

STOCKHOLM SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS  
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## *Are organizations what they wear?*

### Abstract

The world of recruiting has in the past decades undergone major, irreversible, changes. The effects of these changes crystallize out into expanded demands of worker knowledge, skills, capabilities and a great number of other characteristics that organizations now require of their applicants and current employees. However, these changes are not only affecting organization's demands of its employees, but also the demands placed upon the organization itself. Within this new environment organizations and employers need to understand the importance of attracting, but also keeping, employees to preserve their competitive advantage. Within this new professional environment competition between organizations, in terms of attracting a qualified workforce, is fierce, forcing organizations to develop a better understanding of what actually attracts employees, and specifically the right employees.

Recruitment advertising is a vital aspect within the early stages of recruitment and organizations need to understand the implications of their advertising activities and the signals it conveys. This paper aims to shed some light on the complex area of recruitment advertising in terms of explaining the signals that individuals within recruitment advertising convey. Specifically this research investigates the effects of nonconformity - the disregard of social norms and rules - in clothing and what it signals through recruitment advertising. An experiment with 4 advertisements; two portraying a nonconforming dressed individual (one male/one female) and two portraying a conforming dressed individuals, was undertaken and the effect in terms of signals and brand attitude and application intent was measured in order to gain an understanding of the implications for organizations. Evidence was found suggesting that a nonconforming advertisement was favored among the respondents, and the results also confirmed that a nonconforming advertisement heightened brand/employer attitude and increased application intent.

**Keywords** Signaling, Recruitment, Recruitment advertising, Brand attitude, Employer attitude, Application intent, Signaling effects, Nonconformity, Nonconforming behavior

### Authors

Sophia Werne, 22402  
Ebba Stålhjem, 50203

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### Supervisor

Nina Åkestam

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Imagine yourself as a university graduate. Perhaps you can imagine that your daily life is filled of uncertainties. Among these uncertainties is potentially mainly your future, something that probably seemed very far away when you began your studies but now, with graduation coming up, is closer than ever. It is likely that your daily life consists of job searching, applications and interview preparations. But how do you choose? How do you find the right employer for you? Potentially you would start researching different organizations and within this research a main focus area for you would likely be people - the people already employed at different organizations - to get answers to some of your important questions:

What will life at the organization be like?

What will my colleagues be like?

Will I make any friends?

Will I succeed at the company? Etc.

Now imagine yourself as a recruitment function of an organization. You are operating in an increasingly complex world, where potential job applicants are placing increasing demands on independence, flexibility and development opportunities. And the organization itself also requires a more skilled workforce. The big question for you is *how*. How do you attract these hard-to-get individuals and ensure that you attract a large enough, competent and skilled enough pool of applicants?

## 1.2 Background

The professional world as we know it - or used to know it - is undergoing extensive changes. Cascio (2003) suggests that the main reasons behind these apparent changes within the working environment are the effects of factors such globalization, technological advances and expanding demographic and cultural diversity within workplaces. The effects crystallize out into increased demands of worker knowledge, skills, capabilities and a great number of other characteristics that organizations now require of their applicants and

current employees (Celani & Singh, 2011). However, it does not only affect organization's demands of its employees, but also the organization itself. Organizations now need to understand the gravity of being able to attract, but also keep, employees to preserve a competitive advantage. Within this new professional environment competition between organizations, in terms of attracting a qualified workforce, is fierce, forcing organizations to develop a better understanding of what actually attracts employees, and specifically the right employees. And the recruitment process obviously plays a vital role within this quest (Celani & Singh, 2011).

Signaling theory has in previous studies been extensively utilized in order to discern how potential job applicants actually react to recruitment processes (Rynes, 1991; Spence, 1973). The main reasoning behind utilizing this theory is the argument that signals conveyed through recruitment processes disclose unknown attributes and characteristics about the organization in question. There exists a general consensus within signaling theory, in terms of recruitment activities, that applicants absorb signals and information conveyed through recruitment processes and develop perceptions about organizations' characteristics, performance and attractiveness (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Turban & Cable, 2003).

Some researchers suggest that initial applicant attraction is generally based on signals conveyed through early recruitment activities (Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson 1998). Moreover arguments have been made that these signals typically initially influence the perception of the recruiting organization (Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson 1998) and main reason behind this is that potential job applicants absorb signals in the early phases of recruitment, through for example advertising, products, employees etc. and relate them to the organization's characteristics (Slaughter et al. 2001). Other researchers argue for complementary factors, which they consider vital in the early signaling of an organization's characteristics, and the effects it has on forming the perception of organization for the potential job applicant. Turban (2001) suggests that people information - the signals an organization are able to convey through utilizing its existing employees - is a crucial factor within the signaling of an organization's characteristics. Previous research also concurs

with this arguments, suggesting that the people an organization is comprised of send forceful signals to potential job applicants in terms of worklife and personal fit for the organization (Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987; Turban & Dougherty, 1992).

Another apparent trend within the new professional environment, adding to its complexity, is that of professional dress codes, and the adherence to them. Some studies argue that employees typically places great emphasis on learning and abiding professional dress codes (Bellezza, Gino & Keinan, 2013). This behavior is suggested to be conforming - the upholding of social or professional rules and norms - and is typically related to social or professional acceptance, while nonconforming behavior is considered to be associated with social or profession exclusion (Anderson et al. 2006, 2008; Levine 1989; Lin et al. 2013; Marques et al. 2001; Miller and Anderson 1979; Schachter 1951; Wilson 1979). However, new research indicates that these assumptions must not always hold true. Silvia Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan (2013) proposes a rather contradicting argument - that nonconforming behavior actually does not have to lead to negative consequences - on the contrary it can be most beneficial for an individual. Their conducted research implied that nonconforming behavior actually can lead to an individual being perceived to have higher status and being more competent.

Thereby we can assume that the professional world - and as an effect recruitment activities - is actually becoming more and more complex and that previous accepted assumptions about processes, norms and perceptions actually are greatly changing.

### **1.3 Problem definition**

As mentioned in section 1.2 signaling has been verified to play an important role within early recruitment activities related to conveying information about an organization's characteristics, specifically in terms of brand or employer image. These results have also been found in studies of that of recruitment advertising, where e.g. Barber and Roehling (1993) found how potential job applicants infer characteristics about an organization by consumption of its recruitment advertising. There seem to be a universal consensus regarding the importance of signaling and information transferring through recruitment

advertisements for potential job applicants within recruitment advertising research. Some researchers actually suggest that potential job applicants have become so advanced within their analyses of recruitment advertisements that they are now becoming increasingly complex to design and formulate (Redman & Mathews 1995).

Adding to this, some researchers, for example Backhaus (2004) argue that organizations are not adapting to the increasingly complex professional world and the changed needs and wants of potential employees. This argument is also maintained within recruitment advertising, where some studies argue that organizations typically rather focus on themselves, rather than on the applicant and his or her needs, within their recruitment advertisements (Backhaus 2004). Moreover, another problematic area within recruitment advertising is the relatively little research placed on the development of recruitment advertising - both in terms of formulating, but also design and features - which forces a recruitment function to rather utilize personal ideas and experiences which in some cases results in ineffective outcomes (Ryan, Gubern, & Rodriguez, 2000).

Furthermore, the implications of people information within recruitment advertising have to our knowledge experienced relatively little research. Because this, as mentioned in section 1.2, is such an important signal for organizations within the early stages of recruitment, such as in recruitment advertising, we suggest that it should be an area of interest to research further, to understand the implications it has on organizations signaling, and as an effect employer image and application intent. This should be of especial interest for organization because of the new complex professional environment where organizations need understand what actually attracts potential job applicants and how they can influence and adapt to it.

#### **1.4 Purpose and research question**

Our main purpose with this thesis is to investigate whether utilizing a nonconforming dressed individual within recruitment advertising actually leads to positive signaling effects for potential job applicants. We will investigate whether creativity - in terms of clothing - actually is perceived as being nonconforming within recruitment advertising - and whether

this nonconformance leads to positive signaling effects. We will also investigate whether the potential positive signaling effect will spill affect brand, or employer, attitude and application intent. Finally we will also investigate the moderating factors, in terms of industry and gender perception, and its effect on recruitment advertising creativity. Thereby our fundamental research question is formulated as follows:

*“Will nonconforming clothing within a recruitment advertisement result in potential job applicants becoming more likely to apply to the advertising organization?”*

### 1.5 Delimitations

Initially we are limiting our research to university students who are graduating within less than a year's time, to ensure our studies relevance for the respondents. The reasoning behind this is that job research is typically an aspect that is top of mind for these individuals, allowing us to reach a relevant sample group. We are also limiting our research geographically to Sweden, which therefore does not necessarily make our results applicable within a global perspective. Moreover, we also made the decision to not use a brand, to ensure that we can equate the advertising image with brand - and employer - image. Also this will ensure that the brand or employer is unknown to all respondents to ensure that knowledge of the brand does not have an effect on the results because of different knowledge bases. Furthermore the utilization of a non-branded advertisement will ensure that the respondents have not developed any preconceived perceptions about the brand, which could affect the study's result.

We are also limiting our study to the banking and human resource industries. The reasoning behind this is based on the pre-surveys conducted suggesting these two industries were specifically gender dominated with either women - HR - or men - banking. Thereby our results will not necessarily be applicable for all industries. Moreover as the purpose of this study is research recruitment advertising the results found may not be applicable for any other type of advertising. With this in mind, the research within this thesis is also limited to only cover advertising, as part of the broader term marketing, as we are only testing for the effects of advertising. Thereby our results are only representative

for marketing through advertising. We are also only using status and creativity as measurements of signaling effects, and it should be noted there a great number of other effects that could be taken into account. Finally we are also limiting our approach to creativity to that of clothing, and specifically clothing within an advertising perspective, and thereby our results might not be applicable for other types of creativity within recruitment advertising.

### **1.6 Proposed research contribution**

There are a number of research studies that map out the signaling effects that are generated from advertising. There are also a number of studies that investigate the signaling effects that occur through recruitment advertising, but this research does not touch upon the signals that are generated by creativity and not specifically on how nonconforming clothing affects how the receiver absorbs signals from the advertisement. By specifically focusing on the people information aspect in terms of nonconformance, we add a new angle to the area of recruitment advertising research. Thereby we apply existing theory within a new environment and with a new context. The signaling effect of people information can hence potentially be applied within a new frame of reference. With adding the people information context to that of the complex recruitment advertising environment we aim to provide organizations with a further understanding of what signals their advertisement sends out to potential job applicants and how they can navigate the new, increasingly complex, professional world.

## 2. Theory

*This section will outline and explain the theories that lie as a foundation for this thesis. The section will begin with an overview of signaling theory and how it previously has taken shape within a marketing context. As we have defined our research to lie within a consumer marketing context we will focus on signaling within a consumer context. Following this we will outline the foundations of signaling theory within a recruitment, and recruitment advertising context. Thereafter we will outline creativity and its impact as a marketing signal within recruitment advertising and suggest how nonconformity in terms of dressing can be considered a creative signal. We will then discuss the implications for an organization and its recruitment processes in using a recruitment advertisement portraying a nonconforming dressed individual. We suggest these implications will consist of perceived status of the individual/employee within the advertisement, brand image for the advertising organization and application intent. Finally we will consider the moderating factors, such as industry stereotyping, which we suggest will moderate our results.*

### 2.1 Signaling Theory

Signaling theory was initially built upon the notion of two parties that are perceived to have different access to information. The relationship between these parties can be either individual to individual, individual to organization or organization to organization. In this thesis however, we are focusing on signaling theory between an individual (in this thesis the job seeker) and an organization (in this thesis the job offerer).

One of the fundamental assumptions within signaling theory - which supports the hypothesis of the theory's credibility - is the idea that information the sender conveys must be considered to be trustworthy. The reasoning behind this premise is that the sender would harm its reliability by transferring arbitrary information (Nelson, 1974). Thereby, the receiver should typically be able to assimilate indirect information from the sender, which thereby works as a signal.

