brand. Investment in both is crucial if you want to attract the most relevant employees (Bellou et al., 2015). Bellou et al. (2015) found through their research that employees often look for employer brands that have developed benefits such as recognition and relationships. This includes organizations that are more culture-driven and have more self-development possibilities. There is also a focus on value propositions and attitudinal processes within the organization (Bellou et al., 2015). This is further supported by Backhaus & Tikoo in their article from 2004.

Lievens & Slaughter (2016) did a comprehensive literature review about the contents of employer image and the applications of this subject. The paper created a table of similar constructs which may and may not support the employer image of an organization. The table states that employer familiarity will help strengthen brand awareness and is mainly implied to external audiences. Employer reputation and employer image are targeted towards external audiences and are affiliated with increasing and bettering the employer brand. Lastly, the organizational identity is mentioned and is primarily focused on an internal audience which helps strengthen the internal brand (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

Uggerslev et al. (2012) have found that the employer image is more important than the organizational attributes themselves. The employer image has a higher impact on people's choices in attracting employers than the actual organizational attributes. This supports Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) because employer brand associations, which are a form of organizational attributes (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014), lead to employer image and employer attractiveness. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) further states that managers can push their desired organizational image on the employees, changing how the insiders view the firm (Scott & Lane, 2000). As research states, internal marketing is vital for some attraction as well as employee commitment and employee motivation. However, research done by Lievens &

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Slaughter (2016) proposes that it can further develop the employer image even more. By having solid internal marketing, you increase the chances of positive Word of mouth (WOM) marketing, which is found to be one of the most effective types of branding and marketing strategies (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Kotler et al., 2016). Employer image emphasizes attraction toward potential employees in older literature (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), which is still supported in newer literature (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Slaughter et al., 2014).

Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) have discussed the importance of benefits for employer attractiveness in the form of employer brand associations. As mentioned, there are both physical benefits and symbolic benefits. Lievens & Highhouse (2003) emphasizes that symbolic benefits can help support attractiveness in a way that physical benefits cannot. Their article found that symbolic benefits have a higher incremental value which helps increase the employer attractiveness. Lastly, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) argues that as brand awareness increases, so too does the positive identification development of consumers towards the brand. This is supported by Keller (2008), who states that the brand image strengthens market brand equity.

3. Research design and methodology

In the following text, we will explain our choice of methodological approaches in this master's thesis. This will include our research design, approach, and epistemology. This chapter will also highlight the decisions made when collecting the necessary data and the study's limitations.

3.1 Research design

The design of this study is derived from the research problem and supportive questions presented. Some ideas on employer branding currently exist, however, there is a lack of theory regarding employer branding towards the youth. Therefore it is deemed appropriate to use an open and explorative research design as there is not much known about the phenomenon and the topic is highly complex and can have different outcomes (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). Due to the lack of existing research on this topic, an exploratory research design was the optimal research design for this thesis.

Epistemology

The research conducted in this thesis is social constructionist epistemology. Gergen (2015) states that the ideas of social constructionists do not belong to any one individual and thus cannot be defined. However, one can try to explain it. Gergen (2015) explained social construction as the social construct of reality between those who experience it. Meaning that there is no definitive fact or a "correct" answer, and it is not necessary to share the views of others. Gergen (2015) further explains it as each reality is valid for the person because they experience it. When research is conducted within a social constructionist epistemology, it is more likely to rely on the word and lived experiences through conversations, interviews, etc. As this thesis bases itself upon the experience of the informants and respondents of the interviews, social constructionism fits the thesis well.

Research approach

There are three different approaches to research, inductive, deductive, and abductive reasoning. This thesis has used the third approach, abductive reasoning. Abductive reasoning is a mixture of deductive- and inductive approaches, as the research process starts with incomplete observations and is devoted to their explanation (Saunders et al., 2012).

This thesis has used a systematic combination of approaches, also known as abductive reasoning. The main characteristic of this approach is a continuous movement between an empirical world and a model world (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This systematic combination has combined the framework, the theory, the case, and the empirical world. The research issues and the analytical framework are successively reoriented and confronted with the empirical world during this process. Dubois & Gadde (2002) further describes it as a nonlinear, path-dependent process of combining efforts with the ultimate objective of matching theory and reality.

Qualitative method

Literature and theory often distinguish between two types of research methods, qualitative and quantitative methods. A quantitative method is usually done on a large scale and expressed in numbers and quantity units and then analyzed using a statistical method to generalize the results. This is often very expensive as it requires an incentive to get a significant enough sample size to reduce the risks of having a biased result (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). For the research design of this thesis, a qualitative method has been used. Gripsrud et al., (2010) states that a qualitative method is used to understand the context of the phenomenon being studied instead of generalizing (as it is done in a quantitative study).

Lacey & Luff (2001) state that qualitative methods are an excellent way to answer what, why, or how questions. This aligns with our research question, "How may employer branding be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry." This could have been done through a quantitative method. Still, by conducting a qualitative method, one would get more informative answers since they can supplement their answers in a qualitative method compared to a quantitative method. The ability to clarify different aspects of the research is another benefit of the qualitative method. According to Ryen (2002), a qualitative method allows the researcher to go more in-depth by focusing on a particular topic. On the other hand, a quantitative method aims for a more general view and an overall perspective (Ryen, 2002).

This thesis collects primary data through semi-structured interviews, allowing the interviewer to go in-depth in each interview and explore areas of interest. The goal of the interviews is to gain information that would be useful for the thesis to answer the research question.

The methods typically used when conducting exploratory research are: informal discussions (with consumers, employees, and managers), interviews, focus groups, and/or case studies.

- *Interviews* are guided, purposeful conversations between two or more people (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). An interview can be either structured or unstructured. There is also a common ground called semi-structured interviews. Interviews can be done with individual respondents or groups (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020).
- *Informal discussions* can be described in analogous terms as an informal conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee, and exploratory research often relies on qualitative approaches like informal discussions for the data gathering. (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020).
- *Focus groups* are a group of people with a moderator leading the discussion on a specific topic or concept. The members of the focus groups are generally chosen on the basis of how knowledgeable they are on the topic or concept that is being discussed, and which information is sought after (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020).
- A *case study* is used when studying a specific institution of a specific problem(s) (Starman, 2013). One can use many techniques when using a case study. Still, the main ones are often qualitative and consist of interviews, observations, and analysis of primary and secondary data (McCombes, 2022).

3.2   Data sample

Quantitative studies usually utilize random samples. However, qualitative studies utilize samples with more purpose (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). A qualitative sample needs clarification on several factors. Such as who will be included and excluded and what context the study will be conducted in (Leech, 2002). Generally, the sample is chosen for a purpose by researchers to obtain a comprehensive view of the situation. This helps to answer the purpose of the research. As we are studying in Kristiansand, Norway, we wanted to use a local firm, as it would be easier for us to visit and dialog with them. The company chosen was Glencore Nikkelverk, a local nickel refinery who has challenges with the recruitment of Norwegian youth. Especially when looking at the lack of workforce in the present as well as projected for the future (Cappelen et al., 2020, p. 42), they were an excellent company to use as an example for this research as the research problem is highly relevant for their current situation.

Selection of informants and respondents

Identifying which informants and respondents possess relevant knowledge of the phenomenon being studied is essential for our research (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). As this study is a study with a specific company used as an example, the most significant relevance comes from the cooperating company of the thesis. At the same time, people who work closely with youth are found relevant to the thesis sample. Within Glencore Nikkelverk, people relevant to recruiting, training, and assisting new employees are seen as relevant candidates, with some regular employees supporting the vision. Lastly, people working systematically to better the situation of youth recruitment are both governmental and privately driven. The overall interview candidates seek to show a complete picture of the recruitment region of Kristiansand. Their information will help support the thesis with the data needed.

Small n-groups

The research was conducted through small n-groups. Small n-groups refer to a small number of respondents from several different groups. As the research problem in this thesis is relatively comprehensive, it is believed that several groups of individuals with different backgrounds can help show a broader picture than if the thesis focused on only one group. This is also known as data triangulation, where one uses a variety of data sources in a study (Patton, 2002, p. 247). Small n-groups will therefore help the researchers gain a comprehensive insight into the research problem of the thesis and help shed light on the three following supportive questions.

The data were retrieved from three sample groups: (1) The company, (2) Advisors of vocational schools, (3) and employees of the county municipality. All the selected groups are relevant in recruiting youth or working within youth career guidance. The groups are called groups A-C, and the respondents and informants are numbered 1-5, which helps protect their anonymity. The respondents and informants are kept anonymous in line with the thesis data protection agreement.

Group A consists of respondents from Glencore Nikkelverk. Glencore Nikkelverk is a Norwegian branch of the French Glencore corporation and specializes in the production of nickel, cobalt, and copper.

Group B consists of informants from different high schools within Agder. The informants are advisors in the schools, and the schools are vocationally specializing in teaching within technology, industry, and production.

Group C consists of informants from the Agder county municipality. The employees have direct knowledge of governmental work towards recruiting youth to vocational schools.

