

Employer Branding on Instagram:

The importance of doing it, and doing it right

Abstract:

Employer branding is a relatively new concept that has received more interest in recent years, as it has been adopted by organizations to create a competitive advantage against the growing competition in the labor market. Instagram is being increasingly used for employer branding purposes, and thus, it is important to investigate how employer branding activities on Instagram should be conducted in order to fulfill its purpose; attracting potential employees. The study aims to explain whether an organization's employer branding on Instagram in terms of having an employer account will enhance the organization's ability to attract potential employees. Further, the study aims to investigate how the pictures on such an employer account should be presented in terms of aesthetics and ethnic diversity in order to attract potential employees. An online quantitative experiment was conducted with 321 respondents responding to the surveys. The results show that an organization can increase job seekers intention to apply by creating an employer account on Instagram on which it shares snapshots that include ethnically diverse employees.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Application Intention, Social Media, Instagram, Aesthetics, Ethnic Diversity

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Glossary

Employer branding - Activities initiated by an organization with the aim of creating an image of the organization as a potential employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Employer attractiveness - A competitive advantage for employers that will enhance their likeliness to attract talent with the right skills and competencies to their applicant pool (Cable & Turban, 2001).

Application intention - An individual's thoughts about a company that moves beyond the passivity of company attractiveness to involve the active pursuit of a job (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003).

Talent - Individuals that possess skills, abilities, and characteristics that are necessary for an organization's long-term success (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & González-Cruz, 2013).

Instagram - The largest photo sharing platform in the world (Chua & Chang, 2016).

Sales account - Refers to an Instagram account that is used by an organization for advertising and promotional purposes. The pictures on the account aim to promote the brand and drive sales, usually by showcasing new products and campaigns.

Employer account - Refers to an Instagram account that is used by an organization for employer branding purposes. The pictures on the account aim to visually showcase the "life at" the organization, i.e., the workplace and the company culture.

Snapshot aesthetics - Pictures that appear less formal and unposed (Nickel, 1998). Snapshots are characterized by poor focus, off lighting, harsh shadows and blurriness (Schroeder, 2010).

Traditional studio aesthetics - Pictures that are characterized by professional lighting, clear focus and detailed images (Schroeder, 2010).

Ethnic diversity - The variation of ethnic identities among people existing together in a defined employment or market setting (derived from Cox [2011] definition of diversity).

Ethnic homogeneity - The non-variation of ethnic identities among people existing together in a defined employment or market setting. As white models are argued to be the norm in advertising (Eisend, 2010; Gulas and McKeage, 2000; Richins, 1991), white models are used to showcase ethnic homogeneity in the study.

1. Introduction

The digital transformation has changed the way organizations brand themselves as potential employers, and the most recent tool in this basket is social media. Employer branding on social media is a relatively unexplored area of research that is under constant evolution. Considering the fact that human talent has become one of the most important resources for organization around the world, this area of research needs to be recognized. This section addresses the current state of employer branding and how this phenomenon has been affected by the digital transformation. The empirical problematization is revealed, as well as the purpose, aim and the expected contribution of the study. Subsequently, the delimitations and the research outline are presented.

The digitalization encompasses many elements of business and is for many organizations one of the most significant transformations to take into consideration (Hagberg, Sundstrom, & Egels-Zandén, 2016). Today, organizations are operating in a global environment, which places higher demands on adaptation and competitiveness (Schuler, Jackson, & Tarique, 2011). The global market is argued to be knowledge-based, and organizations are in great need of human talent that is able to successfully manage the complex and dynamic ever-changing environment (Ployhart, 2006). The importance of having skilled employees with the right competencies and abilities is thus growing at a rapid speed. But as the global market is becoming increasingly competitive, volatile and complex, organizations are struggling to attract talent (Beechler & Woodward, 2009).

According to Tarique and Schuler (2010), organizations' difficulty in attracting talent is due partly to the globalizing market, but the authors also mentions the effects of the generational shift. The young talents who are entering the marketplace today are often referred to as millennials (i.e., people born between 1980 and 2000), and are argued to possess characteristics that differ from former generations (ibid.). Research has shown that millennials are more confident, independent and entrepreneurial (Schuler et al., 2011) and that they score higher on characteristics such as self-esteem and narcissism. Hence, this generation is likely to have higher expectations on their employment (Twenge & Campbell, 2008).