Hence, when defining signaling theory, researchers tend to describe it as the behavior one party utilizes to overcome asymmetric information (Kirmani & Rao, 2000). Asymmetric information is typically described as one party holding more information compared to the other party, e.g. with regards to a future interaction between them (in this thesis we define this interaction as a potential future employment), where the less informed party needs to absorb as much information as possible to compensate for the asymmetry (Kirmani & Rao, 2000). The party that is perceived to hold greater access to information (defined as the sender) must therefore consider options of signaling to convey that information to the less informed party (defined as the receiver) (Certo, Conelly, Ireland & Reutzel, 2011). In this thesis we have defined the job seeker as a receiver and the job offerer has been defined as the sender [of signals].

The need to equalize the asymmetry is crucial as it attempts to avoid potential issues such as adverse selection and moral hazard. It has been proved that these controversies frequently upcome within e.g. the the labor market (discrimination in terms of gender, ethnicity etc) (Aigner & Cain 1977). Signaling controversies can unquestionably also take other shapes and forms, and certainly originate within other sectors such as within the health industry where health practitioners base their diagnoses on patients signaling of symptoms (Herbig & Milewicz, 1994).

As such it should be noted that the importance to absorb information for the lesser informed party does not diminish the importance for the more informed party to contemplate what information it conveys. Rather the opposite - it amplifies the importance of which signals to portray and how to transfer them to the other party. This is certainly crucial also within the labor market where, as mentioned in the introduction, organizations are increasingly being evaluated on factors such as, equality, discrimination, work-life balance etc (Cascio, 2003). Factors that tend to become problematic to portray to a potential candidate prior to employment.

Originating from an organizational viewpoint signaling theory thereby includes all types of signals, intentional or unintentional, that an organization transmits to its ecosystem. The

most common form of information that an organization conveys typically emerges from the organization's marketing and communications, and therefore marketing becomes a crucial factor for an organization to consider. It should also be recognized that it is not only the content of the marketing or advertisement that sends signals, but perhaps rather what can be 'read between the lines' within an ad (Nelson, 1974).

## **2.2 Signaling theory within a consumer context**

Consumers (as mentioned in limitations this thesis equates potential applicants with consumers) use signals to reduce any uncertainties related to an organization's ability to deliver on its promises. This is generally especially striking in situations where the outcome or quality of an organization's offer is challenging to predetermine (Allison & Uhl, 1964; Hoch & Ha, 1986). Therefore consumers attempt to absorb both direct and indirect information through organization's advertising and previous research has indicated that different elements of marketing, including price or packaging, have been confirmed to send signals related to the marketed brand (Kirmani & Rao, 2000).

Signals may be defined as manipulative attributes or activities that convey information about economic agents such as e.g. organizations, products or job applicants (Spence, 1973). Therefore marketing elements such as packaging and warranties can be observed to not only provide direct product information but also indirect information about products or services, within a situation where the consumer is considered to experience asymmetric information. A prominent and repeatedly discussed aspect within this type of research is advertising. Advertising and adverts are often emphasized as typical examples within consumer signal absorption as it tends to send out other signals than the direct signals that can be inferred from the actual content of the advert. It has been proven that adverts typically send out other, perhaps more important, signals through e.g. color choices and images (Lohse & Rosen, 2001).

## **2.3 Signaling theory within a recruitment context**

In this thesis - similar to previous research - we suggest that recruitment includes the activities initiated by an organization in order to appeal to potential job applicants and

influence their decision to apply (Ployhart, 2006). Signaling theory within this field of research typically focuses on how the actual applicant attraction occurs. However some researchers note that this theory has not been adequately tested within a practical approach (Breaugh, 2008; Hausknecht et al., 2004), but that the marketing research has been rather theoretically focused. Instead the majority of marketing research has focused on a rather organizational point of view - in other words, signals conveyed by an applicant to an organization (Spence's 1973, 1974). Spence's (1973, 1974) suggest that organizations typically are uncertain of a potential applicant's ability to deliver on its capabilities. The applicant perspective has previously typically rather been explored within recruitment research. Recruitment research suggest that within a situation of asymmetric information - such as that of a potential job applicants information about a potential future employer - individuals reacts to and form impressions of an organization based on any information it can absorb, including information and signals conveyed through recruitment activities (Rynes, 1991; Rynes *et al.* , 1991).

Moreover, signaling theory within a recruitment advertising context - and within a potential job applicant perspective - typically focuses on how organizations can use signals of an organization's characteristics to influence applicant attraction during any recruitment activities (Rynes, 1991; Spence, 1973). Previous research has indicated how applicants tend to perceive any recruitment activities (such as interviews, communications, ads etc.) and information as signals of an organization's internal characteristics (such as working environment) (Collins and Stevens, 2002; Turban and Cable, 2003). Research has also proven that recruiter behavior and appearances generally also work as signals of any unknown organizational components (Rynes, 1991; Turban *et al.* , 1998).

Given a situation where a potential job applicant is faced with a relatively unknown organization and needs to make a decision as to whether to apply or not, we can clearly see that there will be some type asymmetric information favoring the organization. Hence, it is vital for potential job applicants to obtain information about said organization in order to bridge this asymmetric gap. Previous research has emphasized the need to understand how information and signals are processed by potential job applicants. The main focus

within this type of research argue for this need because of the great opportunities for organizations to influence and govern these signals to ensure they convey the right message (Aaker, 1996). Jacoby et al. (1992). suggest that it lies within an organization's best interest to learn all channels for which it can reach or influence its potential applicants. Ford, Smith & Swasy, 1990 however note that organizations need to understand that potential job applicants cannot be considered as passive beneficiaries of signals/information. Rather on the contrary previous marketing research has shown that individuals typically are quite sceptical towards information received from organizations and that individuals generally perceive information differently compared to similar information received from other sources (Ford, Smith & Swasy, 1990). Thereby it becomes crucial for organizations - in order to effectively influence any signals or information conveyed to individuals or potential job applicants - to examine and understand how these interpret and process this information (Barber, 1998; Rynes, 1991; Rynes & Barber, 1990).

Keller (1993) emphasizes the need for understanding the importance of brand/organizational information and any individual's knowledge of it. Keller (1993) argue for its usefulness as it typically influences how consumers - or job applicants - reacts to a brand/organization. When theorizing about brand knowledge Keller (1993) draws upon social psychological research and specifically upon associative models of memory (Wyer & Srull, 1989; Yi, 1990) that tend to be useful for conceptualizing how memories could be compared to associative networks comprised of nodes - stored information - and links - connections of nodes, that normally vary in strength. Within associative models of memory a node becomes a source of activation for other nodes when a person is processing new information or when already processed information is retrieved from our long-term memory. The result of this is defined as 'spreading activation' (Anderson, 1983; Ratcliff & McCoon, 1988; Yi, 1990). Keller (1993) - in relation to this notion - defines brand/organizational knowledge as a brand node in the memory which has numerous associations linked to it.

Turban et al. (2001) - consistently with the presented social psychological research (e.g. Wyer & Srull, 1989) and Keller's (1993) brand memory node - define employer knowledge

as a potential job applicant's memories and associations with an organization. They suggest that any information the potential job applicant has regarding a possible future employer influences how they will process and acknowledge information - direct or indirect - about an organization. Turban et al. (2001) suggest that when a potential job applicant views an organization's recruitment advertisement the potential job applicant will recall his or her memories that are most strongly related to that organization. These memories can consist of numerous things, including products, services, interactions with employers to name a few. Thereby, Turban et al. (2001) argue that the potential job applicant will react to the advertisement based on his or her stored memories.

This can potentially be considered to be relatively straightforward, however it has great implications in terms of understanding how recruitment processes are affected by potential applicants' previously stored memories and perceptions of the organization. Hence, Turban et al. (2001) suggest that there are two important factors that recruiters and organizations need to take into consideration: (1) what dimensions of knowledge that a potential job applicant develops about employees and (2) how these dimensions in turn affect the potential applicants' responses to information - direct or indirect - about an organization, in view of potentially becoming a future employer. In this thesis we will focus our research mainly on the second factor: how the knowledge - or perceived information - a potential job applicant develops about an organization affects its responses to that information. Specifically this thesis will investigate how a potential job applicant will perceive indirect signals from an organization within a specific industry (Banking and HR) - which the individual will have pre-conceived assumptions of in terms of industry accepted dress codes.

Within numerous previous marketing scholars, it has been long recognized that brand image is a vital component of information or signal, in terms of individuals' perceptions, attitudes and associations that can be connected to an organization's brand (Aaker, 1996; Biel, 1992; Keller, 1993). In that sense we can assume that brand image can refer to information or signals of the meaning and assumptions of a specific brand or organization for consumers (Biel, 1992). Assuming the importance of brand image, we would need to

understand what constitutes this phenomenon. Biel (1992) suggests that brand image is actually built upon three types of images. (1) Image of the maker (2) image of the product and (3) image of the user (the consumers who consume the product or service. Holding this assumption true, Turban (2001) proposes that employer (or brand) image then should be defined as the sum of the beliefs of a potential job applicant holds about an organization or potential employer. For the purpose of research within this thesis we suggest that brand or employer image (assumption based on the non-existent brand within our research) can be equated with industry image. In other words brand (or industry) image can thus be assimilated with the aggregate beliefs that a potential job applicant holds about any attributes of the potential employer (Turban 2001).

Turban (2001) furthermore advises that there are perhaps three categories which can be considered to be of especial importance in employer/brand image research. These three categories are defined as: employer information, job information and people information (Turban 2001, Biel 1992). As previously mentioned this thesis focuses on the indirect information an organization can convey, in terms of its brand image, through people, and more specifically through people's way of dressing. Hence herein focus will lie within the third category - the information an organization can convey through the usage of its people. Turban (2001) refers to people information as the characters of the individuals that the potential employer is typically comprised of. These people - or characters - are also the people who in turn would become potential co-workers for a job applicant. Previous research has suggested that the individuals that make up - or are assumed to make up - an organization send truly powerful signals to potential applicants in terms of how life at the organization would play out and how well they would fit in within the working environment (Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987; Turban & Dougherty, 1992). People typically tend to be more comfortable with people that they perceive as being more similar to themselves than those viewed as being slightly different to themselves (Byrne, 1969).

Moreover, research indicates that potential job applicants in general are especially interested in the attributes of its direct co-workers or supervisors. The reasoning behind this is theorized to be because these individuals are perceived to be those that would be

closest points of contact to the job applicant, and furthermore it is typically believed that these people offer more direct insights into what the working situation would resemble in terms of a potential employment (Breaugh, 1992; Jablin, 1987). As this thesis aim to direct the research specifically towards business students we choose to use individuals within a similar age group - to provide relatability for the respondent and thereby ensure their belief that this person would be an individual that the respondent would perceive to be someone whom it would be possible to work on a day-to-day basis with.

#### **2.4 Signaling theory within a recruitment advertising context**

Within recruitment advertising, a wide majority of research focuses on the perspective of the employer rather the receiver - the potential job applicant. Mathews & Redman, 1998 argue that little efforts and research has been conducted in terms of understanding the other perspective - in other words the view of the job applicant - and its needs in terms of approaching recruitment advertising. In line with what Ford, Smith & Swasy (1990) suggest - that organizations need to understand how job applicants are not passive absorbers of information but rather seek any information they can obtain, and that potential job applicants typically are sceptical towards any information received from an organization - it can be argued to be important that a recruitment advertisement includes factors that would be typically be considered important by the potential job applicant.

These factors can potentially include a number of elements, including benefits, career path, working condition, business type, title etc. (Blackman, 2006). However, as Ford, Smith & Swasy (1990) it can be assumed that potential job applicants might not read as much into this directly expressed information, but potentially view it rather skeptically. Thereby it seems it is important for organizations to understand what information a potential job applicant might view with a more accepting response. Kirmani & Rao (2000) argue that the party - within this thesis the potential job applicant - that is perceived to hold less access to information must try to interpret signals, perhaps rather than direct information, from the more informed party - in this thesis the organization conveying information through recruitment advertising. Hence signals that the potential job applicant may absorb through the medium of a recruitment advertisement becomes of utmost importance.

It is sometimes suggested that increasing competition within different industries as an effect force organizations and employers to pursue aggressive recruitment strategies, and thereby organizations are always on the look-out for the most effective ways and channels to reach and attract potential job applicants (Denton 1992). Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson (1998) suggest that initial applicant attraction typically presents early in the recruitment phase, and is found to rely heavily on the perception of that of the employer's/organizations image. It has been suggested that potential job applicants may relate specific characteristics to an organization through processing signals in terms of the organization's advertising, products, employees, social information etc. (Slaughter et al. 2001). Thereby we can conclude that recruitment advertising plays an important role in the initial attraction of job applicants in terms of conveying important information about the organization to the potential job applicant.