Table 3.1 Overview of N-groups

GROUP	RESPONDENTS / INFORMANTS	COMPANY
A	**3**	**Glencore Nikkelverk**
B	**5**	**High School advisors**
C	**1**	**Agder county municipality**

3.3   Data collection

Semi-structured Interviews

The researchers believe that a semi-structured interview is best suited. It will allow the interviewees to speak more freely and express their opinions about the given topic. A semi-structured interview can be described as an informal interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). For a semi-structured interview, the interviewers prepare a guide, usually in the form of a questionnaire in advance. This serves as a guideline during the interview. However, the interviewer can move beyond the guide if deemed appropriate for the interview flow. Usually, a specific structure is followed at the start, leading to a more particular question as the interview follows and depending on the respondents' answers (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). Semi-structured interviews are a mixture of structured and unstructured interviews and can thus be seen as a middle way and can provide detail, depth and insider perspective, while hypothesis testing (Leech, 2002). It helps gather more detailed information from the interviewees and better understand the subject. In such an interview, the respondent can express their own opinions, thoughts, and experiences, which will help gain a reliable comparison between the collected data at a later stage.

This interview technique was deemed most relevant for the thesis as it helps create a collaboration between researcher and respondents. It helps create a dialog between the two

and gives the interviewee a chance to develop new relevant aspects that can help generate more information.

Interviews (primary data)

All the respondents and informants were contacted by email, except for one participant who was suggested to us at a company's headquarters. The HR manager reached out to this person on our behalf. Ryen (2002) highlights the importance of sending an email to the interview subjects to explain the reason for inquiry and explain the study's process and features. Bryman (2008) also recommends this.

The participants were not sent the interview guide before the interviews to prevent the preparation of the questions, which would help the reliability and validity of the data presented to us. We made a separate interview guide for all of the different groups of respondents and informants. They contained some similar questions but also had some different questions to target the respondents and informants better. Although the interviews were semi-structured, the questions worked more as a roadmap for the interview. The conversations that took place explored the questions beyond what was originally planned. It was a natural flow in the interview process rather than following the questions to the letter due to it being an explorative approach.

The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were recorded as all the participants allowed this.. The plan for the interviews conducted in this thesis was reported to NSD (Norwegian Center for Research Data) with an application for us to legally be able to conduct and use the data from the interviews. The application was accepted as we fulfilled all of their criteria to conduct the interview ethically and with a purpose.

During the interview, notes were taken in addition to the voice recording. After the interview, the respondents and informants were offered to read the interview notes to ensure that they were not misquoted. After the interviews, all the respondents and informants answered that they were happy with how the interviews were conducted and found the research very interesting.

3.4 Data quality and ethics

We took different measurements to ensure that the data we gathered was reliable and valid through the research design and research approach presented in this chapter. The interviews conducted were planned out to get useful data from relevant informants and respondents and all of the data gathered was done so in good faith. These are some of the strengths of our data collection, but it is not flawless. The sample size we had could have been larger, and we could have included more groups to get more perspectives and a broader overview. Due to time and budget constraints, we created a plan to conduct the interviews presented in this thesis with our supervisors as this was most fitting.

From an ethical perspective, we had to carefully plan out the interviews and who to interview in advance as a part of the NSD application. We had to clarify why the interview would provide data for our thesis and whether it was ethical to conduct the interviews. All of the information and data gathered were in good faith from reliable sources to provide correct information to help our research. We have ensured that the data has been safeguarded in compliance with the NSD's requirements.

4.   Results and discussion

This section will present the findings from the interviews and discuss them in light of the supportive questions presented in chapter 1.

4.1   What challenges does the Norwegian industry have in recruiting youth?

The industrial sector in Norway is struggling with attracting and recruiting newly educated youth to their trainee programmes, the first supportive question set out to map why. From the interviews, we can group the answers into seven categories: The stigma, looking at parental influence and the geographical and cultural differences. The difficulty of recruitment, what organizational attributes to prioritize, focusing on attracting applicants to relevant studies in high school, providing clearer job descriptions and highlighting the possibilities in vocational studies

The stigma

Through the interviews conducted with advisors of vocational high schools in Agder, interviews with Agder county municipality, as well as leaders in Glencore Nikkelverk, many challenges for recruiting Norwegian youth were mentioned. One of the main findings was the existing stigma of vocational studies. The stigma is well known amongst most people who seek an education and phrases like "you are too smart for vocational studies" and "there is no future within the vocational path" were common during many people's upbringing. This, in turn, created a stigma towards vocational studies that only the "dumb pupils" choose such an education. Additionally, the stigma of vocational studies varies based on geographical locations.

The stigma is a problem because the pupils do not choose their specialization until the second year of high school, meaning that they do not get this information until the application deadline is closed. This is vital information to know before a student even chooses to go to vocational studies and was one of the main things informants B2 and B5 would like to communicate when working with middle school advisors, based on the interviews conducted in this thesis.

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Parental influence

The findings showed that parental influence was a challenge when recruiting Norwegian youth. The topic of parental influence was somewhat contradictory as some informants said that parental influence was not a problem at all and that the parents were more or less trusting and supportive of their children no matter what direction they chose. Other informants said that they often had students complaining about unsupportive parents that had a decisive influence and opinion on the education of the students.

It is hard to point out exactly why this difference in views is, but one of the things that stood out was the urban cities seemed to have more of a problem with parental influence than rural cities. Respondent B3 argued that the bigger cities have more "academics." Thus, the likelihood a parent is an "academic" and is more susceptible to the stigma surrounding vocational studies. Including the parents in the different informational events, such as work fairs. Despite being made for the students, it would help inform and enlighten the parents of the possibilities in vocational studies and clear up misconceptions or other questions they might have. The stigma and misconceptions surrounding vocational studies often stem from a place of misinformation or lack of information. The inclusion of parents could help both reduce the stigma and hopefully influence the parents' perception of vocational studies.

Geographical and cultural differences

The findings show a significant difference between geographical locations. All of the informants were based in Agder in Norway, with the distance varying by no more than two hours between them. However, the research found apparent differences in the mindset of different geographical locations. One thing that stood out is the difference in the stigma surrounding vocational studies. B1 and B5 informed that stigma is a big problem, while B2, B3, and B4 informed that the stigma exists but is not significant. One thing worth mentioning among the informants is that there seems to be more stigma in the urban cities than in the rural cities. Informants B2 and B3 explained this as a product of more cornerstone firms and a culture shift. Additionally, more parents or other close relatives work in the Norwegian industry or come from vocational backgrounds, thus making it more familiar and attractive among the local youth.

Another aspect worth mentioning is the cultural and social differences between the different places. The thoughts and ideas of youth in urban cities may differ from those living in rural
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cities. Underwood et al. (2001) mentioned that self-image is important when choosing a "membership" with a firm. If a firm's image matches a person's self-image, they are more likely to be attracted to the specific firm. Self-image is known to be affected by social and cultural differences. Thereby, a challenge for the companies exists to match the companies image with the self-image of potential employees.

Farrugia (2014) highlights the influence of experiences from social relationships and resources from the local community and how it affects young people's identity. This can also be one of the reasons for the stigma, as their environment differs and thus, the degree of stigma varies. Informant B3 said that there is a lack of possibilities for pupils to move away from their hometown. Insecurities and the cost of living away from home makes it hard for pupils to choose firms located further away. This gives firms that provide benefits such as financial aid an advantage in recruiting as they have the possibilities to attract pupils from several locations.

Informants B2 and B3 stated that pupils' choices for studies are strongly influenced by what local businesses there are in their area. For example, if there are a lot of production companies around, pupils are more likely to choose the studies that relate to these. The local jobs often relate to what their parents are working with, which further influences the youth towards specific vocational studies.

The difficulty of recruitment
The recruitment issue is something that was discussed during the interviews. A consensus among the advisors was the issue of having students understand the future possibilities within vocational studies. Helping them understand that vocational studies have many opportunities for further studies and higher education is key in recruiting more towards vocational studies.

Prioritizing organizational attributes
Per Chhabra & Sharma (2014), organizational attributes are important for employer attraction. When focusing on the wrong organizational attributes, the firm might not attract the desired applicants and will present a different employer image than intended (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Informants B2 and B3 specify that salary and compensation are essential attributes for the youth. Informants B1, B3, and B4 stated that the students' working environment is important. The organizational culture mentioned in

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Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) also affects the need to have a good working environment; it can lead to increased employee motivation.

One challenge the industry has when recruiting Norwegian youth is the differences in priorities between the advisors (informants) information and the answers given by Glencore Nikkelverk (respondents). Through the interviews, an essential attribute for vocational studies pupils is compensation and organizational culture, neither of which was mentioned by the respondents as particularly important. Respondents A1 and A2, on the other hand, put more emphasis on the image through employee retention and their work for the environment (becoming greener), which can be considered as company prestige.

Employer brand image and familiarity are essential when it comes to recruitment of Norwegian youth. One crucial factor that most of the informants pointed out is that the companies often forget when marketing themselves that these pupils are only 14-18 years old and are still finding themselves and their place in life. Being familiar with a company and knowing how they operate can help reduce uncertainty and other anxieties when getting their first workplace experience. Despite the company's experience in taking care of Norwegian youth, the advisors feel that they often fail to communicate this to the youth.