The globalization and the generational shift have had an impact on organizations' employer branding. Employer branding is a relatively new concept that has received more interest in the recent years (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), and it can be defined as a tool adopted by organizations to create a competitive advantage against the growing competition in the labor market (Katiyar & Saini, 2016). Organizations use a wide range of external employer branding tools, such as campus brand ambassadors, pre-placement talks and campus reach (Saini, Rai, & Chaudhary, 2013), and the most recent tool in this basket is the use of social media. Katiyar and Saini (2016) argue that due to the changing behavior in job seekers and the explosive increase in the use of social media platforms all over the world, organizations should seriously consider promoting their employer brand on social media.

1.1 Problematization

In the beginning, social media platforms were used mainly by individuals for interaction and entertainment, but in the recent years, people's behavior on social media has changed. People in the contemporary society are connected to various social media platforms more or less constantly, and they tend to use these platforms in a more constructive manner, i.e., to seek information for their personal and professional use (Schaffer, 2013). Thus, the world has witnessed the appearance of more constructive social media platforms such as LinkedIn. LinkedIn has grown into being the world's largest professional social network with over 547 million users (LinkedIn, 2018), but the daily use of the platform is rather low. Only 2 percent of Internet users use LinkedIn every day (Davidsson & Thoresson, 2017).

Individuals spend more time on Instagram than on other social platforms, which indicates that organizations need to gain a broader understanding regarding this platform (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Instagram is known as the largest photo sharing platform in the world, and it is especially popular among millennials (Chua & Chang, 2016). Instagram is not only a place for individuals to interact with each other but also a platform on which companies and their customers can interact with each other. According to Instagram¹ (2018), 80 percent of the users follow at least one company account on Instagram. Many organizations have therefore included Instagram in their social media marketing strategy, by using a sales account as a visual marketing tool to highlight products, news, and campaigns (ibid.).

In the research field of employer branding, social media platforms such as, e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook, are often mentioned as platforms that are being used by organizations for recruitment and employer branding purposes (e.g., Katiyar & Saini, 2016). Instagram is rarely mentioned in this context, despite the fact that many large companies have started to use Instagram for employer branding purposes (e.g., GANT, Bonnier, and Google). A common way of doing it is by creating an additional account on Instagram, often named "life at [Brand]," on which employees are sharing pictures from their daily work. Google, for example, has created an employer account (in addition to their regular sales account) named "Life at Google" with the description "Snapshots of real life at Google offices around the world. Brought to you by the official #lifeatgoogle team and Googlers themselves" (Instagram², 2018).

Building on the notion that Instagram is being increasingly used for employer branding purposes, it is important to investigate how employer branding activities on Instagram should be conducted in order to fulfill its purpose (i.e., to attract talent). Seeing that Instagram is a visual platform, the aesthetics of the images shared on the account is likely to be an important factor to take into consideration. The effects of aesthetics is a phenomenon that has gained more recognition in the marketing literature in recent years (Schroeder, 2010), and one of the latest studies on the subject has shown that a brand's choice of image aesthetics on Instagram can have a significant impact on

brand attitude (Colliander & Marder, 2018). An additional topic related to the field of employer branding is ethnic diversity. Ethnic diversity is a highly relevant topic today since the workforce is becoming increasingly globalized (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Åkestam (2017) suggest that when mindfully portrayed, ethnic diversity in branding can lead to effects that are positive for the ad and the brand. Furthermore, diversity dimensions have shown to have an effect on employer attractiveness dimensions (Backhaus, Stone, & Heiner, 2002).

1.2 Aim, Purpose & Expected Contribution

The study aims to explain whether an organization's employer branding on the social media platform Instagram in terms of having an employer account will enhance the organizations ability to attract potential employees. Further, the study aims to investigate how the pictures on such an employer account should be presented in terms of aesthetics and ethnic diversity, in order to attract potential employees. Hence, the purpose of the study is to clarify if and how organizations can benefit from an employer account on Instagram in order to stay competitive in the war for talent.

The study anticipates to make theoretical contributions to the relevant yet scarce field of research on employer branding on the image-based social media. Further, the study wants to contribute with empirical findings to practitioners wanting to optimize their employer branding on Instagram in order to attract potential employees.