Previous research has also found that potential job applicants can infer characteristics about an organization by consuming its recruitment advertising (Barber and Roehling 1993). Several researchers actually suggest that receivers of advertising - potential job applicants - are in fact becoming increasingly sophisticated in analyzing recruitment advertisements and as an effect the recruitment advertisements are becoming increasingly complex to design and write (Redman & Mathews 1995). Moreover, some researchers also emphasize the focus of organizations on conveying their own characteristics and attributes rather than conveying the job applicants' potential work-life and advancement opportunities - aspects which has been seen to be important for individuals' seeking new positions (Backhaus 2004). Research within this field - recruitment advertisement - is typically considered to be relatively limited, which as a result forces recruiters to rely on personal experiences and own ideas (Ryan, Gubern, & Rodriguez, 2000), thereby in some cases making for a relatively ineffective outcome.

Recruitment advertising and the signals it conveys has been reviewed by several marketing scholars whom have argued for its importance. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) for example emphasize the need for an organization to develop a strategy that places great emphasis

on the symbolic meaning an organization or potential employer conveys to its pool of potential job applicants. These symbolic meanings could typically consist of 'employee imagery', which Lievens and Highhouse (2003) define as employee testimonials and 'employment imagery' which is defined as stories of employment in advertising. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) argue that these 'image-oriented advertising techniques', specifically if these are constructed with the aim to convey the image that the organization is innovative and sincere, have a positive outcome in terms of attracting potential job applicants.

Moreover, within recruitment marketing research evidence has supported the importance and effect of recruitment advertising within the early stages of recruitment. Factors such as advertising (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey, & Edwards, 2000; Rynes, 1991) and corporate image (Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993) can have a great impact on a potential job applicants decision to apply to a specific organization, in terms of it affecting the potential applicant's' perception of the organization. It should also be noted that the use of organizational advertising and the conveying of brand or industry (as previously mentioned brand and industry is equated within this thesis) image can have both a positive or negative outcome in terms of application decision, depending on the signals conveyed and processed by the potential applicant.

The marketing research literature often argue that marketing - and advertising - strategies may vary in terms of the level of involvement. Specifically level of involvement is typically suggested to be the level of efforts that the individual or organization applies to for example an advertisement for it to become effective in terms of desired outcome (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989). Cable and Turban (2001) suggest that recruitment activities - including recruitment advertisement - can be argued to represent a similar situation. Collins & Han (2004) undertook a study where they compared low-involvement recruitment practices to high-involvement recruitment practices, defined by their level of effort put into the activities. Their results suggest that using a typical recruitment ad is a low-involvement recruitment strategy and they found that these types of low-involvement strategies were typically more effective - compared to high involvement activities - for firms who previously

have had low levels of organizational advertising and where the organizational reputation/image was generally unknown. One of the reasonings behind this outcome was that this type of advertising potentially positively affects potential job applicant's awareness and impressions of an organization even when the potential applicant is not actively searching for information about an organization.

Based on the results and outcomes of the previous signaling and recruitment advertising research evaluated within this section of theory we suggested that a potential job applicant will anticipate and absorb signals from recruitment advertising. Moreover, we suggest that a potential job applicant will exhibit a stronger applicant intent towards an organization which they perceive to display a more positive brand/organizational image through their advertising. Furthermore, we also suggest that a potential job applicant will present a stronger application intent towards an organization which the potential job applicant perceives to have more favorable employees, with regards to becoming future colleagues.

## 2.5 Creativity as a marketing signal

Creativity and its functionality within advertising has been a topic of much scrutiny within advertising research. Kover, Goldberg, and James, 1995 for example suggest that using creativity as part of the advertising development does not necessarily translate into increased memorability for the receiver, nor does it necessarily make it more appealing. Some researchers actually go a bit further and suggest that creativity as part of advertising actually is a waste of resources (Kover, James, and Sonner 1997). The claim behind this reasoning is that creativity typically does not serve a functional purpose, such as increasing advertising appeal to the receiver or ensure the receiver of the advertisement increases its recall of the content. However, alternative research has indicated that - despite the importance placed on functional aspects of advertising - there are other positive effects that can affect the receiver of the advertising. Ambler and Hollier, 2004 and Kirmani and Rao, 2000 for example suggest that size - in other words - increasing the physical size of an advert can increase the attention it receives. Moreover, they suggest that increased exposure to an advertisement may actually increase and have positive spillover effects in terms of brand perception.

A research study by Dahlén et al. (2008) suggest that advertising creativity is actually not a wasteful resource, rather the contrary. Advertising creativity can imply great positive effects in terms of perceived effort by the advertising organization. Dahlén et al. (2008) further argue that today's consumers - when exposed to advertising - can be assumed to be competent and knowledgeable enough to deduce that a more creative advertisement probably has a more resource-demanding process behind it. The main reasoning behind this statement is grounded in Dahlén et al. (2008) and also Ambler och Hollier (2004) assumption that creativity is viewed upon as a form of 'waste' which as a result causes assumptions of the advertisement in terms of being viewed upon as having more time and efforts behind its development. Thereby they conclude that advertising creativity should actually be considered to be a good measurement of marketing efforts, as a more creative advertisement can be assumed to demand more resources in terms of time, money, thought behind it compared to a less kreativ advertisement.

Dahlén et al. (2008) continues this claim by suggesting that an advertising organization which utilizes vast resources in order to develop a creative advertisement will signal that it has both the will and the ability to think outside of the typical industry norm. Moreover, Dahlén et al. (2008) suggests that advertising creativity can actually increase consumers' interest and appeal towards a specific advertisement and can thereby also affect the perceived quality of the brand/organization in question. By signaling greater marketing effort, both in terms of the advertisement and the brand/organization, consumers attitude could be affected. Thereby creativity has indicated its advantages in terms of being an effective signaling mechanism in organizations that strive to effectively communicate a message through its advertisement. The research study conducted by Dahlén et al. (2008) also supports their claims. Their experimental study demonstrated how organizations - by signaling a great effort placed upon development of their advertising - can enhance organization/brand interest for consumers.

This claim - that advertising creativity is not an actual waste but rather an effective signaling mechanism - is also supported by other research studies. In fact is it typically

assumed that creativity is actually the foundation of the whole advertising industry, and that without it it wouldn't even persist (Koslow, Sasser, and Riordan, 2003). This view is supported by for example Helgesen (1994) and Kover, James, and Sonner (1997) who suggest that advertising agencies actually spent a majority of their time and resources on creativity and developing new innovative creative ways of developing their advertisements. Under this claim creativity is automatically assumed to have some practical and functional abilities in terms of an advertisement outcome. Gross (1992) in his celebrated study also argues for the importance of creativity and attributes it to the success of advertising agencies in terms of delivering effective advertisements in the long run.

## **2.6 Creativity as a marketing signal within a recruitment advertising context**

Rawlinson (1988) suggests that the typical recruitment advertisements often consists of an uninspiring list of qualifications and information suggesting the need for the 'ideal' candidate. Within the same line of reasoning Bucalo (1983) argues that the majority of recruitment advertising is quite ineffective in attracting job applicants as their needs and wants generally are not influenced by such generic and uninspiring factors. Palkowitz & Mueller (1987) hypothesize that the reason for the lack of inspiring and thought-provoking recruitment advertisements may be lack of the research of writing and developing mentioned advertising. Organizations typically only place their ads, gather the responses they receive and interview the most appropriate applicants (Stoops, 1984).

However, with the increasing demand of especially technically skilled employees, human resource department has to evolve - and recruitment advertisements with it. Palkowitz & Muetler (1987) further cements the claim that recruitment advertising is becoming an increasingly important factor within recruitment activities. They conducted a study showcasing how personnel professionals actually regard recruitment as a marketing function rather than a function for placing ads. Organizational recruiters have begun developing marketing strategies for their recruitment advertisements with new objectives and aims. These marketing strategies now typically try to base the message and information conveyed on the receiver - the potential job applicants - needs and wants rather than just selling a straightforward job description. Stoops (1984) suggest that these

marketing strategies actually resemble those of a product advertisement in the sense that they do not solely need to capture attention and generate interest but must also ensure that the potential job applicant want to seek more information about the organization/employer and the potential job opportunity.

Within this thesis we also suggest that potential job applicants typically should behave similar to consumers in terms of their reactions and processing of advertising. Similar to Stoops (1984) we suggest that recruitment advertising is actually quite comparable to that of a product advertising, where the latter has been more emphasized and analyzed within an advertising research perspective. We suggest that potential job applicants - similar to consumers - interpret signals to avoid uncertainty related to an organization's ability to perform. Allison & Uhl (1964) and Hoch & Ha (1986) suggest that this uncertainty avoidance is especially apparent when it is difficult or even impossible to determine quality of an organization's service or products beforehand. Jacoby et al. (1971) and Olson (1977) second this claim and argue that the interpretation of signals conveyed by an organization is vital in situations where consumers are in need of reducing the risk of a purchase of a good or service. Within a recruitment advertising perspective it is apparent that the potential job applicant needs to reduce the risk associated with applying for a position within an organization. We suggest that the acceptance of a job offer may be equated to that of a purchase of a high-risk service, as it implies the job applicant becomes dependent on the organization delivering on its promises. Thereby we argue that potential job applicants will interpret both direct and indirect information that can be absorbed through an organization's advertising.

The previous section demonstrates how consumers have been proven to perceive creativity as a signal of organization/brand image, and that creativity actually enhances the perceived organizational image for a consumer. We hypothesize that this will stand true within a recruitment advertising perspective as well. Previous research within recruitment advertising supports this claim. Studies conducted by for example Aaker (1997, 1999), Bushman (1993), Shavitt (1990), Sirgy (1982) and Solomon (1983) indicate that potential job applicants who perceive an organization as being innovative, creative or competent could

potentially relate this perception to their own self-image or personality and will as a result regard the organization in a more favorable lighting. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) further support the hypothesis that potential job applicants will perceive creativity as a favorable trait within recruitment advertising by emphasizing in their research how potential job applicants seek symbolic meanings to evaluate within recruitment advertising and that these symbolic meanings may be for example innovativeness and creativity. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) suggest that these are characteristics of an organization that the potential job applicant will perceive to be held in high regards by others and thereby will affect the potential job applicants perception positively also.

Similar to the arguments placed forward by previous mentioned studies, Allen et al. (2004) found in their study about recruitment advertising that there are several important factors that affect a potential job applicant's perception of the advertising organization. Within these factors were some that stood out. These were channels that transmit visually pleasant graphics such as pictures, symbols, facial expressions etc (Allen et al. 2004). Vestergaard & Schroder (1985) also emphasize the importance of the graphical elements within recruitment advertising stating that an advertisement needs to capture the receiver's attention first and foremost, and only after the attention had spiked an interest within the receiver can it convince them to read into the more direct information such as informational text. Chandor (1976) agree with this view, suggesting that it is vital for organizations to understand how their recruitment advertising is surrounded by others very similar to its kind, and that the only way to ensure standing out in such a populous environment is to include thought-provoking and appealing headlines and graphics - directly capturing the potential job applicants attention.

Thereby we suggest that creativity - specifically in terms of using more creative images/graphics with a thought-provoking angle - within recruitment advertising will generate a more favorable brand/organizational brand attitude within the potential job applicant.

## 2.7 Dressing creativity as a marketing signal within a recruitment advertising context

The research conducted within this thesis focuses on creativity within recruitment advertisements and the effects this has on potential job applicants' perception of the organization and the possible spillover effects this can have in terms of applicant intent. We specifically suggest that creativity in terms of outfit/dressing of a person may cause effects on perceived brand/organizational attitude in terms of providing a thought-provoking divergence to a typical recruitment advertisement. As mentioned in section 2.6 previous research indicates that potential job applicants consume signals within recruitment activities related to the individuals that are assumed to make up an organization. These signals can be for example how the worklife at the organization is perceived to be or how well the potential job applicant would fit in within said working environment (Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987; Turban & Dougherty, 1992).