Attracting applicants to relevant studies in high school
As mentioned, a challenge that advisors informants, Glencore Nikkelverk respondents, and Agder county informants all have a common interest in is the challenge of attracting applicants to vocational studies in high schools. Although there has been an increase in applicants for vocational studies over the last few years, the different high schools in Agder seem to struggle to attract relevant pupils towards some needed educational studies. Respondent B4 stated that pupils who have made up their mind of what specializations they want to continue their education in, often have made that decision before starting high school. Therefore, it is hard for the advisors to influence and motivate them to reconsider their educational path.

Clearer job descriptions
A crucial part of creating employer attractiveness is the correct communication toward the individuals you wish to attract (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Due to this, using the proper communication and promotion channels can be a challenge for many firms to attract youth.
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The interviews of advisors (group B) found a consensus that it is often hard to understand what the employers are seeking when trying to attract youth. As such, many pupils don't understand what the jobs are about and what is required.

The respondents of group A specified that many Norwegian youths are unfamiliar with their company and its history. The name or brand of a company can be familiar, but who they are and what they do is often unknown. The respondents of group A use themselves as an example of this. Glencore Nikkelverk is familiar with many of the people of Kristiansand and the Agder area. It's a very historic company filled with traditions from generations. Many people still know them as their former names, such as Falconbridge or Xstrata Nikkelverk. Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) state that symbolic associations, meaning the idea or feeling that a brand represents, could provide significant meaning for a person.

"Everyone" in Kristiansand has some knowledge of who Glencore Nikkelverk is, but very few know what they do. Respondents A1 and A2 acknowledge this and want to use the company's reputation and history as a part of the companys' recruitment plan. Reegård et al. (2019) state that many of the challenges Norwegian youth face when entering the labor market are structural, social, and cultural aspects depending on where they come from, meaning that geographical differences would provide different environments and problems for the Norwegian youth.

Possibilities in vocational studies
In the final year of middle school pupils are often offered to visit different high schools and experience some programs offered there. Informant B4 discusses that middle school pupils who visit the high school are often not shown the possibilities offered, like the "Chemistry process." The specializations marketed are often limited to the most popular ones like mechanics, carpenters, plumbers etc.

According to groups B and C in the interviews, a big misconception about vocational studies is that many people think that if you choose vocational studies, you can either become a mechanic, a carpenter, a painter, or an electrician. The reality is that there are more than 30 different specializations of vocational studies and a lot of these are unknown to a lot of people, as highlighted by informants B1, B2, B5, and C1. NHO (n.d.) states that six out of ten parents do not know that vocational studies have more than 150+ potential professions.

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This creates a challenge as pupils do not choose their specialization until the second year of high school. This means that they do not get the necessary information until the application deadline is closed. The information is important for the pupils to know before they choose vocational studies and was one of the main things informants B2 and B5 would like to communicate when working with middle school advisors.

4.2   What can be done to improve the recruitment according to the relevant parties?

The second supportive question follows up on the first. As the first one seeks to highlight the challenges within the industry, the second question sheds some light on what can be done to lessen or negate these challenges. In light of employer branding, the interview groups influence today's youth before they choose vocational studies, during vocational studies, and after.

Start guidance earlier

One of the main findings from the interviews is that Group B recommends starting the information earlier than high school and wants to have a working relationship with the middle school advisors. This suggestion is supported by the findings from Buland et al. (2010). Informant B3 stated that many middle school advisors are part-time advisors and teachers in one or multiple subjects and are thus limited in their role as advisors. Buland et al. (2010) state that 59 percent of the middle school advisors had relevant education for their role as an advisor, while 82 percent of the advisors in high school in Norway had a relevant education for their role as an advisor. Informants B2 and C1 stated that it is often up to the individual schools in question whether they want to establish a working relationship with another school or company. According to Buland et al. (2010), 40 percent of the advisors in middle school have a working relationship with companies, while only 25 percent of the advisors in high school have a similar working relationship with companies.

Most Norwegian youths have to decide what education they wish to pursue in middle school. The choice falls typically on either general studies or vocational studies. This is one of the main reasons the high school advisors want to work with the middle school advisors. Due to this, the Norwegian school system decided to explore a project in which cross-studies between general studies and vocational studies were possible. This was aimed to counter the

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low completion rates that were mentioned by the informants of group B. Research from Høst & Skålholst (2020) shows early signs of a successful process from first-year students from general studies transferring over to vocational studies for the second year.

Despite the early signs of positive research, informant B4 stated their school decided to shut down the project due to a lack of applicants. Informant B4 believe that one of the issues they struggled with is spreading relevant information about future studies to these students, as the belief is often that the pupils may not engage in higher education with vocational studies as a background.

Increase gender balance within the studies

Informant B1 specified that gaining a larger gender balance within the schools might positively impact the social environment of high school, which in turn could help attract more pupils towards vocational studies. Additionally, informant B3 mentioned a trend in which girls are more likely to choose and do well in more academically heavy courses such as chemistry. Due to this, focusing more on gender balance within vocational studies could potentially increase the specter of which the recruiting is done. The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) in Agder has in recent years held different events and other initiatives to market vocational studies in collaboration with the different high schools in Agder that offer vocational studies.

Focus on future opportunities

Vocational studies can often be looked at as manual labor, and this is correct in some cases, but as A1 mentioned, the industry sector is also progressing similarly to the rest of the industries, and the use of automated machines rather than manual labor is increasing. As stated by informant C1, the use of robots in the industry seems to be important for the future, but they are not there to replace people. Companies still need people to be able to operate these machines and robots. Respondent A2 agreed with the statement and added that there is a lot of underappreciated value in the youth's general understanding of modern technology. Complementing this competence with a relevant education makes them very attractive for a company in the Norwegian industry and the job market in general.

Two of the most important organizational attributes mentioned by Chhabra & Sharma (2014) were career prospects & growth, and training & development in the context of employer

attractiveness. Using proper communication channels, one could communicate the different possibilities and opportunities in vocational studies. B1 suggested the usage of media such as educational newspapers and internet promotional videos, as well as company visits and presentations. Another way to communicate both towards the individual but also a possibility to reach their parents is through an education fair, which has the same qualities as a job fair, but specifically towards different educational studies and opportunities.

Media and press influence the youth

Informants B1 and B5 stated that media and press has a big influence on the Norwegian youth. Informant B2 mentioned a surge of applicants towards the study of ambulances after the tv show "Ambulansen" started airing. This indicates that tv shows affect youths' choices of studies, and relating to such shows could be beneficial for firms. They can read and hear about attractive and potential job opportunities and thus be attracted to these through the media. Using these media to become more relevant to the youth could be a key aspect of recruitment. Vetráková et al. (2018) state that people use social media to connect with other people. Medietilsynet (2020) also published that as many as 95% of people between 9-18 years old use social media, with the top 5 used being Youtube, Snapchat, Tiktok, Instagram, and Facebook. This makes it a good communication channel to reach the Norwegian youth with some relevant information.

Reduce the stigma through media attention

As mentioned, one of the biggest challenges of recruiting Norwegian youth towards the industry is the stigma of vocational studies. Naturally, a way to improve recruiting is thereby to reduce the stigma. There seemed to be a common view that the problematic students who were not as academically strong were the ones that chose vocational studies. This stigma has given vocational studies a bad reputation, and academically strong students are often told they are "too smart for vocational studies." However, despite the stigma existing, the situation seems to get better every year, and the stigma is now more commonly known to be a myth rather than a factual statement.

Discussing the training and development possibilities (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014) within the organization could be a good way to reduce the stigma. Showing this through the media and press will have extended effects on the public perception of vocational studies. The difference is that you could easily ascertain a higher education through vocational studies on the same
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line as general studies. This part is not necessarily supported by employer branding but has the opportunity to make the effort of employer branding a little better and easier.

4.3   How can businesses like Glencore Nikkelverk market themselves to attract youth?

The third supportive question focuses more specifically on Glencore and businesses in the Norwegian industry. How can companies attract the Norwegian youth as potential employees and fill the gap of the lack of industrial workers that exists in the industry today?

Communication

Respondents A1 and A2 acknowledge that they have many problems when trying to recruit Norwegian youth. Especially on what channels to use when trying to reach them. Respondent A1 said they have little-to-no social media presence, which is a significant flaw in an employer branding strategy, especially towards the youth (IPSOS, 2021; Medietilsynet, 2020). Tanwar & Kumar (2019) found that social media plays a significant role in becoming an employer of choice. Two of the main factors that helped a company become an employer of choice were a good HR representative and a good strategy, including a social media presence (Tanwar & Kumar, 2019). Glencore Nikkelverk relies heavily on word of mouth and company visits, but they are not utilizing these communication channels enough for them to be an efficient recruitment tool. All informants of group B pointed out that the most effective way to reach the Norwegian youth is to talk to them directly, on school visits or if they invite the students to their headquarters and show them around.