1.2.1 Research Questions

1. Is it beneficial for an organization to have an employer account on Instagram in order to be attractive for potential employees?
2. How should the pictures on an employer account on Instagram be presented in terms of aesthetics and ethnic diversity, in order to be attractive for potential employees?

1.3 Delimitations

Due to restrictions in time and resources, the study has some delimitations. The study is set on Instagram, and do not investigate the effects of employer branding on other types of social media platforms. The study examines the effects of Instagram pictures, and do not take into consideration the effects of written communication or other types of visual content such as videos or Instagram stories. It is likely that several factors affect an organizations employer brand, but this study is limited to investigating two factors; aesthetics and ethnic diversity. Further, the study is limited to investigating the effects on the external pool of stakeholders and does not consider the effects on the internal pool of stakeholders (e.g., employees already engaged within the company). No distinction has been made between active Instagram users and novices.

A well-known fashion brand was used in the study. Hence, the study does not examine how the results differ between different industries, brands, or categories. Neither does it consider that organizations might use a mix of snapshot aesthetics and traditional studio aesthetics, as well as a mix of ethnically diversified models and ethnically homogeneous models on Instagram. Further, an Instagram account can be used both for sales purposes (e.g., promoting the brand and drive sales) and employer branding purposes. The effects of such combination have not been examined.

The geographical scope of the study is limited to students and alumni currently living in Sweden. However, some of the students participating in the study have been exchange-students which means that the study incorporates students and alumni from different parts of the world. The study focuses on comparatively young talents who have just entered the labor market or young talents who are going to enter the labor market in the near future. Hence, the study does not take elderly or more experienced talent into consideration.

1.4 Research Outline

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The second section review relevant literature on corporate brand and employer brand, employer branding on social media, aesthetics, and ethnic diversity in advertising. This section also includes the theoretical background and hypothesis development, including a theoretical framework. The third section explains the research approach and methodology, including measures, samples, and data collection. Section four presents and analyses the results derived from the data, and the fifth section provides a discussion of the findings. Lastly, conclusions and managerial implications are provided, followed by the limitations of the study and suggestions on future research areas.

2. Theory

The following section presents the theoretical approach used in the study, and can be divided into two separate sections; a literature review and the theoretical framework. The literature review includes the background to the research area, as well as existing research on employer brand and corporate brand, employer branding on social media, aesthetics and ethnic diversity in advertising. At the end of the section, the research gap is outlined. In the second section, the theoretical framework is presented, drawing from theory on employer branding, aesthetics, and ethnic diversity. The hypotheses are generated within this section and work as a foundation for further analysis of the empirical data. The section is finalized with a summarizing model, which includes the hypotheses generated.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Background

Attracting and retaining talent is argued to be a critical driver of organizational performance, competitive advantage and future success (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). Barney (1991) argues that human talent is the primary source of value, growth and sustained competitive advantage, and Cappelli (2008) suggest that human talent is the most important resource for organizations around the world. Yet, organizations are struggling to attract highly skilled talent, which is due mainly to the complexity of the globalized market and the generational shift (Tarique and Schuler, 2010). The global market has become knowledge-based, and organizations are thus in need of skilled talent that can manage the complex environment (Ployhart, 2006). Schuler et al. (2011, p. 507) state that "in today's rapidly moving, extremely uncertain, and highly competitive global environment, firms worldwide are encountering numerous global talent challenges."

The digitalization and the invasion of social media platforms in peoples lives have changed the business landscape, with the result that organizations are lowering their budgets for traditional media marketing and increasing their budgets for social media marketing (Kirtis & Karahan, 2011). The same goes for employer branding activities. Many companies have expanded their "traditional" employer branding activities such as pre-placement talks and campus reach, and are now using various social media platforms for employer branding purposes (Katiyar & Saini, 2016). Instagram seems to be one of the most recent tools to this basket. Yet, few organizations can be aware of what kind of content to share on Instagram in order to successfully attract talent, since there is a lack of research on the field (ibid.).