Silvia Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan in a study from 2013 suggest that individuals - both within professional and unprofessional settings - typically make a great effort in terms of learning and adhering to dress codes and other direct or direct held assumptions of standards of behavior. Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) suggest that this effort is a type of conformity - typically rewarded with social acceptance. Not making an effort on the other hand is regarded as nonconformity, something that is generally associated with group exclusion and disapproval (Anderson et al. 2006, 2008; Levine 1989; Lin et al. 2013; Marques et al. 2001; Miller and Anderson 1979; Schachter 1951; Wilson 1979). Cialdini and Goldstein 2004 furthermore suggest that conforming to these assumed social rules and norms are generally motivated by a need or desire to gain acceptance and status within a social or professional environment. Kruglanski and Webster (1991), Levine (1989), Miller and Anderson (1979) and Schachter (1951) also concur with this reasoning and state that individuals are specifically apprehensive of any negative reactions related to disregarding the social or professional norm, such as social disapproval, mockery and rejection. However, within the research of Silvia Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan (2013) it is proposed that nonconforming behaviors might not actually only lead to negative effects. Their study actually suggests that - under some circumstances - it can rather be more beneficial to be regarded as nonconforming to conforming in terms of perceived status

and competence. However they note that these positive effects typically present under perceived unintentional violations of social or professional norms, and that negative effects will indeed present should these violations be perceived as intentional.

Signaling theory has within advertising research suggested that for a signal to be inferred and being effective it must be considered costly and observable by others (Feltovich, Harbaugh, and To 2002, Spence 1973, Zahavi and Zahavi 1997). Levine (1989) and Schachter (1951) suggest that nonconformity may be assumed to have a high social cost in terms of that it might be costing the individual any social standing he or she has been perceived to have in the past. Thereby Silvia Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan (2013) argue that conforming behaviors can be defined as costly and observable signals and as a result may be assumed to convey signals about status and competence to the receiver. This reasoning is also in line with studies conducted by Veblen (1899 & 1994) suggesting that individuals will perceive status of an individual through its ability to purchase and wear luxury goods. Silvia Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan (2013) argue that it can be assumed that nonconformity may lead to perceptions of higher status and competence through the visible display of disregard of social or professional norms and rules as it suggest the individual can afford to do what pleases him or her.

As mentioned in section 2.3 it is typically assumed that individuals tend to be more comfortable with people that they perceive are more similar to themselves within recruitment research, and that this people information is something an individual generally tries to absorb before entering any recruitment activities (Byrne, 1969). This has also been the general assumption within recruitment advertising research. For example Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel (1989), Escalas and Bettman (2003 & 2005) and McFerran et al. (2010, 2010) argue that consumers are motivated to behave similar to those surrounding them and that they are likely to make similar decisions to those within their environment. The argument behind these assumptions is that consumers and individuals typically crave affiliation and identification to their surroundings.

As mentioned nonconformity has been defined as actions or beliefs that are conflicting with a social or professional norm or rule (Nail, Macdonald, and Levy 2000). Within research of consumer psychology nonconforming behavior has identified as a need or wish to distance oneself from perceived dissimilar or disliked individuals or groups (Berger and Heath 2007, 2008; White and Dahl 2006, 2007). However it has also been associated with the will or need to express uniqueness (Ariely and Levav 2000; Griskevicius et al. 2006 & Simonson and Nowlis 2000). Within this type of research the main focus has been within the specific nonconforming individuals' behavior, thoughts and actions. Our study will however focus on - similar to the research conducted by Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan (2013) - the external parties of the nonconformity. In other words we will focus on the effects of nonconformity in the view of others.

As demonstrated there are many studies that have explored the perception of others formed by individuals, which have concluded how individuals typically make fast judgments of others in terms of perceived competence and status. The signals and factors explored within this area range from appearance, dress codes, verbal and nonverbal conversations and a great number of others (Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan 2013, Ambady and Rosenthal 1993; Dubois et al. 2012; Hall et al. 2005; Knapp et al. 2009; Magee 2009). As mentioned, within this study we will focus on others' perception of clothing nonconformity in recruitment advertising and suggest that nonconformance within clothing will be perceived as a form of creativity from both an individual - but also organizational level.

As mentioned in section 2.5 research within creativity and its effectiveness has been widely debated (El-Murad and West 2004; Ang and Low 2000; Ang, Lee, and Leong 2007; Smith and Yang 2004). Some researchers argue that creativity is actually one of the most important components in terms of advertising (Reid, King, and DeLorme 1998). This line of reasoning was also explored in section 2.5 where Dahlén et al. (2008) concurred and suggested the importance of advertising creativity in sending signals of brand/organizational image and quality. Creativity has been defined in many different ways across many different studies and is typically divided into two sections of perspective. The first of these two perspectives suggest that creativity is involves a divergent, novel factor

and that this is expressed through aesthetic representation and newness (Till and Baack 2005; Kover, Goldberg, and James 1995). The second perspective also concurs with this definition but adds a second element. That the advertising in it self also needs to be considered relevant related to the receiver and perceived as having a meaningful message (Smith and Yang 2004; Amabile 1983, Ang and Low 2000 and Sasser and Koslow 2008). These studies suggest that if there is no meaning to be interpreted from the advertising, the advertising cannot be considered creative, as it does not even reach a fundamental level of importance to the receiver.

With regards to these perspectives we suggest that a recruitment advertisement portraying a nonconforming clothed individual will actually be perceived as more creative to an advertisement portraying a conforming individual. We suggest that the element on nonconformance will be viewed be divergent and novel compared to more traditional advertisements. Respectively we suggest - as the advertisement is directed towards soon-to-be graduates and students it will be considered relevant, and by framing the text to suggest its relevance in terms of a future employment we argue that the recruitment advertising will also be considered meaningful and send a suitable message to the receiver - or potential job applicant.

Thereby we hope to contribute to the research of recruitment advertising in terms of both adding to the information and signals organizations need to understand in their advertising - specifically in terms of people information and nonconformity. We suggest that creativity in terms of dressing may actually be equated with that of nonconformity. In summary we suggest one fundamental assumption, as a basis of our research:

**Fundamental assumption:** Job applicants will perceive a person with a nonconforming outfit as more creative than a person with a conforming outfit.

Moreover, we suggest that creativity in terms of clothing is a form of nonconformity and that may affect a potential job applicants' perceived organizational/brand attitude and as a

secondary effect amplify application intent. We suggest that, in line with previous research on creativity by for example Dahlén et al. (2008), an organizational utilizing recruitment advertisement portraying a nonconforming dressed individual/employee (as we argue the individual within the advertisement will be perceived as being an employee at the advertised organization) will benefit from the same effects as the brands/organizations within Dahlén et al. (2008) study. In other words we suggest that an organizational utilizing recruitment advertisement portraying a nonconforming dressed individual will signal creativity and that this as an effect will signal that the organization has both the will and the ability to think outside of the typical industry norm (Dahlén et al. 2008).

Furthermore we suggest that by assuming that recruitment advertisement portraying a nonconforming dressed individual will be considered to be creative, this will increase the potential job applicants' interest and appeal to the advertisement and also as an effect the perceived quality of the organization. Thereby the principal hypothesis for this study is as follows:

**H1:** Job applicants will favor a person with a nonconforming outfit to a person with a conforming outfit in advertising.

## **2.8 Perceived status of a person in a recruitment ad**

As mentioned in section 2.3 nonconformity of an individual does not necessarily have to lead to negative reactions in terms of for example group or social exclusion. Alternatively it has actually proven to result in positive effects such as that of externally higher perceived status through the means of social disregards (Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan 2013).

When comparing perceived high-status individuals to those with perceived lower status the first is typically considered to be freer from social constraints or norms and that they have more room for any desired deviation (Feshbach 1967; Hollander 1958; Peterson and Kern 1996; Phillips and Zuckerman 2001). Hollander (1958) suggests that individuals within a

group setting typically can attain a high status through 'idiosyncratic credits', which is defined as the aggregation of positive reactions from the others whom belong to that group. Hollander (1958) further suggests that this aggregation is the basis for how far the individual can deviate from the group without receiving any negative reactions in terms of for example exclusion or ridicule. Cartwright (1959) and Galinsky et al. (2008) also concur with this view and thereby conclude that with this in mind individuals who are perceived to have a high status within a group can depart from social or professional norms without receiving a negative backlash.

Previous research within this matter, and specifically focused on the angle of consumption, has indicated how individuals with perceived high status sometimes actually deliberately downgrade themselves in terms of lifestyle (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Brooks 1981; Holt 1998; Peterson and Kern 1996; Solomon 1999). These downgrades can range from for example extensive material management and recycling, consuming a wide variety of products and extreme simplicity. Etzioni (2004) suggest that individuals with high status typically dress down in business and social settings, such as for example Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg who appear more often than not without formal business dress at large industry events and entrepreneurs who attend their daily business, including all important meetings in considerably casual clothes (Searchy 2011).

These arguments were further developed in Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan study from 2013, where they proposed that non conforming behavior in terms of casual dressing actually acts as a form of distinct consumption which in turn leads others perceiving the casually dressed individual as having a high status. Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan (2013) suggest that the reason behind this is that a nonconforming individual will have more power to choose for themselves how to dress or act, because their position allows them to deviate from the norm within any negative sanctions. Previous research also supports this claim, suggesting that high status individuals typically do not feel the need for obvious displays wealth or status, but that they rather seek other ways of conveying this, thereby separating themselves from any group (Berger and Ward 2010; Feltovich et al. 2002; Han et al. 2010).

We suggest that this stands true also for individuals portrayed within recruitment advertising. As mentioned previous research suggests that an individual dressing casually or nonconforming may be perceived to have a higher status because its position protects it from negative backlash. Thereby we suggest that an organization utilizing a nonconforming dressed individual within its advertising will signal that this individual enjoys a high status position within the organization and the receiver - the potential job applicant - will interpret these signals accordingly. Thereby our second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

**H2:** Job applicants will perceive a person with a nonconforming outfit to have higher status than a person with a conforming outfit in advertising.

## **2.9 Perceived brand attitude and application intent as measurements of signaling effects**

As mentioned in section 2.7 in some cases individuals who do not conform to norms and rules are perceived to be able to do this because their high status position allows them to deviate from social and professional norms without negative consequences. Bellezza, Francesca Gino and Anat Keinan (2013) suggest that the main argument behind this reasoning lies in autonomy - specifically the individual's autonomy in terms of self-governance (Ryan and Lynch 1989). Individual autonomy is typically equated with an individual's ability to act independently and not obey any other rules but its own. Independence and autonomy is deeply rooted within western societies with for example the founding documents of the United States being built on independence (Dworkin 1988; Markus and Schwartz 2010) and Western cultures high regard of independence. Thereby many researchers suggest that autonomy - and as an effect nonconformity - is typically considered to be a positive aspect. Baumeister (1982), Galinsky et al. (2008) and Kim and Markus (1999) also suggests that the positive inferences of nonconformity stands true and argue that deviating from group norms is viewed upon as brave and an admirable trait.

We also concur with these assumptions and thereby suggest that a nonconforming dressed individual within its recruitment advertising will also be perceived as more positive compared to an individual that conforms to the norms. This claim is also supported by a number of researchers suggesting that individuals that are considered to be easily influenced by others - in other words not having the ability or will to stand out - are viewed to have non-admirable traits (Jetten, Hornsey, and Adarves-Yorno 2006). Individuals who on the other hand do stand out - or nonconform - are perceived to signal freedom and autonomy (Phillips and Zuckerman 2001; Thompson et al. 2006) which as a effect can generate positive assumptions about them from others within their environment.

## 2.10 Employer attitude

Many research studies have emphasized the importance of brand or organizational image. Within previous marketing research, brand image typically refers to any individual's perception, characteristics and associations to a specific brand or organization (Aaker, 1996; Biel, 1992; Keller, 1993). Hence it may be suggested that brand image is actually the translation of the information and meaning a brand or organization holds for an individual. Many scholars have - under the assumption that brand image is a vital part of any marketing processes - focused on the components that constitute brand image. Biel (1992) suggests that brand image can essentially be divided into three parts or images: 1) image of the maker 2) image of the product and 3) image of the users. Turban (2001) suggests that these assumptions and components are also greatly applicable within research of employer image. He suggests that employer image is actually the aggregated beliefs that a potential job applicant holds about an organization, in terms of the organization's characteristics and attributes.