In one of the interviews, Respondent B5 said that everyone can picture what a mechanic or a carpenter does, but it is harder to picture what people in the process industry do. Making the Norwegian youth more familiar with what, for example, the process industry is and how it is working with it can be vital to improving recruitment. This is where employer branding may be an efficient way to recruit Norwegian youth.

Informant B2 stated that advisors have limited impact and influence on the pupils because of all the other channels of information they are exposed to. This is a great example why developing an employer branding strategy where the Norwegian youth can be found is essential. In marketing terms, all of the other channels of information would be described as

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noise (Kotler et al., 2016). Reducing this noise will make it easier to reach out with their message. With that being said, having a presence on places like social media, promotional material in newspapers, and having an up-to-date website is still very important. Despite all the noise on social media, Norwegian youth will still be able to find information and promotional material, which is why it is still essential to have a presence.

Focus on the organizational environment and culture

Organizational environment and organizational culture are two of the organizational attributes mentioned within Chhabra & Sharmas' (2014) framework. The informants of group B suggest focusing on the parts that create employer brand loyalty, such as organizational culture and organizational image (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Allen et al. (2003) suggest that employees develop beliefs about how an organization values their contributions and if a company cares about the employees well-being. Greater perceived organizational support from a company is expected to result in a greater affective attachment and feelings of obligation to the organization, meaning that talented employees are less likely to leave if treated fairly.

Show interest in both middle school students and high school students

Two of the informants in the interviews stated that contacting the Norwegian youth and seeking to influence them early could be a key component in recruiting them at a later stage. Informant B2 stated that some of the youth go straight from middle school to working, meaning they stop their education and leave high school. Informant B2 further said that a company should start early to reach middle school pupils before they make up their mind about what specialization in vocational studies. This way, the pupils will have a better overview of the different possibilities. Informant B3 disagrees with this statement. Informant B3 stated that companies should put their focus on first-year high school pupils and let the advisors focus on the middle school students.

Show the different possibilities in a company

Employer image is an essential part of an effective employer branding strategy (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Informant B1 specified that companies should not present themselves as something they are not, as it can easily be seen through. He further stated that the pupils are not looking for companies with all the "correct" answers and look perfect from the outside looking in, but instead want to see the "real" company. The pupils

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want real and truthful answers to get to know the company. Companies could also benefit from shifting the focus on themselves over to the pupils. This can be done by showing them the possibilities that the companies can provide for the pupils and what benefits they would get by working for that company.

This can be done by highlighting the different organizational attributes through employer brand associations for an employer branding strategy. For example, they could say that they focus on empowering the employees by providing them with additional training and education for those who want a competitive salary. Or perhaps they arrange different social gatherings frequently, resulting in a great working place atmosphere.

Specify what studies the companies after
Informant B3 stated that the most popular companies during company fairs and such were the ones that highlighted their need for the pupils and what the pupils can offer the company. Many companies are good at informing what they have been doing historically and what they are doing at the moment. Still, they often forget to talk about the future, which is the most relevant for the Norwegian youth. Informant B5 told an example about a company that had visited their school and was a perfect example of what to do.

The company openly said that they want every one of the pupils to apply for a job at the company. The reality is that the company also needs most of the pupils' knowledge and skill sets. After the visit, all the pupils talked about it. The use of word of mouth can be a valuable part of an employer branding strategy. The positive presentation of the employer and the employer image could inspire the pupils to research further about the company and the available jobs at that firm. Informant A1 stated that their company has a variety of needs in the process industry, such as manual labor, administration, and other company areas. However, this is something they fail to communicate, and as a result, they lack applicants for the jobs.

There has to be a balance, and telling all the pupils at every school that everyone is needed and that they should apply for a job at a particular company is not a realistic employer branding strategy. Leading the pupils to believe something that is not true will negatively impact the employer image, which would negatively impact an employer branding strategy. The essence of the example told by informant B5 was that they were open about the need for

what the pupils could offer and highlighted what they wanted and a variety of specializations, not just the popular ones. Specifying and highlighting what specializations the company needs motivates that group of people to apply and shows them the need for them. Often, the pupils have no idea whether they are what a company needs or not, and due to the fear of rejection, they would rather not apply to prevent getting rejected.

Moving support for youth who moves away from home to work
The interviews also stated that the geographical location of the workplace mattered. Informant B3 stated that numerous pupils had refused opportunities in different companies simply due to the location. The majority of the time, the workplace was too far away from where they live and have their social life, and the pupils were not willing to leave. One of the suggested solutions to this, as stated by informant B3, was for the companies to give the students some incentives, for example, through a scholarship or financial aid to attract the pupils to move to work for their company. This could help out the companies that are located in what are considered less attractive locations by the pupils, often rural areas, become more attractive.

The importance of company presentations
According to Chhabra & Sharma (2014), company presentations and visits were the second-best communication/promotional channel preferred among their respondents. The findings in this thesis show that company visits and presentations were the best way to reach the pupils of both vocational schools and middle schools. Through this communication, one could actively achieve the goals set and spread the relevant information to attract the youth. It's an excellent way for the pupils to have their questions answered directly from the source and present them. This also helps the pupils visualize what working at the company looks like rather than just reading about it. According to informants B2, B3, and B5, this is an underrated communication tool. This is an excellent opportunity for the lesser-known specializations, like the process industry, to be presented and make more people familiar. A presentation and visualization will be more impactful than reading an information pamphlet.

These company visits and company presentations can benefit the pupils, parents, and advisors. As previously highlighted in the thesis, the lack of information is a big part of the problem and the root of many problems within vocational studies. Having parents and advisors present at the presentations and visits lets them ask questions they might have that

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are different from the pupils and can help them (the parents and advisors) become more familiar with concepts,specializations and professions that previously were foreign to them. As advisors, but most of all parents, are influential people for the Norwegian youth, involving them and educating them could help reduce the stigma, highlight different opportunities within vocational studies, and help promote vocational studies as an option.

Additionally, by inviting parents to the company, one could reduce the stigma and simultaneously seek to shift the parents' influence on their kids towards a more positive view of the education they are seeking. Parents' influence is an integral part of both middle school students and high school students' decision-making, as exclaimed by the informants of group B. Thus, gaining the parents' trust and interest can go a long way in recruiting youth. With that being said, the interviews show that parents' influence is stagnating and decreasing compared to before.

A consensus among all the interviewed groups was to highlight the necessity of getting more applicants to vocational studies. This is very relevant and important, seeing as there is a shortage of workers and the demand is increasing throughout Norway. Cappelen et al. (2020, p. 42) state that there will be a surplus of 50 000 jobs in the Norwegian industry by 2040.

When asked about the most important factors for a company to highlight when marketing themselves, the groups had different opinions. Informants B1, B2, and B4 pointed out that the most important thing for the Norwegian youth is getting a good experience as this is their first "real" work experience for many. Working for a company that is willing to let them grow and teaching them along the way was crucial. Interestingly, respondent A1 said that one of the most important for businesses in the Norwegian industry to highlight when marketing themselves to the Norwegian youth, was to highlight that they are a part of "the green transition" and how they work to be a sustainable and ethical company.

This finding is fascinating, as it contradicts what Informants B2, B4, and B5 said. They said that in their experience, sustainability and the green transition were not essential nor a factor the Norwegian youth usually consider when exploring their possibilities of work and education. This apparent mismatch in message communication is an excellent example of a change Glencore Nikkelverk could make to improve their employer branding strategy.

4.4 Summary of the findings

Norwegian industry has several challenges in recruiting the youth. The main findings from our research suggest that the biggest challenge is what the companies communicate and how it is communicated. The interviews present different views on this topic, highlighting a discrepancy between the different groups interviewed. Group A wanted to highlight the values of a company, especially as a frontrunner in the green transition and as a sustainable and responsible company. This is, of course, important and beneficial as a part of their employer brand image. However, group B wanted the companies to highlight different organizational attributes and possibilities for the pupils.

As mentioned, employer branding is a broad term. Using the correct communication channels and highlighting the most relevant organizational attributes, as is done through an employer branding strategy, the information would most optimally reach the Norwegian youth and other influences like advisors and parents. Thus helping reduce the stigma caused by cultural differences as well as highlight all of the different possibilities in vocational studies. A company could also specify what studies they are looking to recruit if necessary, seeing as having a well-defined job description is important for the Norwegian youth. Reaching out to the youth early, such as in middle school, with relevant information about possibilities in studies, could be the key for a long term strategy, while high schools would be for present pupils.

An employer branding strategy can be effective when used correctly. In order to improve the recruitment according to relevant parties, the employer branding strategy has to use relevant data in order to get the most optimal results. Highlighting and showing them what the future opportunities can look like is important, as seen in the surge of applicants due to the influence of the TV show "ambulances". This, combined with already mentioned optimal communication channels and organizational attributes is another way for employer branding strategy to influence the Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry.