Within this study we suggest that - as our chosen recruitment advertisements does not include brand names - the brand image can be assumed to be equated with the image of the advertisement. In other words we argue that the perception of the organization - or potential employer - can be equated with the receiver's - the potential job applicant's - perception of the advertisement. Drawing on previous research within brand image, we concur with Collins and Stevens (2002) who argue that the information related to a brand

or organization actually fall into two categories; awareness of the brand or employer and the associated perceptions of the brand or employer. Moreover, Wilke (1986) argues for the importance of attitudes to the organization and Keller (1993) argue for the importance of beliefs about a brand or organization to be considered by employers as a complement to Collins and Stevens (2002) two dimensions. We suggest that this line of reasoning also stands true for recruitment marketing activities and specifically for recruitment advertising. Hence we suggest that employer image could be defined as the potential job applicants' attitude and perceived attributes of the organization.

As mentioned in section 2.3 Turban (2001) suggests that people information - the characters of the individuals that the organization is perceived to consist of - is one of three vital pillars within brand/employer image. He suggests that organizations need to understand the signals its employees send to potential job applicants. Previous research has also argued for the importance of the individuals that are assumed to make up an organization with regards to the truly powerful signals they send to potential applicants in terms of how life at the organization would play out and how well they would fit in within the working environment (Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987; Turban & Dougherty, 1992). We suggest that people information - as per Turban's (2001) definition - will affect potential job applicants' attitudes towards the organization and also affect the perceived attributes related to the organization. The main reasoning behind this suggestion is that the potential job seeker will find itself within a situation of uncertainty, experiencing asymmetric information, and it will thereby react and form impressions of the organization based on any information it can consume (Rynes *et al.*, 1991). Within this thesis the main signals will be conveyed through the individual within the recruitment advertisement, thereby affecting potential job applicants attitudes and perceived attributes of an organization.

In section 2.7 we suggest that a nonconforming dressed individual within recruitment advertising will be perceived as more positive compared to an individual that conforms to the norms. This argument is put forth because we suggest that - with basis in previous research - an advertisement with a nonconforming individual portrayed will signal freedom and autonomy of that individual (Phillips and Zuckerman 2001; Thompson et al. 2006)

which as a effect will generate positive assumptions for the receiver of the advertisement - the potential job applicant. With regards to the research presented within this section and the conclusion that assumed employees send powerful signals about organizations, we suggest that an organization utilizing recruitment advertising with a nonconforming dressed individual will benefit from the positive inferences that the individual will receive in terms of potential job applicants perceiving the organizational to have a more positive brand image compared to organizations utilizing conforming dressed individuals.

### **2.11 Application intent as an effect of brand/employer attitude**

Individuals with little experience within a product or service area typically find it difficult to compare any different products and their qualities (Aaker 1996; Cobb-Walgren et al. 1995). Moreover, some researchers suggest that these individuals - or consumers - generally are the ones that are most influenced by any branding activities as it becomes an important source of information in terms of evaluating products, and/or comparing different products (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993).

We suggest that this also stands true for inexperienced job applicants - such as recent or soon-to-be graduates - as it is typically difficult to compare different employers as their true characteristics and attributes may be difficult to recognize. Moreover, there are many aspects and properties of organizations that are challenging to pre-discern. Thereby we argue - in line with the findings of Collins and Stevens (2002) - that potential job applicants will depend on the factors present to them, such as of their perceived employer brand image. We also concur with Collins and Stevens (2002) in their findings that employer brand image (which is argued to be based within attitudes) is positively related to any application intentions the potential job applicant conveys.

As concluded in section 2.10 we suggest that job applicants who experience a recruitment advertisement with a nonconforming dressed individual will perceive the organization to have a more positive brand image compared to organizations utilizing conforming dressed individuals. We also suggest this positive relationship of recruitment advertisement and

brand image will imply a greater application intention for the advertising organization. Hence our third hypothesis is formulated as follows:

**H3:** Job applicants will exhibit a more positive brand attitude to an organization using an ad portraying a person with a nonconforming outfit to an organization using an ad portraying a person with a conforming outfit.

### **2.12 Industry gender as a moderator of brand attitude and application intent**

Much research has been conducted within the field of gender differences in professional settings. Within a majority of gender-research studies focus has laid with the gender-biased characteristics of managerial positions, entrepreneurial ventures etc. (Powell & Butterfield, 1989; Schein & Davidson, 1993). Within many of these studies there are typically referrals to 'male' and 'female' industries, typically defined by the majority of men and women in the particular industry. This view of male and female industries also tends to be a general opinion within daily society. We suggest this view will also have an implication for our purpose of research, as we have specifically chosen two industries considered strongly male - banking - and strongly female - human resources.

We found that within previous research stereotyping is repeatedly a subject of interest within gender scholars (Eagly & Johnson's 1990). For example research within managerial stereotypes suggest that managerial traits are typically considered being more masculine and that both professionals and college students believe prosperous managers being more likely male rather than female (Powell & Butterfield, 1989, Schein & Davidson 1993). Deal & Stevenson, 1998 further support this claim, arguing that masculine considered traits are more often related to a successful manager than feminine traits. Thereby women within male-dominated industries might have to adopt a more masculine leadership style - in other words conform to the industry norm. However, as Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky (1992) suggest this type of conformance to masculine stereotypes within women does not always imply positive reactions. Rather on the contrary Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky (1992) suggest

that not adhering to a female leadership stereotype actually may harm the reputation of a woman. In their research study they found that women who violated female leadership stereotypes actually were considered as being less competent, effective and not as able to lead as their male companions.

We suggest that this type of gender-stereotype reasoning also can apply to industries in terms of them being viewed as male, or female, dominated. Specifically we suggest that the effects mentioned in hypothesis 2-3 (in other words that a recruitment advertisement portraying a nonconforming dressed individual will imply a greater perceived status of that individual and that this in turn will lead to a more positive brand attitude and application intent) will be moderated by the perceived gender of the industry. We argue that the effects will be more apparent within the 'male' considered industry because of the relationship between nonconformity, independence and status - aspects which can be considered being quite controversial within a female stereotype perspective. Thereby we have formulated our fourth hypothesis as follows:

**H4:** The industry for which the job lies within will moderate the effects so that they are more apparent within a male dominated industry.

### 3. Methodology

*This section will describe the method and its different elements underlying the study. The scientific approach will be presented and motivated, and thereafter the study design, pre studies and main study will be described. Lastly, the reliability and validity of the study will be argued for.*

#### 3.1 Scientific approach

The examination presented in this thesis is based on earlier research that has been applied in order to construct hypotheses, which have been further empirically analyzed. Hence, a deductive research approach has been applied for this examination. Critics often argue that this type of approach is strongly limited since the researcher tends to only look at information that should be relevant for the study. Therefore, certain effects that could have emerged in the study will not be discovered (Jacobsen, 2002). However, since this thesis aims at investigating outcomes from conforming versus nonconforming factors in recruitment ads for male versus female industries where a large set of data provides general conclusions, the deductive approach is relevant.

Further, to be able to provide these general conclusions the study has been conducted as a scenario based survey with given answers and statements, which have not been changed during the examination. The responses have been analyzed in a statistical program to be able to draw conclusions and generalize the outcomes. Critics claim that this type of research is unrealistic, comparing a controlled situation to everyday life (Jacobsen, 2002). However, another type of method would not be able to provide general conclusions for this ad comparison. Therefore, the quantitative method has been applied.

#### 3.2 Preparatory work

##### 3.2.1 Selecting industry

One factor in the main study is to compare recruitment ads for two different industries, which would preferably be considered male or female by the respondents. Further, the

industries were bound to be relevant for the respondents in question in order to draw conclusions from the outcomes. Lastly, the industries had to be considered having a relatively consistent dress code. The industries that were chosen to be included in the study were therefore based upon what we believed would be relevant for the students and where we have seen a consistent dress code. After this, a pre-study was conducted where the industries chosen (banking, retail, marketing, management consulting, tech and HR) were ranked on how male versus female the respondents considered them to be. Further, the industries were also ranked on how relevant the respondents considered them to be for them personally. By analyzing the responses, the industry Banking could be chosen as the male industry ( $\mu=6$  on a scale where 1 = very feminine and 7 = very masculine and  $\mu=6,32$  on industry relevance for a business student where 7 = very relevant) for the main study, and HR could be chosen as female industry ( $\mu=2,14$  on the feminine/masculine scale and  $\mu=5$  on industry relevance for a business student).

### 3.2.2 Selecting dress code

The next factor to be considered in the main study is the comparison between clothing that is conforming or nonconforming for the industry in question. A number of different photos of people with more or less creative clothing were chosen and presented for the respondents. They were asked to range the pictures in order from least to most creative and least to most conforming. Through this pre-study it could be decided that a black suit with a white shirt was considered least creative and most conforming. If red glasses were added, the outfit was considered most creative and least conforming. Therefore, ads could be conducted which answered to these compiled facts.

### 3.2.3 Conducting ads

By reviewing the results of the first two pre-studies, ads could be conducted for the main study. Two models were selected, one male and one female with the intention to examine differences in outcomes created by the gender presented. To eliminate other influencing factors, the models that were chosen are siblings and therefore similar looking. The setting and pose were identical. As compiled from the previous pre-studies, the models were dressed in a black suit and white shirt and were photographed both with and without red

glasses as creative and nonconforming factor. The photos were the same regardless of which industry they were intended to portray. A logo was added to the ads to make them look more realistic, but it was blurred to avoid branding effects.

#### 3.2.4 Ensure dress code and industry fit

Lastly, a final pre-study was conducted to test the ads and ensure the fit between the dress code and the industries. The respondents got to see one scenario, either for the HR industry or the banking industry, with the female or male model and with or without red glasses. They were asked questions regarding if the person in the ad conformed to the industry dress code, if she/he had a creative way of dressing and if the person had made a deliberate choice to dress differently. The results of the industry were analyzed and showed a tendency to provide the results as were expected for the main study. Therefore the ads were approved and could be used for the main study.

### 3.3 Main study

#### 3.3.1 Study design

To be able to test the difference in recruitment ads for two different industries, with two different genders and two different types of dress codes, eight scenarios were conducted (a 2x2x2 study design, see table 1). It was decided that each respondent would only view one scenario to reduce the risk of influenced answers by realizing the topic examined. The scenarios were conducted as surveys with the exact same questions and statements for each. They were randomized in order to receive an even distribution.

|       |                | Banking    | HR         |
|-------|----------------|------------|------------|
| Man   | Conforming     | Scenario 1 | Scenario 2 |
|       | Non-conforming | Scenario 3 | Scenario 4 |
| Woman | Conforming     | Scenario 5 | Scenario 6 |
|       | Non-conforming | Scenario 7 | Scenario 8 |

Table 1

### 3.3.2 Sample

As the study examines recruitment ads that are targeted towards business students, the surveys were distributed to students at top universities within the business or economics program. The surveys were therefore mainly sent to students at Stockholm School of Economics, Uppsala University, Stockholm University and Lund University. The response set consisted of 357 respondents and ultimately contained students within the age range of 20-27 years old. Approximately 50 % of the respondents had a Bachelor's degree and 50 % had a Master's degree.

### 3.3.3 Analytical tool

The collected responses were transmitted to IBM SPSS Statistics version 23 for statistical analysis. Several different tests were used in the statistic program to provide accurate results. When differences between two groups were compared (e.g. conforming vs. nonconforming outfit), independent mean comparison t-test was used. Where more groups were involved (e.g. differences between genders and outfits), one-way ANOVA's were conducted. To further examine moderators and interaction effects between the variables, multivariate general linear tests were conducted (MANOVA). All statistical analyses were followed through with a 95 % significance level and no hypotheses were accepted which were not significant on this level.

### 3.3.4 Questionnaire

The survey started with a description of a scenario for the respondent with focus on the background of the person answering and description of the industry that the ad represented. The respondent was then asked to study the ad closely before answering the questions. All of the questions were conducted as a question battery where answers were gathered on a 7-point Likert scale. All question batteries were tested through a reliability analysis where only Cronbach Alpha > 0,7 was accepted before creating indexes of the questions. The question batteries were chosen with the intent to examine different types of attitudes about both the person in the advertisement and about the organization. Several batteries were examined in order to ensure significant results for at least some

aspects. It should be noted that all of these batteries and aspects will not be analyzed in the results, due to different reasons such as non-significant results or plainly the need to limit the study.