Firms like Glencore Nikkelverk can differentiate themselves from other companies with the use of employer branding strategy. As the findings show, the companies that actively participate in company presentations and interact with the pupils seem to be the most successful ones. Company presentations can be time consuming and expensive, but as the

findings have shown it is the most effective way to market themselves. The pupils have the opportunity to ask questions they may have and get a personal relation to the company, which as mentioned earlier is a great strength in employer branding.

By also putting their focus on the relevant organizational attributes, the firms may relate the correct information needed to reach the youth. The employer branding strategy shows that to optimize recruitment there must be a correlation between the organizational attributes, the promotion channels used and the image of the organization. These are some of the areas that an employer branding strategy may help the recruitment of Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry.

5.   Conclusion

The goal of the thesis was to explore whether employer branding could be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry. The findings in this thesis show that the recruitment of Norwegian youth is a complex issue and the use of data triangulation has provided the thesis with many different perspectives and possible solutions. This has been done in order to try to provide an answer to the research question:

"How may employer branding be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry."

An employer branding strategy may be efficient for recruiting Norwegian youth in many different ways. There are different challenges for a company like Glencore Nikkelverk when it comes to recruiting the Norwegian youth from vocational studies, both from a short-term perspective and a long-term perspective. However, it requires cooperation between different parties to achieve the most significant effect. Glencore Nikkelverk and other companies can use an employer branding strategy to recruit. However, they should be mindful of what information they wish to communicate, which image they want to create and which channels they wish to use.

The use of abductive reasoning with the ultimate objective of matching theory and reality should be tested further. The empirical material in this thesis is the knowledge and lived experiences of the sample group and might not reflect the reality of others, as mentioned in the epistemology. As a result, there is a need for more research on this subject in order to get a better reflection of reality. This thesis has focused on the local area of Agder in Norway and might not reflect the reality in other parts of Norway and the world. The theory of using employer branding as a recruitment tool will thus need more research before one can conclude with an answer.

5.1   Critique of the study

One part that was found lacking within both Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and Chhabra & Sharma (2014) is the usage of social media in employer branding. Social media has become increasingly popular both among youth and old alike (IPSOS, 2021; Medietilsynet, 2020). This better illustrates how there are different aspects of developing an employer branding

strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth. It is, however, theoretically very similar in how this can be used in creating an employer branding strategy.

The framework of Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) describes in detail what employer branding does and what it can lead to, however it does not in detail describe how it will lead to it. Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) framework goes more into detail on how to specifically attract a group of students. However, the students in their studies are older and of higher education. Due to this, it is not a good fit for Norwegian youth.

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) has some significant differences from Backhaus & Tikoo (2004). Mainly, Chhabra & Sharma (2014) specifies which organizational attributes are relevant towards branding oneself to a specific group. Additionally, they provide promotion/communication channels that can be used to market their organizational attributes. In comparison, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) uses employer brand associations instead of organizational attributes. It can be understood that this is a broader term than what Chhabra & Sharma (2014) uses.

5.2   Future research

During the research on this thesis, we came across many different areas that could be interesting and informative to explore but lack research. The effects of geographical, social, and cultural differences are one area that would be interesting to see, whether one could create a generic employer branding strategy or if it has to be adapted to the group one is conducting the research on. Other areas could be to look at the influences on the different genders and whether an employer branding strategy is more likely to be influential on either of the genders.

 A third area is to look at how people's priorities change throughout their teenage years. One could look at if the priorities of organizational attributes change over the years and what the causes might be. Additionally, one could conduct a similar thesis, but at a larger scale using bigger sample sizes and perhaps multiple industries. One could therefore test the strategy within a company to see if the attributes and communicational channels have an effect, or by making a quantitative study with respondents that fit within the age and educational group discussed in the study.

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Lastly, the employer market, the people, the organizational attributes, and the channels in which one communicates is constantly changing. This is one of the reasons it is so difficult to come up with an exact answer or a specific strategy. Due to this issue, the research conducted could be tested again after a period of time to see if the situation changes, and how drastically the changes occur. This could give a broader overview of how often an employer branding strategy needs to be changed by firms.

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7.   Appendix

7.1   Request for participation

7.1.1   Request for participation - Group A

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

”How may employer branding be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth in the process industry ”?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er og er å gi et klart innsyn i hva bedrifter innenfor prosessindustrien kan gjøre for å fremstå som attraktive bedrifter for ungdommer som skal søke studievalg mot videregående. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet for prosjekter er å gi et klart innsyn i hva bedrifter innenfor prosessindustrien kan gjøre for å fremstå som attraktive bedrifter for ungdommer som skal søke studievalg mot videregående.

Problemstillingen som vi ønsker å utforske er: «How may employer branding be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth in the process industry?” Videre vil intervjuet brukes til å analysere forskningsspørsmålene:

1. Hvilke utfordringer møter prosessindustrien med tanke på å rekruttere ungdom?
2. Hva mener berørte aktører man kan gjøre for å bedre rekrutteringen?
3. Hvordan kan bedrifter som Glencore markedsføre seg for å tiltrekke seg ungdom?

Oppgaven er en mastertese og et avsluttende prosjekt for våres mastergrad.

Opplysningene lagret skal ikke brukes til andre formål enn selve prosjektet.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Handelshøyskolen ved Universitetet i Agder er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Oppgaven er skrevet i samarbeid med Glencore Nikkelverk. Vi har spesifikke kontaktpersoner som hjelper med rekruttering og trekking av utvalget. Du blir kontaktet ettersom Glencore Nikkelverk anser deg som relevant for prosjektet og at du kan bidra med relevant informasjon

Personopplysninger er gitt av våre kontaktpersoner innenfor selskapet.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet innebærer det at du tar del i et intervju. Intervjuet vil ta rundt 45 minutter. Du vil bli spurt spørsmål om temaene markedsføring, omdømmebygging og fremtiden for prosessindustrien i forbindelse med rekruttering av ungdom. Dine svar blir tatt opp på en diktafon og transkribert i etterkant. Alle opplysninger og opptak vil bli slettet i etterkant av prosjektet.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Studenter i prosjektet samt veileder for prosjektet vil ha tilgang til opplysningene
- Dataene blir lagret på UiAs passordbeskyttede servere. Dersom det er behov for å sende dokumenter vil de krypteres før sending. Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil bli erstattet med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data

Du vil ikke kunne bli gjenkjent i publikasjon ettersom navn ikke vil publiseres. Stillingstittel vil bli nevnt, men den institusjon/selskap du tilhører vil bli anonymisert slik at du heller ikke kan gjenkjennes gjennom dette.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er Prosjektslutt: 01.06.2022. Ved prosjektslutt vil alle opplysninger og opptak bli slettet.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Handelshøgskolen ved Universitetet i Agder har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Handelshøgskolen ved Universitetet i Agder ved Prosjektansvarlig: Torunn Skåltveit Olsen, tlf: 37253162, E-post: torunn.s.olsen@uia.no. Student: Ingve Grannes, tlf: 97696865, E-post: ingveg17@student.uia.no.
- Vårt personvernombud: Johanne Warberg Lavold, E-post: Personvernombud@uia.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med: NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Torunn Skåltveit Olsen   *Ingve Grannes*

(Forsker/veileder)   (Student/prosjektansvarlig)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *[sett inn tittel]*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐ Å delta i *Intervju*

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

7.1.2   Request of participation - Group B

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

"How may employer branding be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth in the process industry"?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er og er å gi et klart innsyn i hva bedrifter innenfor prosessindustrien kan gjøre for å fremstå som attraktive bedrifter for ungdommer som skal søke studievalg mot videregående.

I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet for prosjekter er å gi et klart innsyn i hva bedrifter innenfor prosessindustrien kan gjøre for å fremstå som attraktive bedrifter for ungdommer som skal søke studievalg mot videregående.

Problemstillingen som vi ønsker å utforske er: «How may employer branding be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth in the process industry?» Videre vil intervjuet brukes til å analysere forskningsspørsmålene:

1. Hvilke utfordringer møter prosessindustrien med tanke på å rekruttere ungdom?
2. Hva mener berørte aktører man kan gjøre for å bedre rekrutteringen?
3. Hvordan kan bedrifter som Glencore markedsføre seg for å tiltrekke seg ungdom?

Oppgaven er en mastertese og et avsluttende prosjekt for våres mastergrad.

Opplysningene lagret skal ikke brukes til andre formål enn selve prosjektet.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Handelshøyskolen ved Universitetet i Agder er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Vi ønsker å intervjue rådgivere på diverse skoler i Agder for å få innsikt direkte fra skolene og ungdom. Rådgivere på skolen kan tilføre perspektiv både fra ungdom (elevene) sitt ståsted og fra et utdanningsinstitusjon sitt ståsted. Et intervju vil på denne måten gi oss data/informasjon fra «begge sider» fra en nærstående informasjonskilde. Du har fått spørsmål om å delta fordi du er rådgiver på en av de skolene vi ønsker å få mer informasjon fra, og vi er derfor veldig interessert i å ha denne undersøkelsen med deg.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet innebærer det at du tar del i et intervju. Intervjuet vil ta rundt 45 minutter. Du vil bli spurt spørsmål om temaene markedsføring, omdømmebygging og fremtiden for prosessindustrien i forbindelse med rekruttering av ungdom. Dine svar blir tatt opp på en diktafon og transkribert i etterkant. Alle opplysninger og opptak vil bli slettet i etterkant av prosjektet.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet.

Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Studenter i prosjektet samt veileder for prosjektet vil ha tilgang til opplysningene
- Dataene blir lagret på UiAs passord beskyttede servere. Dersom det er behov for å sende dokumenter vil de krypteres før sending. Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil bli erstattet med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data

Du vil ikke kunne bli gjenkjent i publikasjon ettersom navn ikke vil publiseres. Stillingstittel vil bli nevnt, men den institusjon/selskap du tilhører vil bli anonymisert slik at du heller ikke kan gjenkjennes gjennom dette.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er Prosjektslutt: 01.06.2022. Ved prosjektslutt vil alle opplysninger og opptak bli slettet.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Handelshøgskolen ved Universitetet i Agder har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

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Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Handelshøgskolen ved Universitetet i Agder ved Prosjektansvarlig: Torunn Skåltveit Olsen, tlf: 37253162, E-post: torunn.s.olsen@uia.no. Eller Student: Ingve Grannes, tlf: 97696865, E-post: ingveg17@student.uia.no
- Vårt personvernombud: Johanne Warberg Lavold, E-post: Personvernombud@uia.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Torunn Skåltveit Olsen   **Ingve Grannes**

(Forsker/veileder)   (Student/prosjektansvarlig)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *[sett inn tittel]*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐ Å delta i *Intervju*

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

----

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

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Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

"How may employer branding be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth in the process industry"?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er og er å gi et klart innsyn i hva bedrifter innenfor prosessindustrien kan gjøre for å fremstå som attraktive bedrifter for ungdommer som skal søke studievalg mot videregående.

I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet for prosjekter er å gi et klart innsyn i hva bedrifter innenfor prosessindustrien kan gjøre for å fremstå som attraktive bedrifter for ungdommer som skal søke studievalg mot videregående.

Problemstillingen som vi ønsker å utforske er: «How may employer branding be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth in the process industry?" Videre vil intervjuet brukes til å analysere forskningsspørsmålene:

1. Hvilke utfordringer møter prosessindustrien med tanke på å rekruttere ungdom?
2. Hva mener berørte aktører man kan gjøre for å bedre rekrutteringen?
3. Hvordan kan bedrifter som Glencore markedsføre seg for å tiltrekke seg ungdom?

Oppgaven er en mastertese og et avsluttende prosjekt for våres mastergrad.

Opplysningene lagret skal ikke brukes til andre formål enn selve prosjektet.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Handelshøyskolen ved Universitetet i Agder er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Vi ønsker å intervjue Agder fylkeskommune for å få innsikt om industrien i Agder, både fra et utdanningsperspektiv, men også fra et næringsperspektiv. Vi har allerede hatt samtaler hvor de har bistått med data vi anser som relevant til vår oppgave. På bakgrunn av dette vil vi nå gjennomgå et intervju med dem for å få mer informasjon. Du har fått spørsmål om å delta i undersøkelsen fordi du jobber i Agder fylkeskommune og vi er derfor veldig interessert i å ha denne undersøkelsen med deg.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet innebærer det at du tar del i et intervju. Intervjuet vil ta rundt 45 minutter. Du vil bli spurt spørsmål om temaene markedsføring, omdømmebygging og fremtiden for prosessindustrien i forbindelse med rekruttering av ungdom. Dine svar blir tatt opp på en diktafon og transkribert i etterkant. Alle opplysninger og opptak vil bli slettet i etterkant av prosjektet.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Studenter i prosjektet samt veileder for prosjektet vil ha tilgang til opplysningene
- Dataene blir lagret på UiAs passord beskyttede servere. Dersom det er behov for å sende dokumenter vil de krypteres før sending. Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil bli erstattet med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data

Du vil ikke kunne bli gjenkjent i publikasjon ettersom navn ikke vil publiseres. Stillingstittel vil bli nevnt, men den institusjon/selskap du tilhører vil bli anonymisert slik at du heller ikke kan gjenkjennes gjennom dette.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er Prosjektslutt: 01.06.2022. Ved prosjektslutt vil alle opplysninger og opptak bli slettet.

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Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,

- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,

- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, også sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Handelshøgskolen ved Universitetet i Agder har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Handelshøgskolen ved Universitetet i Agder ved Prosjektansvarlig: Torunn Skåltveit Olsen, tlf: 37253162, E-post: torunn.s.olsen@uia.no. Eller Student: Ingve Grannes, tlf: 97696865, E-post: ingveg17@student.uia.no
- Vårt personvernombud: Johanne Warberg Lavold, E-post: Personvernombud@uia.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Torunn Skåltveit Olsen   *Ingve Grannes*

(Forsker/veileder)   (Student/prosjektansvarlig)

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Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *[sett inn tittel]*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐ I delta i *Intervju*

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

----

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

7.2   Interview Guide

7.2.1   Interview guide - Group A

Glencore:

- Hvilke utfordringer ser prosessindustrien med å rekruttere ungdom?
    - Hva er utfordringsbilde i dag, evt på kort og lang sikt?
    - Det siste året har det vært en økt interesse for yrkesfag, hva tror du dette kommer av?

- Hva mener du, **(informanten)**, Glencore bør gjøre for å rekruttere flere unge?
    - Må man styrke rådgivning, andre kanaler, hvordan kommunisere?
    - Hvilken relevans har Agders planer om å bli en såkalt Battery coast for Glencore?
    - Hvordan jobber Glencore for å videreutvikle unge?

- Hvordan kan bedrifter som Glencore markedsføre seg for å tiltrekke ungdom?
    - Tror du ungdom er opptatt av omdømme til bedrifter?
    - Hvordan kan Glencore forbedre seg mot å bli sett på som en arbeidsplass for fremtiden?
    - Hva tror dere Glencore's omdømme har som appellerer til ungdommen
    - Hva gjør Glencore til en attraktiv arbeidsplass?

- Er det noe annet du mener er viktig? Har du noen andre tanker vi ikke har snakket så mye om?

7.2.2 Interview guide - Group B

Rådgivere:

- Hvilke utfordringer har prosessindustrien med å rekruttere ungdom?
  - Hva er utfordringsbilde i dag, evt på kort og lang sikt?
  - Hva er din tanke om yrkesfag, evt i forhold til studiespesialisering?
  - Hvordan opplever du stigmaet rundt yrkesfag?

- Hva mener du som rådgiver at man kan gjøre for å forbedre rekrutteringen??
  - Må man styrke rådgivning, andre kanaler, hvordan kommunisere?
  - I hvilken grad føler du foreldre spiller en rolle innenfor ungdommens utdanningsvalg?
  - Hva gjør du/dere for å minimere foreldres rolle innenfor studievalg?

- Hvordan kan bedrifter som Glencore markedsføre seg for å tiltrekke ungdom?
  - Hva kan gjøres for å fremme yrkesfag?
  - Hva gjør dere nå for å fremme yrkesfag som et attraktivt valg?
  - Hva tror du er viktige faktorer innenfor organisasjoner som ungdom legger fokus på?

7.2.3 Interview guide - Group C

Fylkeskommunen:
- Hvilke utfordringer har prosessindustrien med å rekruttere ungdom?
  - Hva er utfordringsbilde i dag, evt på kort og lang sikt?
  - Er det et stigma rundt yrkesfag og i så fall, hvor kommer det fra? Er dette noe fylkeskommunen opptatt av og ønsker å gjøre noe med?

- Hva mener du at fylkeskommunen kan gjøre for å forbedre rekrutteringen til prosessindustrien??
  - I hvilken grad føler du foreldre spiller en rolle innenfor ungdommens utdanningsvalg?

- Må man styrke rådgivning, andre kanaler, hvordan kommunisere?

- Hvordan kan bedrifter innenfor prosessindustrien markedsføre seg for å tiltrekke ungdom?
    - Spørre om tanker rundt workplace for the future/battery coast
    - Hva tror du er viktige faktorer innenfor organisasjoner som ungdom legger fokus på?

- Er det noe annet du mener er viktig? Har du noen andre tanker vi ikke har snakket så mye om?

7.3   Discussion papers

7.3.1   Discussion paper - International - Nikolai Røinaas

You are among the students who will discuss the concept **"international"** in light of the topic, research question(s), units of analysis, findings, and/or conclusions of your master's thesis. For details, please see the guidelines below.

Introduction

This discussion paper will discuss our master thesis "Employer branding: A viable strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth?" from an international perspective. The thesis and the research conducted have been done from a local perspective, meaning the Agder area in southern Norway where we study at the University of Agder. The other reason for having a local focus is the new and upcoming establishment of "the battery coast" in Agder and around the southern coast of Norway, which could also have implications on an international level. This is a big opportunity for Glencore Nikkelverk, the company that used an example in the thesis, to partake in the establishment. In order to do so, they need to recruit a competent workforce now but also in the future.

The research question the thesis looks to answer is:

> ***How may employer branding be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry.***

The thesis also presents three supporting questions in order to get a better understanding and context for the research question:

- What challenges does the Norwegian industry have in recruiting youth?
- What can be done to improve the recruitment according to the relevant parties?
- How can businesses like Glencore Nikkelverk market themselves to attract youth?

Both the research question and supportive questions can be looked at from an international perspective. Through interviews or surveys, one could measure the effect of employer branding within a case study. Or, similarly to the master thesis, look at employer branding through a regular study and how it can be used as a recruitment tool.

Thesis in relation to international trends and forces

The thesis and research conducted have been used in light of the Norwegian youth and for a Norwegian company. However, the same methodology and approach can be used in any country and adapted to fit any company. This thesis just happened to use it in a Norwegian context as it was requested by the company and was convenient for the writers of the thesis. As presented in the thesis, there is not much research done on the field of employer

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branding in light of recruitment. However, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and Chhabra & Sharma (2014) proved to be two of the most influential research papers for our thesis as they provided two conceptual frameworks that were used in order to test out the data collected as well as provided general information and research in the field of employer branding.

Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) focuses on employer branding in a broader sense, meaning both from a recruitment perspective and from an employer retention perspective. Chhabra & Sharma (2014) on the other hand focuses on the recruitment part of employer branding and is thus more relevant for our research. As a result, Chhabra & Sharma (2014) was the framework we selected to use in our thesis as we saw it as more fitting for what we wanted to research.

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) also provided some studies that were used as a comparison to the results of the interview conducted in our thesis. Comparing our Norwegian studies to Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) Indian studies was quite interesting and showed both similarities and differences. As reflected in the thesis, the differences in the findings could be due to cultural or geographical reasons. Whatever it may be, it was interesting to look at the same thing from different perspectives.

How everything could be influenced by international trends and forces and how to react to them.

In order to test whether or not, employer branding could be useful as a recruitment tool, we used a local company, Glencore Nikkelverk as an example for our study. Glencore Nikkelverk is an old nickel refinery and is an old and well-known company in Kristiansand. They are a Norwegian branch of the French company, Glencore, which operates at an international level. Glencore Nikkelverk was named Xstrata Nikkelverk until 2013 when Xstrata and Glencore merged (Sundance Terminates, 2013).

Not too far away from Glencore Nikkelverk, another company called Morrow Batteries is building its new gigafactory and aims to become the world's most cost-efficient and sustainable battery cell manufacturer (Reinertsen, 2021). This is a very ambitious goal and certainly will have implications for the international battery cell market. Seeing as nickel is one of the main components of a battery cell, Glencore Nikkelverk could be heavily influenced in the establishment of "the battery coast", especially with the potential of working together as a nickel refinery for Morrow Batteries. In the interviews conducted with Glencore Nikkelverk, we were informed that the majority of their operations today are international and they work as a middle-man for a lot of international companies, mainly in the Asian market.

This is a common misconception about Glencore Nikkelverk they said, despite being a Norwegian company and located here, they have very few operations in Kristiansand and Norway altogether. The vast majority of the nickel they refine is exported internationally

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again after their work is done. Their workers, however, are often local workforce and a lot of their recruitment is from word-of-mouth one of the respondents said. Cappelen et al., (2020, p. 42) state that there will be a surplus of 50 000 jobs in Norwegian industry by 2040, which is important to highlight seeing as the competition for the workforce will be tough in the coming years unless the government and the schools become better at marketing the need for vocational education.

This situation might differ in another country or could even be similar to the situation in Norway. The result of a lack of workforce is that companies are forced to import workforce from other countries in order to meet the demand, which means that they could very much be affected by international trends and forces. Companies will thereafter have to adapt to the workforce market in order to keep up with the needs of the company. If their need for the workforce is not met, they would not be able to meet the demands of their clients and customers resulting in lost income and potential clients. This is a hypothetical situation and usually gets resolved as there are many ways to hire a workforce. However, this could be a more realistic situation for the future but for the moment this will all be speculation.

Draw relevant theory and research

The theory of employer branding emerged in the 1960s as recruitment communications, but the term "employer branding" was not introduced until the 1990s (Rosethorn & Bernard Hodes Group, 2009). Employer branding can be defined as a long-term strategy that can boost employer attractiveness, employer image, employee acquisition, and employee retention as seen in Backhaus & Tiko (2004). Biswas & Suar (2016) stated that employer branding includes three components in more recent years. The three components are employer brand equity, brand loyalty and employee engagement, and attraction and retention of talents.

This thesis used abductive reasoning, meaning the research issues and the analytical framework are successively reoriented and confronted with the empirical world during this process. The frameworks relevant to this thesis were presented in chapter 2, and ultimately Chhabra & Sharma's framework was the one we decided to use. They provided different organizational attributes and communication channels as a part of their framework. However, this was done using Indian students as their data, and thus the data was less relevant for the thesis. However, the thesis did use the same organizational attributes and communication channels that were re-oriented with the empirical data gathered from the interviews conducted. This gave us a more fitting list of the most important organizational attributes and communication channels to focus on when developing an employer branding strategy.

The thesis has conducted a qualitative study and has used an explorative research design where we compare the results from all of our interviews to look for an answer to the

research question. We used data triangulation in order to gather different perspectives on the subject and all of the collected data were retrieved through semi-structured interviews that took place in Agder in order to gain a local perspective on the challenges.

As mentioned earlier, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and Chhabra & Sharma (2014) provided us with two different frameworks. We found out that Chhabra & Sharma (2014) was the most fitting for our data, as they looked at employer branding in the light of recruitment specifically. In contrast, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) also looked at employer branding in light of employer retention and other benefits of employer branding in addition to recruitment. All data gathered will be put into Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) framework. The different parts and factors were rearranged to correspond with the findings. The findings of the interview will help highlight what factors within the other subsections of the framework will be the most important in light of recruiting Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry.

To further elaborate on the framework, the two main areas of the framework will be the "Organizational attributes" and "Promotion/Communication channels." These will be the basis on which the employer image of a company is made. Based on the interview, all the different factors will be re-arranged from most important to least important. This will be valuable knowledge for a company like Glencore Nikkelverk, not only because it gives an insight into Norwegian youth priorities but also because it gives an insight into the local Norwegian youth priorities. These people are more accessible and also more likely to be relevant candidates for the recruitment of Glencore Nikkelverk. On an international level, the same method can be used in order to gain the desired perspective through a different study.

An optimal employer branding strategy will increase a company's employer attractiveness, which will provide them with different benefits as provided by the original framework. Biswas & Suar (2016) further reaffirms that employer branding lowers recruitment costs, attracts more qualified applicants, and lowers employee turnover in terms of profitability. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) also states that a company's investment in human capital as part of their employer branding strategy can result in competitive advantages, a performance boost, and financial profitability.

Based on the Biswas & Suar (2016) article, a proactive strategy toward employer branding indicates a company's genuine interest in attracting talents from the employment market and maintaining their existing talented workforce to gain a competitive edge. The employee strategy will help design the policies and practices for the betterment of employees and thus emphasize employer branding to boost the company's performance.

Briefly summarize and conclude the discussion

The thesis highlights a lot of theory and research on the subject of employer branding to understand what it is and what it can be used for. The different frameworks presented show

that employer branding can be used to recruit Norwegian youth, and even highlights different factors that companies can use to get the most optimal employer branding strategy. However, this is not only limited to Norwegian youth, and can be used for all kinds of focus groups on both a local but also on an international level. The employer branding strategy ensures that there is a match between the focus group, which is Norwegian youth in the thesis, and the company in question, which in this thesis is Glencore Nikkelverk. It highlights the most important organizational attributes for the Norwegian youth and what communication channels are best to reach out to them. This way the company knows what to say and what communication channels to use. Another aspect of employer branding that has not been highlighted in this thesis is how it helps with employer retention, which ensures that the employees that have been hired also stay within the company. This reduces the need for recruitment in the future.

This discussion paper shows a glimpse of what the master thesis is about and hopefully can intrigue more people to read the master thesis. Seeing as the topic of this discussion paper was "international" I have tried to look at some of the parts of the thesis from an international perspective rather than the local perspective of the thesis. As mentioned, the thesis in itself can be put into an international context rather than local and done at a larger scale. The findings of an international thesis would be very interesting to see, as pointed out in the "future research" in chapter 5 of the thesis. Case studies and comparisons looking at cultural, geographical, and other differences can provide interesting findings for the different views and perspectives on employer branding as well as on a bigger scale answer whether employer branding can be used as a recruitment tool and whether it has the desired effect or not.