#### *Attitude toward the person*

The attitude toward the person in the ad was determined through a bipolar scale with the statements "Negative/Positive", "Bad/Good" and "Unfavorable/Favorable". This question battery is widely adapted and used by for example Grossbart et al (1986).

#### *The person's status*

The status of the person in the ad is in this study interpreted as the strength of the person to do as she/he like. Two statements that were answered on a bipolar disagree-agree scale conducted the question battery. These were statements as: the person in the ad "can afford to do what pleases her/him" and "can afford to do what she/he wants". This question battery has previously been used by Bellezza et al (2014) when researching a similar topic.

#### *Attitude toward the company*

To examine the attitude toward the company sending the ad, the same questions were used as for the attitude toward the person. Therefore, it was determined through a bipolar scale with the statements "Negative/Positive", "Bad/Good" and "Unfavorable/Favorable". This question battery is widely adapted and used by for example Grossbart et al (1986).

#### *Brand/job interest*

To examine brand interest, the questions were directed toward the respondent's interest in the actual job and not their interest in the company. The question battery consisted of the three statements: "I am interested in...", "I would like to try..." and "I would like to have..." the job. They were answered on a bipolar disagree-agree scale. Similar questions have been asked regarding brand interest by for example Machleit et al 2008.

### *Job desire*

Further, it is interesting to see how much a job applicant would be drawn to the company in question by looking at the ad. Therefore, job desired was examined by using questions designed for purchase intention. These were: "I am interested in the job", "I would like to try the job" and "I would like to have the job". The questions were answered on a bipolar disagree-agree scale. Similar questions have been used by Dahlén et al 2008.

### *Control variables*

To be able to secure the certainty of the research, some control questions were asked. The first one was a simple likeability question phrased "How likely is it that you would work within..." and ended with either banking or HR depending on which scenario the respondent pertained. Further, two relevancy related questions were asked regarding the industries, the first one aiming at personal relevance and the second one at general relevance for a business student. Lastly, control questions were also asked about the perception of the outfit choice of the person in the ad. The same statements were specified as in the pre-study, that is: the person in the ad "conforms to the industry dress code", "has a creative way of dressing" and "has made a deliberate choice to dress differently". As above, these were answered on a bipolar disagree-agree scale. The question battery was inspired by Bellezza et al (2014). It should be noted that the variable "the ad conforms to the industry dress code" was recoded to be on the same scale as the two other questions.

### *Demography*

Questions were asked about gender, age, education, university attended and program studied of the respondents to be able to certify an accurate sample.

## **3.4 Reliability**

The reliability of the study indicates if the precision of the results is accurate. If the study can be repeated and still indicate the same results for the same measurements, the reliability is high (Söderlund, 2005). This is of particular importance regarding quantitative studies, as they are more likely to be questioned regarding their stability of the measurements and their internal reliability of the acceptance of the results (Bryman & Bell,

2011).

It can be difficult to predict stable results from this study taking into consideration the fact that the society's view on gender roles may differ over time. Further, the acceptance of nonconforming clothing could also be a factor changing over time. However, actions have been taken during this research to ensure the stability as highly as possible. First of all, the pre studies were performed and analyzed to confirm that the respondents interpreted the questions and stimuli correctly. Further, the number of respondents reached above 30 for each scenario group, securing an accepted sample (Malhotra, 2004).

The internal reliability is mainly ensured through the way of asking and managing the questions. First, only previously established questions were used in order to ensure that they provide accepted results. Further, the questions were asked in batteries containing similar expressions for every variable intended to measure. These were merged into indexes where only a Cronbach Alpha over 0,7 was accepted, which can be seen in Table 2 (Söderlund, 2005).

| Index               | Cronbach Alpha |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Attitude to person  | 0,961          |
| Status              | 0,951          |
| Attitude to company | 0,978          |
| Job interest        | 0,930          |
| Job desire          | 0,958          |
| Industry relevance  | 0,823          |
| Outfit conformity   | 0,733          |

**Table 2**

Based on these assertions, it is valid to claim that the study is reliable.

### **3.5 Validity**

The validity of the study is ensured if the results that have been established are spared from both randomized and systematic errors in measurement (Söderlund, 2005).

### 3.5.1 Internal validity

The internal validity concerns whether the examination measured what it was intended to measure, the causal correlation between the variables. That is, a variation in the independent variables is supposed to cause a variation in the dependent variables (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Because of the pre-studies and very thorough development of the ads, the different scenarios can be seen as practically identical. The only factor changing between the different scenarios were the red glasses, and since the respondents were only exposed to one scenario it is safe to say that the results are dependent on the manipulated variable. No visible brand was used, which excludes effects that might have emerged from brand knowledge or recognition. Further, the respondents were randomly selected for each scenario, which ensures that there were no subjective measurements in the study.

### 3.5.2 External validity

The external validity ensures that the results and the study can be generalized and transferred to other contexts (Jacobsen, 2002). No brands were used in the study in order to eliminate errors that could come from brand recognition. Therefore, it is likely that this study could be copied and transferred to other industries and businesses. However, it should be noted that the respondents consist of students of similar age range from top universities in Sweden. If the study would be transferred to another target group (e.g. unemployed people in general or students from average rated universities) the results could possibly differ. For this study though, the specified target group was essential. Further, the ads were not presented at any type of advertising platform and therefore it is safe to say that the study could be remade with other general recruitment ads.

## 4. Results & Analysis

*In this section, the results from the study will be presented and analyzed along with the hypotheses in the same order as in previous sections. The results will determine whether the hypotheses will be accepted or rejected.*

### 4.1 General results

The study aimed at examining differences between conforming and nonconforming outfits on women and men in recruitment ads. The manipulated variable for the study is therefore how creative/nonconforming the outfit is perceived to be and it was examined through adding red glasses to the person in the ad. An independent samples test was conducted for the dress code index to examine the difference in mean values between the groups. Table 3 shows the results of the test.

| Variable                | Conforming<br>ad $\mu$ (SD) | Nonconforming<br>ad $\mu$ (SD) | Mean<br>difference | Sig.   | Sig. 2-<br>tailed |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------------------|
| Perceived<br>conformity | 2,30 (1,03)                 | 3,85 (1,3)                     | 1,55               | 0,003* | 0,000*            |
| * P < 0,05              |                             |                                |                    |        |                   |

Table 3

The results presented in the table indicate that the nonconforming outfit was perceived as more nonconforming and creative (3,85) than the conforming outfit (2,30) with a significant difference. However, it should be noticed that the nonconforming outfit was still only ranked with a mean value of 3,85 on a scale of 1-7 where a higher value indicates higher nonconformity. Since it scores below 4 it could be concluded that even though the outfit with red glasses was perceived as more nonconforming than the outfit without glasses, it is still leaning towards being considered a conforming outfit. This could affect forthcoming results.

Further, differences between female and male industries are examined in the study. Therefore, it is of interest to see if differences exist between the groups regarding dress code within the different industries. A mean comparison was conducted through a one-way ANOVA and the results are presented in Table 4.

|                                     | Variable                        | Conforming<br>ad $\mu$ (SD) | Nonconformin<br>g ad $\mu$ (SD) | Mean<br>difference | Sig.   |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------|
| <b>Male<br/>industry<br/>(Bank)</b> | <b>Perceived<br/>conformity</b> | 2,29 (1,08)                 | 4,06 (1,44)                     | 1,77               | 0,000* |
| <b>Female<br/>industry<br/>(HR)</b> | <b>Perceived<br/>conformity</b> | 2,31 (0,97)                 | 3,61 (1,10)                     | 1,30               | 0,000* |

\* P < 0,05

**Table 4**

As seen in the table, the results differed more regarding the male industry. The person with glasses in the ad was considered more nonconforming (4,06) in the male industry than in the female industry (3,61). The person without glasses was also considered more conforming in the male industry (2,29) than in the female industry (2,31). The differences were significant for all groups. It should be noted that regarding the male industry, the nonconforming person was also rated above 4 on the scale of 1-7, meaning that the person is actually considered nonconforming and not just more nonconforming than the conforming person.

#### **4.2 Dressing creativity as a marketing signal within a recruitment advertising context**

As discussed in the theory section, it has previously been proven that adding a creative element to an outfit in a traditional setting could lead to effects on the perception of this person. The nonconforming outfit could in fact lead to positive effects and be rather beneficial if presented as unintentional (Bellezza et al 2013). This in turn could lead to peoples' attitude towards a person with a nonconforming outfit being affected.

First, the attitude toward the person in the ad was examined to see if the nonconforming clothing could influence the potential job applicants' perception of the person. By splitting the whole sample regarding the variable conforming or nonconforming, an independent samples test could be conducted to see differences in mean values for the conforming versus nonconforming person. Table 5 shows the results of the test.

| Variable                  | Conforming<br>ad $\mu$ (SD) | Nonconforming<br>ad $\mu$ (SD) | Mean<br>difference | Sig.  | Sig. 2-<br>tailed |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Attitude<br>toward person | 4,21 (1,22)                 | 4,5 (1,31)                     | 0,29               | 0,156 | 0,049*            |
| * $P < 0,05$              |                             |                                |                    |       |                   |

Table 5

From the results in the table it can be read that the attitude of the potential job applicants toward the person in the ad is higher (more positive) when he or she is wearing a nonconforming outfit (4,5 versus 4,21). Even though the mean difference is quite small between the groups it is still significant on a 95 % confidence level. This indicates that the nonconforming outfit actually contributes to a better attitude toward the person, and therefore it can be stated that the potential job applicants do favor a person with a nonconforming outfit.

**H1:** Job applicants will favor a person with a nonconforming outfit to a person with a conforming outfit in advertising → **ACCEPTED**

### 4.3 Perceived status of a person in a recruitment ad

To extend the research about the perception of the person in the ad depending on his or her conformity, the status of the person was examined. As discussed in the theory section, a person with a nonconforming outfit in a recruitment ad could be perceived to have higher status and can afford to dress differently because he or she is confident in his or her competence (Bellezza et al 2013). To examine these assumptions, the whole sample was once again split into two groups regarding the conforming or nonconforming outfit. An independent samples test was conducted for the whole sample and the results are shown in Table 6.

| Variable            | Conforming<br>ad $\mu$ (SD) | Nonconforming<br>ad $\mu$ (SD) | Mean<br>difference | Sig.  | Sig. 2-<br>tailed |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Status of<br>person | 3,83 (1,27)                 | 4,45 (1,3)                     | 0,62               | 0,807 | 0,001*            |
| * $P < 0,05$        |                             |                                |                    |       |                   |

Table 6

As seen in the table, the potential job applicants perceived the person with a nonconforming outfit to have higher status (4,45) than the person with a conforming outfit (3,83). The difference between the groups was larger than regarding the attitude toward the person (0,62 versus 0,29) and significant on a 95 % confidence level. This indicates that the potential job applicants do believe that the person with a nonconforming outfit in the recruitment ad has higher status than the person with a conforming outfit.