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7.3.2 Discussion paper - Responsible - Ingve Grannes

Summary of thesis

Our thesis is written based on a need in the local municipality of Agder. The industry of the municipality has had some struggles concerning recruiting youth towards their firms. As such, Glencore Nikkelverk has asked us to research a strategy that can help them optimize the recruitment of new youth. The thesis uses a qualitative approach to the problem where three different groups associated with the problem have been interviewed. Together with the mentioned firm, we deduced the research problem:

> *"How may employer branding be*
>
> *an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry."*

The research questions were followed by three supportive questions to help gain insight and an answer. The three supportive questions were:

1. *What challenges does the Norwegian industry have in recruiting youth?*

2. *What can be done to improve the recruitment according to the relevant parties?*

3. *How can businesses like Glencore Nikkelverk market themselves to attract youth?*

The three questions were answered and helped answer the research question in the end. It was found that the recruitment to vocational studies had increased, but the stigma of vocational studies, which is a door to the industry, still existed. Additionally, there was a challenge to get youth interested in the relevant studies available. For improving recruitment, one could help reduce the stigma and involve more parties within recruitment between a firm and the youth, like parents and advisors of schools. It was found that firms like Glencore Nikkelverk should focus on specific organizational attributes, the most influential being compensation and organizational culture. They should focus on specific promotion channels as well. The two most influential promotion channels they may focus on is Company visits/presentations and Media/social media. Both of which were found to be highly influential. Overall, employer branding can indeed be an efficient strategy for recruiting youth when the focus of the firm is fixed within the correct parameters.

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The thesis was further conducted through using relevant frameworks and theory created by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and Chhabra & Sharma (2014).

Education and being responsible

Throughout the education at the University of Agder, there has been an emphasis on being responsible and responsible courses. One large area of conducting responsible research was presented to us through a course called "Research Method in Business." Most of the other courses have had some emphasis on conducting a responsible business in one way or another. As an example, "Sustainable Capitalism" gives an insight into running a business while still maintaining sustainability, "Corporate Governance" gives insight into governing a corporation sustainably and in congruence with laws and regulations, "Management Control Systems" takes the control of the management of the corporation to ensure that businesses are keeping up with regulations and help reach their goals. All these courses and more have had an impact on the choice of thesis and how to conduct the thesis methodology. It has helped form a world view that I believe is better than the world now and helps give insight into creating a better future.

Being responsible

When writing the thesis, being responsible is a large part of it. The thesis can be considered responsible in many ways. One way to consider, is the reason Glencore Nikkelverk has a wish for this thesis. Glencore Nikkelverk wished to be seen as a greener and more responsible company, as such, the thesis has some emphasis on making firms a bit more responsible. Additionally, ensuring a good recruitment strategy that is equally relevant to all parties will help firms attract more diversity and thus create a broader spectrum for responsible decision making. Responsible itself is not defined, but it is defined with the extra word with which it is written. In example, a responsible firm is different from a responsible thesis, and the two can be vastly different. This discussion paper will take into consideration the ethical questions of both a responsible firm when recruiting and a responsible thesis.

When it comes to a responsible firm, some ethical questions may arise, especially between the firms' dealings and their CSR. However, this thesis bases itself on recruitment and employer branding strategies. As such, much of the focus of a responsible firm is not relevant. However, there are a few issues to consider with being responsible when recruiting

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new employees. First, an employer branding strategy that is aimed at everyone is needed. This is where the two frameworks mentioned (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014) fit well. They are both general and aimed at a large scale of people. One issue that arises with Chhabra & Sharma's (2014) framework is the fact that the respondents used within their article are from management students in India. Research has shown that geographical distance is significant when assessing thoughts and beliefs (Reegård et al., 2019). As such, the optimal recruitment of Chhabra & Sharma (2014) is not necessarily consistent with the optimal recruitment of Norwegian youth. Backhaus & Tikoo's (2004) framework however is more in the general section and thus does not experience these challenges.

Glencore Nikkelverk as a responsible organization

For an organization to seem responsible in the public eye, it is important for them to also act responsibly. Glencore Nikkelverk has done several things to be seen as a responsible organization as mentioned during the interviews with their representatives. The firm has a large emphasis on safety at their workplace, saying as respondent A1 one stated "Our employees security is the highest priority of the firm". Additionally, Glencore Nikkelverk has done some things concerning CSR. For example, they have contributed to the public through giving cultural tickets at cost to the public, in which anyone could buy. According to respondent A1, they have also helped sponsor different buildings within the city of Kristiansand and helped improve different studies both in the University of Agder and in vocational schools such as Kvadraturen Videregående. An organization's CSR is also important for employer attraction and can help improve the employer image (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

Advisors as a responsible party

It is equally important for advisors to act responsibly as it is for organizations. During the interviews, the informants of group B stated that they have an obligation to act responsibly and not take any favoritism towards certain organizations or certain studies. They need to guide their pupils to the best of their ability and provide an ethically neutral ground towards their future education and advice.

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Ethical questions and how we handle them

Another large ethical issue that arises within this thesis is the question of marketing towards young people (under 18). In the country of Norway, marketing yourself directly to children and youth is illegal (Regjeringen, 2022). In this case, the ethical question of how you should attract said youth without breaking the law arises. Although direct marketing is not allowed, indirect marketing and marketing not aimed at the specific audience is allowed. In this case, by focusing on organizational attributes such as compensation and organizational culture could be two key concepts. And then branding yourself towards the audience towards specific channels they are part of would be a possibility. However, the thesis suggests to not brand yourself directly towards the youth but specify the opportunities working for a good firm and what the firm can offer. This safeguards the ethical question from marketing and could be considered as a suggestive of life choice. If the focus lies within telling a "story," rather than marketing a "product" the ethical question should be lessened. The employer branding strategy suggested in the thesis, can be said to give such a focus. Additionally, the research showed that self-identity with an organization can help to attract applicants towards them (Xie et al., 2015). Identifying with youth could be a responsible way to help attract without having too many ethical implications.

With organizations needing to be responsible in recruiting, it is also important that research conducted is done in a responsible way. As such, this thesis has been written in the most responsible way within the ability of the authors. Several ethical questions arose during the development of the thesis. The first issue that arose was finding relevant informants and respondents to the thesis. As interviewing or using children within the thesis would raise a whole other set of ethical challenges and questions, it was decided against doing so. Due to this, all informants and respondents were issued to be above 18 years of age. Although this raised another issue, how would we gather data amongst youth without speaking to the youth? The decision was made to lay focus among advisors among high schools, who are often educated within such areas and have an insight into relating youth with the different industries of Norway. This would help us gain an unbiased opinion of the youth and their thoughts without approaching the youth itself.

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Another issue among the study is the collection and usage of data. To gather data from other persons needs to be strictly controlled and ensured that it is only used for the purpose it was intended to be used. As we wished to record the interviews conducted to ensure the highest form of quality control, even stricter measurements should be implemented to safeguard the information. To tackle this ethical question and ensure responsible handling of the data we decided to keep the answers of the groups anonymous. That said, one is not able to track down the informants and respondents through reading the thesis. To get an approval of the research method we handed a draft of the data collection to NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata). All data is anonymously gathered and stored. Further, the data acquired will be completely deleted after the thesis is complete.

Being responsible with the theory gathered

Bougie & Sekaran (2020) holds the basis of most of the theoretical parts in how to conduct research. Bougie & Sekaran (2020) are highly acknowledged within the research communities and have authored several books on conducting research. As such, the quality and securement of the qualitative data gathered should be within great standards of data collection. Additionally, all the theory collected has been properly cited and analyzed. Sizeable portions of the theory are highly cited to ensure that the quality of the research collected is good. The sources are cited in accordance with APA 7th model, which makes it easy to backtrack and find for future readers.

Being responsible in light of conclusion of the thesis

The goal of the thesis was to answer the research question mentioned at the start. The thesis found that employer branding could indeed be an efficient strategy for recruiting Norwegian youth to the Norwegian industry, and while doing so, acting in a responsible manner. Through the thesis, several challenges were shown such as stigma towards vocational studies and a lack of knowledge towards relevant vocational studies and the probable future outcomes of these studies. These issues, although more complex than presented here, could be lessened, or solved through proper information distribution.

As mentioned in the conclusion, to reach the maximum effect of an employer branding strategy towards the youth, it needs cooperation between several parties. The three parties

suggested as interviewed are: Corporations, advisors, and Government officials. The corporations are the "end-product" of an education and is what the youth studying vocational studies should aim towards. As such, it is important for the corporations hiring to present their needs and wants in a well-suited manner. Advisors are the binding component between high schools, middle schools, and corporations. Some of the work they do is informing graduating middle school students of the possibilities of taking a vocational study which results in working for the industry, while the corporations need, as mentioned, to properly inform of the needs within vocational studies and the offers they can provide pupils who seek such an education. The last faction, the government, can help with delegate funds towards such needs. They are part of choosing which educational programs should be focused and how they should focus on them. As that is, the government is important to ensure the maximum value of the resources put in by corporations.

Conclusion

In conclusion the thesis has taken many ethical questions into mind regarding responsibility. Glencore Nikkelverk has several times acted as a responsible company and it is our beliefs and wishes that they will do so with the knowledge obtained from this thesis. The recruitment of youth can be done in a responsible and ethically sound way; however, it needs to be considered when forming the employer branding strategy. The data collected in the thesis were all done in a responsible manner, to the best of the authors ability, as such the data collected is kept safe and the findings presented should be valid. The University of Agder has indeed provided their students with the knowledge to act responsibly and provide solid responsible research and to both understand ethical problems and act in an ethically sound and comprehensive way.

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