**H2:** Job applicants will perceive a person with a nonconforming outfit to have higher status than a person with a conforming outfit in advertising → **ACCEPTED**

#### 4.4 Perceived brand attitude and application intent as measurements of signaling effects

To continue the examination of the effects of displaying an individual in a nonconforming outfit in a recruitment ad, the effects on the company in question were researched. As discussed in the theory section, assumptions about employer image are aggregated beliefs that a potential job applicants' hold about an organization, in terms of its characteristics and attributes (Turban 2001). Further, an advertisement with a nonconforming individual portrayed could signal freedom and autonomy of that individual (Philips and Zuckerman 2001). Therefore, it could generate positive effects to the organization in terms of attitude of the potential job applicants. As an individual with a nonconforming outfit is supposed to be perceived as more favorable than an individual in a conforming outfit, this attitude should also be reflected on the company displaying the person. Therefore, the attitude toward the company was examined through an independent samples test where the whole sample was split regarding the conforming variable. The results are presented in Table 7.

| Variable                | Conforming ad $\mu$ (SD) | Nonconforming ad $\mu$ (SD) | Mean difference | Sig.  | Sig. 2-tailed |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------|---------------|
| Attitude toward company | 3,78 (1,22)              | 4,02 (1,55)                 | 0,624           | 0,003 | 0,212         |
| * P < 0,05              |                          |                             |                 |       |               |

**Table 7**

As seen in the table, the mean values differ between the groups. However, the difference is not significant and consequently no conclusions can be drawn with certainty. However,

instead of rejecting the hypothesis directly a further test was conducted. As the aim of the study is to see if the signals of the individual portrayed in the recruitment ad could have effects on the perception about the organization sending the ad, these effects could occur on the actual interest in applying for the job instead of on the attitude toward the company. Therefore a new independent samples test was conducted, and this time the mean values regarded the interest in the company (brand interest) in order to see if the job applicants were more interest in applying to the company when viewing a nonconforming person. The results are presented in Table 8.

| Variable     | Conforming ad $\mu$ (SD) | Nonconforming ad $\mu$ (SD) | Mean difference | Sig.  | Sig. 2-tailed |
|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------|---------------|
| Job interest | 2,92 (1,13)              | 3,22 (1,44)                 | 0,3             | 0,002 | 0,047*        |
| * P < 0,05   |                          |                             |                 |       |               |

Table 8

The results in the table indicate that the potential job applicants were in fact more interested in the job when seeing the ad with the person in a nonconforming outfit (3,22) than when seeing an ad with a person in a conforming outfit (2,92). The mean difference is quite small but significant. However, it should be noted that the interest is still below 4 on a scale of 1-7 where a higher value indicates a higher interest. Therefore, the nonconforming outfit still does not contribute to a large interest. As no significant effect could be proven about the attitude toward the organization, the hypothesis is partly rejected. Nevertheless, an indication was discovered that the potential job applicants would be more interested in the job when viewing a person in a nonconforming outfit. Therefore, the whole hypothesis is not rejected.

**H3:** Job applicants will exhibit a more positive brand attitude to an organization using an ad portraying a person with a nonconforming outfit to an organization using an ad portraying a person with a conforming outfit → **PARTLY ACCEPTED**

### 4.3 Industry as a moderator of the effects

This part of the study aims at examining if there is a moderating interaction effect within the variables that could influence the main hypotheses. This means that a variable exist

that affects the strength of the relation between an independent variable and a dependent variable. This moderating variable affects the correlation between the variables (Cooper, Russell, & Frone, 1990).

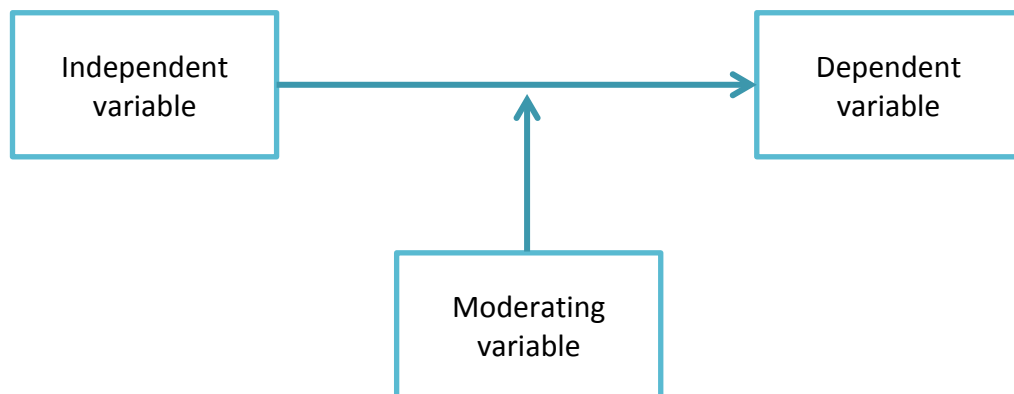


Figure 1

The variable that is believed to affect the previously tested variables is the industry for which the job ad lies within, since the ads were tested both for a male and a female industry. To test the moderation effects, a moderation analysis was conducted in the shape of a multivariate general linear model for the four dependent variables in the main hypotheses, including job interest that was added in H3, with the clothing variable and industry variable as factors. The results are presented in Table 9.

| Source  | Dependent variable | Sig.   |
|---|--------------------|--------|
| <b>Conforming *<br/>Industry</b>                    | Attitude person    | 0,000* |
|   | Status person      | 0,007* |
|   | Attitude company   | 0,053  |
|   | Job interest       | 0,000* |
| <i>(F= 7,935, *P &lt; 0,05, Wilks' Lambda 0,87)</i> |                    |        |

Table 9

As can be confirmed from the table, there is a significant interaction effect between the clothing on the person in the ad and the industry for which the ad belongs to regarding all dependent variables tested except attitude toward the company. Therefore, this variable will not be examined further. Instead, job interest will work as the variable stating if there is a connection between the ad perception and the company for a potential job applicant.

The next step is to see how the interaction effect works by examining how the moderating variable affects the dependent variables. By comparing the means of the dependent variables in a One-way ANOVA for both industries with the conforming variable as factor, it can be confirmed how this interaction effect influences the dependent variables. The results are presented in Table 10.

| Industry                            | Variable                   | Conforming<br>ad $\mu$ (SD) | Nonconforming<br>ad $\mu$ (SD) | Mean<br>difference | Sig.   |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------|
| <b>Male<br/>industry<br/>(Bank)</b> | <b>Attitude<br/>person</b> | 3,80 (1,08)                 | 4,73 (1,23)                    | 0,93               | 0,000* |
|                                     | <b>Status<br/>person</b>   | 3,64 (1,26)                 | 4,73 (1,24)                    | 1,09               | 0,000* |
|                                     | <b>Job<br/>interest</b>    | 2,57 (1,03)                 | 3,57 (1,47)                    | 1,00               | 0,000* |
| <b>Female<br/>industry<br/>(HR)</b> | <b>Attitude<br/>person</b> | 4,62 (1,23)                 | 4,24 (1,36)                    | -0,38              | 0,069  |
|                                     | <b>Status<br/>person</b>   | 4,03 (1,26)                 | 4,14 (1,30)                    | 0,11               | 0,323  |
|                                     | <b>Job<br/>interest</b>    | 3,28 (1,11)                 | 2,84 (1,34)                    | -0,44              | 0,032* |

\* P < 0,05

**Table 10**

Looking at the significance column, it can be confirmed that the clothing affects the variables in one of the industries, the male industry. Regarding the female industry, it can only be confirmed that the outfits affect the perception of the interest in the job, but not the perception of the person in the ad. For the male industry, all the dependent variables score higher for the nonconforming ad, showing that the clothing affects both the attitude toward the person in the ad, the perceived status of the person in the ad and the interest for the job. The biggest difference can be found regarding the status of the ad, where the potential job applicants perceive the nonconforming person to have a status of 4,73 compared to 3,64 for the conforming person. This corresponds to a mean difference of 1,09.

Regarding the female industry, only the job interest is significantly affected by the clothing in the ad. However, it is important to note that the scores are reversed. The job interest is

actually higher for the conforming ad than the nonconforming with a mean difference of 0,44 between the variables. Therefore, the nonconforming outfit affects the job interest negatively for the female industry.

**H4:** The industry for which the job lies within will moderate the effects so that they are more apparent within a male dominated industry → **PARTLY ACCEPTED**

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

*In this section the results will be analyzed and discussed with the purpose of drawing conclusions about the researched topic. Future research, implications and limitations will also be discussed.*

The purpose of this study was to examine if nonconforming clothing within a recruitment ad would result in potential job applicants being more likely to appreciate the employee in the ad and the sending organization – and in turn being more likely to apply to the job. After presenting the results it can first of all be stated that a person wearing nonconforming clothing in a recruitment ad targeting business students was considered to be more creative than a person wearing a conforming outfit. Further, the nonconforming recruitment ad was more favored by the potential job applicants. The individual in the ad was also perceived to have higher status. Regarding the organization, no conclusions can be drawn about the potential job applicants' attitude towards the organization being influenced. However, the results show that the application intent does in fact increase. The results will hereby be discussed and analyzed more deeply.

### 5.1 Dressing creativity as a marketing signal within a recruitment advertising context

As discussed in the theory section, research indicates that potential job applicants consume signals within recruitment activities related to the individuals that make up an organization. These signals can for example be how the potential job applicants perceive that they would fit in within the working environment (Schwab et al 1987; Turban & Dougherty 1992). It is further proposed that signaling nonconforming behaviors as an employee (such as creative dressing in an advertising) might lead to effects on the view of both the individual and the organization (Bellezza et al, 2013). Focusing on the employee, positive effects could arise regarding the job applicant's attitude towards him/her and they might find themselves favoring the individual more. The general results showed that the hypothetical employee in the ad was perceived as more creative when wearing nonconforming clothing and therefore it could be confirmed that a nonconforming outfit signals creativity. Further, it is confirmed that the creative individual also was more favored by the potential job applicants than the conforming and less creative individual.

In society today, a lot of questions regarding workplaces and working environments are discussed and debated. One of these questions concerns creativity and independence among the employees, and the main standpoint is usually that these are of positive effects for the employees (Honkiat, 2012). With this in mind, the fact that an employee signaling creativity in a recruitment ad is favored more than a conforming employee is very logical. Job applicants most likely want to be able to identify with the people they are to work with (Bearden et al. 1989), and since creativity is a factor that many candidates demand in their working place, a creative employee ensures that demand. Therefore, the creative employee will be more favored by the potential job applicant exploring the ad.

## **5.2 Perceived status of a person in a recruitment ad**

In excess of creativity, nonconforming clothing is also shown to signal higher status of the individual wearing it. The nonconforming behavior in terms of casual dressing actually leads to others perceiving the individual as having high status since it acts as a form of distinct consumption (Bellezza et al, 2013). The reasoning behind this goes in line with the reasoning in section 5.1 about why a creative person is more favored in a recruitment ad; that the nonconforming individual will have higher independence, being able to choose for him/herself how to dress (Bellezza et al, 2013) and therefore is perceived to have higher status.

The independence and individual autonomy is deeply rooted within western societies today and is therefore considered to be a positive aspect. Elaborating on the demands on a potential workplace today, as discussed in section 5.1, independence is a second factor after creativity considered crucial by today's job searchers (Computer Weekly, 2005). Therefore, job applicants might search for signals proving that independence is a factor present among the employees at the workplace. Because of this, the nonconforming clothing will be seen as a sign of high status in a business where conforming clothing prevails. In this case, the creative and nonconforming outfit signals that the employee at the company is in power to decide for him/herself what to wear and is free enough to be

able to make own decisions. Developing on this, the person in the recruitment ad is therefore seen as having high status when dressing in nonconforming clothing.

### **5.3 Perceived brand attitude and application intent as measurements of signaling effects**

People information – the characters of the individuals that the organization is perceived to consist of – is a vital factor of brand/employer image (Turban, 2001). Therefore it was suggested that people information would affect potential job applicants' attitudes toward the organization. With regard to this, an organization utilizing recruitment advertising with a nonconforming dressed individual should benefit from the positive inferences that the individual will receive in terms of potential job applicants perceiving the organization as a better place to work. As the results show, this kind of recruitment advertising signals creativity and independence, making the organization more attractive (Dahlén et al 2008). Therefore, the interest in the organization – and the application intent – is increased for the organization portraying a nonconforming person.

Elaborating on the western society today and the demands and requests that have arisen the last years, a clear pattern can be seen. Looking at the most popular employees and the best places to work, companies such as Google, Apple and Twitter are topping the lists; innovative and front running companies both regarding their products but mostly in terms of their company culture. Factors such as free dress code, no set rules, creative environments and high status brands are mentioned (Entrepreneur, 2015). Even though the nonconforming factor in the recruitment ad could seem like a small influencer, it could evidently be the factor contributing to job applicants' intent of applying to the organization. People are actively searching for independent, high status and creative workplaces and are looking for signals that could confirm this. In this case it has been proven that the nonconforming employee is both more favored and perceived as having higher status than the conforming employee. Therefore, positive feelings are transferred to the organization portraying the nonconforming employee. This in turn, leads to higher application intent for the potential job applicants.

#### 5.4 Industry as a moderator of the effects

When comparing the industries, the factors tested were female versus male dominated industries. As seen in the results, not all variables could be significantly confirmed regarding the female industry. As argued previously in this study, this is probably an effect of the gender-stereotype reasoning within different businesses. The male industry has more apparent effects because of the relationship between nonconformity, status and independence – aspects that can be considered controversial within a female stereotype perspective within business.

The variables were tested within two different industries (male and female dominated) to see if there could be a difference in attitude when portraying a conforming versus nonconforming person in a recruitment ad in different settings. As the results showed, the industry variable turned out to be a moderator of the effects, meaning that the industry influenced whether the nonconforming variable affected the testing variables. The nonconforming variable did affect all tested variables (except attitude toward the organization).

Focusing on the male industry, it was clear in the results that the nonconforming manipulation did in fact affect all the tested variables except attitude toward the organization with a quite large difference. This means that, as discussed previously in this section, the attitude toward the person wearing nonconforming clothes was more positive, the perceived status was increased and the interest of applying for the job grew. This is most likely a consequence of the gender stereotyping within business. Masculine characteristics are more apparent in top businesses, such as high status and independence. Therefore, a person displaying these traits in an ad belonging to a male industry will be more positively rated. Further, the organization itself becomes more attractive to apply to.

In society today, gender roles are debated heavily and a lot of actions are taken toward a more equal society. Still, men dominate top positions such as executive and management ranks in most industries. For example, there are no female CEOs among CAC 40 companies

in France of the DAX index in Germany. In the US, female CEOs only represent 4 % of the S&P 500 and Nasdaq listed companies (Financial Times, 2016). Because of this, it is easy to assume that associations toward what are seen as male businesses are stronger than toward female businesses. Therefore the attitudes toward these businesses might also be stronger when it comes to questions such as those researched in this study regarding status, preference and company interest. A person displaying creative features and high status will consequently be preferred and create a bigger interest in the organization itself within the male business.

### 5.5 Implications

The main conclusion and contribution of this thesis is that an organization utilizing an advertisement with an individual dressed nonconforming is regarded can enjoy a more positive brand attitude and application intent. The reasoning behind this is that receivers of such a recruitment ad considers the nonconforming individual within the advertisement more positively compared to an individual that is considered conforming. This suggests several implications for organization. Firstly and perhaps primarily organizations need to understand the importance of its people and the signals they convey through advertisement. Organizations who utilize their employees within recruitment advertisement, or utilize individuals, which are perceived to be employees within recruitment advertising, need to consider the signals it wants to convey and thereby choose these individuals with great consideration. As creativity seemed to be considered to be a greatly important factor within recruitment advertising, as it signals the creativity of the workplace itself, organizations in general typically need to place more emphasize on the design of their advertisements and the thought process behind needs to be elaborate. Organizations must understand what factors their specific targeted applicants will consider to be creative - for example within an industry that is already perceived as being creative a different route than the 'normalized' creativity might have to be taken.

Moreover we found that perceived independence - in the form of a nonconforming individual - was rewarded with higher brand attitude and application intent. Thereby organizations needs to consider how to signal this trait through its advertising. Utilizing its

employees and allowing them to dress nonconforming then seems to be a way for organizations to show their acceptance for independence and individualism - something that potential job applicants seem to find attractive. Hence, generic recruitment advertisements with static and formalized job descriptions will likely not be effective for potential job applicant favoring independence. In the majority of the respondents' independence - in our research in terms of conforming clothing - was favored to the more generic advertisement causing a need for organizations to consider how to share its more independent values. Organizations might also have to consider the implications this has for the workplace in general as well. If perceived independence is favored within recruitment advertising is it likely also favored within the actual job itself. Thereby organizations should review how they formulate their job descriptions and actual work environment.

Finally organizations also need to consider the implications of perceived industry gender domination and the implications this has for the design and formulation of their recruitment advertisements. As this research found that the results were more apparent within a male dominated industry organization will need to evaluate the perception of the industry they are operating in and consider how to design their advertisements thereafter. Perhaps if the organization is operating within a female dominated industry these measures might not be as important to consider compared to other factors in order to attract potential job applicants. Lastly, the results in this study suggests that perhaps the most vital factor for organizations to understand is that their recruitment advertising actually affect employer image and application intent, thereby probably implying that a greater emphasize needs to be placed upon the development of their recruitment advertising.

## 5.6 Future research

The research area which this study lies within - recruitment advertising - is relatively unexplored. Adding gender moderation as a factor to this makes it almost nonexistent in today's research. Therefore, a lot of extensions can be made within this area. First of all, continuing on the gender aspect, it would be of great contribution to analyze the effects regarding to the gender of the hypothetical employee in the ad. Since the gender industry

had an impact on the results, were male dominated industries saw much more apparent results, the gender presented in the ad would most likely also have effect. Further, examining the genders of the respondents - the potential job applicants - could also show a difference in effects on the variables. According to the gender stereotyping, it is feasible to believe that female and male applicants respond differently to the ad they are presented to.

As stated, this study examines the moderation between gender-dominated industries. Therefore, further research could be made within different aspects of industries. Conservative and non-conservative industries would for example be an example of a differentiation that could be made. Also, the actual signal examined in the ad could be moderated. This study examined nonconformity as a creative signal, but there is still a gap in examining other signals both within creativity but also within other aspects in recruitment advertising. Lastly, the general results showed that the individual in the ad was not seen as substantially creative/nonconforming. Therefore it is of interest to examine a more creative/nonconforming factor and also prove how creative and nonconforming the person could be perceived before leading to negative reactions.

All of these aspects, especially the gender role, lies in time with society today and the continuously ongoing debate about equality, working environments and performance pressure. Therefore, it is not only of interest to continue the research on this topic, but also of great importance so that implications can be sent to companies to continue improving society.

## 5.7 Limitations

There are some limitations that can be argued to have affected this study. Firstly we only have respondents from students at top universities in Sweden, which could affect the results in terms of attitude toward the person in the advertisement. It could be argued that this skewed the results as these students typically have more choices in terms of job offers and therefore can be more critical to recruitment advertising.

Moreover, it could be argued that the students were not faced with a real situation, but that they were aware that these were not actual recruitment advertisements, which could have affected the results in terms of its reality. Furthermore, the choice of individuals within the advertisement may also have affected the outcome, for example attitude can probably also be related to the actual looks of the individual portrayed in the advertisement.

Finally the relevance for the organization in terms of the quality of the application pool - or intended pool - within this research was not measured. Hence a nonconforming advertisement might have been attractive to a specific group of people, not necessarily relevant for the organization itself.

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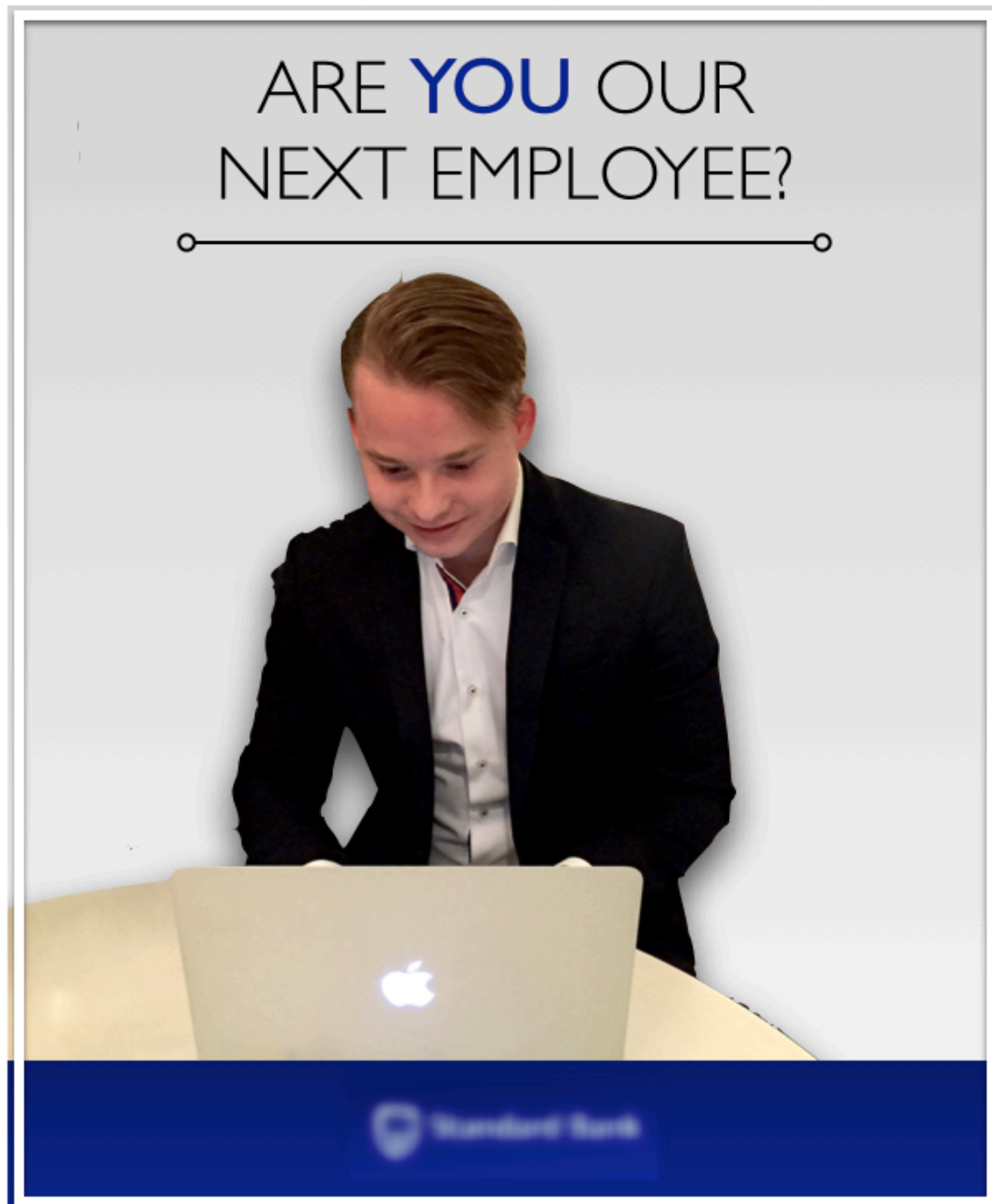
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## 7. Appendix

### 7.1 Advertisements



ARE **YOU** OUR  
NEXT EMPLOYEE?



ARE **YOU** OUR  
NEXT EMPLOYEE?



ARE **YOU** OUR  
NEXT EMPLOYEE?



## 7.2 Survey

Imagine that you are a top performing business student approaching the end of your studies. You are currently in the process of looking for a job for after your graduation and in this search you stumble upon the following ad for a job in **HR**.

The person in the ad is an actual employee at the company in question. Please study the ad closely and answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

What is your perception about the person in this HR ad?

|             | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |           |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Negative    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Positive  |
| Bad         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Good      |
| Unfavorable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Favorable |

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the person in this HR ad?

The person in the ad can afford to do what pleases him

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

The person in the ad can afford to do what he wants

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

Based on the ad, what is your perception of the company?

|             | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |           |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Negative    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Positive  |
| Bad         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Good      |
| Unfavorable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Favorable |

Based on the ad, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I would like to know more about the job

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

I am intrigued by the job

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

I am curious about the job

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

I am interested in the job

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

I would like to try the job

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

I would like to have the job

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

How likely is it that you would work within HR?

|                   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |             |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Not likely at all | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Very likely |

How relevant is the HR industry for you?

|                     | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |               |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Not relevant at all | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Very relevant |

How relevant is the HR industry for a typical business student?

|                     | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |               |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Not relevant at all | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Very relevant |

Based on the ad for the HR job, to what extent do you agree with the following questions?

The person in the ad conforms to the industry dresscode

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

The person in the ad has a creative way of dressing

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

The person in the ad has made a deliberate choice to dress differently

|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |       |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Disagree | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Agree |

Age (in numbers)

Education

Which university are you attending?

- ☐ Stockholm School of Economics
- ☐ Uppsala University
- ☐ Stockholm University
- ☐ Lund University
- ☐ Other

Which program are you studying?

- ☐ Business/Economics
- ☐ Other (please specify)