Historically, researchers have applied marketing principles of brand management to the fields of human resource management to get a broader understanding of which values that attract talent (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). In the field of marketing, it is a common understanding that a strong consumer brand will result in several advantages for a company, such as more engaged and loyal consumers (Aaker, 2004). Within the field of employer branding, corresponding advantages have

been found from leveraging a strong employer brand. Martin and Beaumont (2003) argue that a strong employer brand act as a value proposition, which can simplify the attraction, recruitment, and retention of talent.

2.1.2 Corporate Brand and Employer Brand

The concept of *brand* has been thoroughly examined by researchers (e.g., Aaker, 2004; Keller, 1993), but most literature on brands have focused on consumer behavior and marketing. Surprisingly few studies have examined the effects of brands on other areas of business (Kim, York & Lim, 2011). Research has shown that a strong brand can create several advantages for an organization. A strong brand can have a positive effect on the area of human resource management, as research has shown that brands play an important role in, e.g., attracting and retaining talent (Hieronimus, Schaefer, & Schröder, 2005). Thus, recent studies have applied research based on brands to understand job seekers' application behavior (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Kim et al., 2011).

A corporate brand (i.e., a organization brand) "defines the firm that will deliver and stand behind the offering that the customer will buy and use" (Aaker, 2004, p. 6). The corporate brand consists of consumer associations and is often referred to as something that exists only in the minds of consumers. Several advantages have been linked to having a strong corporate brand, whereas one of the advantages consists of enhanced *brand credibility*. Brand credibility is formed by brand associations and refers to the extent of which customers believe that a brand can create products that will satisfy their needs (Brexendorf, Bayus, & Keller, 2015). A credible brand can attain benefits such as higher levels of liking, higher levels of perceived expertise and higher levels of trust, which will enhance the likeliness that consumers will choose that brand over another (Aaker, 2004).

The corporate brand and the employer brand are argued to be interconnected (Rosethorn, 2009; Rampl & Kenning, 2013). When a brand is highly rated by the consumers on the market, it works as a representative for both the material brand and the immaterial brand. The immaterial brand represents the organizations "soft values," such as the employer brand (Matuska & Sałek-Imińska, 2014). Employees are becoming central to the process of brand building, as their behaviors can strengthen or weaken a brand's value on the market (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Studies have shown that employees play a crucial role for consumer satisfaction (Schultz, 2002), organizational performance (Lado & Wilson, 1994), and job seekers' application behavior (e.g., Collins & Stevens, 2002; DelVecchio, Jarvis, Klink, & Dineen, 2007; Kim et al., 2011). Thus, employees and the employer brand do not only affect the internal strength of the company, with regard to having internal talent as a competitive asset, they also affect how strong the corporate brand is on the consumer market. If organizations want to stay internally and externally competitive, they thus need to adopt a successful employer branding strategy (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001).

2.1.3 Employer Branding on Social Media

Employer branding is a relatively young concept, originating in the mid-1990s, that has received more interest in the recent years. Employer branding can be defined as "the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors" (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 502). Katiyar and Saini (2016) argue that employer branding is a tool adopted by organizations in order to maintain a competitive advantage over the growing competition in the labor market. Employer branding can be expressed in a number of forms, varying from an HR-perspective to being more focused on marketing and strengthening the commercial brand. Within the marketing literature, employer branding is most commonly used as a tool to strengthen the brand towards consumers and potential future talent, with the aim of increasing brand recognition and attitude. The ultimate goal is to attract both consumers and potential talent (Edwards & Kelan, 2011).

Job seekers usually have limited information about potential employers and must use small pieces of information to construct a view of what it would be like to work for an organization. Signaling theory suggests that individuals use these clues and pieces of information (usually dropped by the organization) to draw conclusions about the organization's intentions and actions, and how it would be to work at the organization (Barber, 1998). In order to build an attractive employer image and attract the brightest employees, organizations must thus style themselves as attractive employers (Kaur, Sharma, Kaur, & Sharma, 2015). Yet, the employer brand is primarily shaped by the employees, and not so much by the more traditional recruitment activities initiated by the company (Rynes, 1991). Thus, social media has become one of the latest and most effective tools for employer branding (Kaur et al., 2015), since these technologies are "social" rather than "commercial" (Miller, 2008).

Today, many organizations are using a variety of social media platforms for employer branding purposes (Katiyar & Saini, 2016). The use of different types of social media platforms to communicate and share information about the organization can increase the likelihood that young talents develop preferred image beliefs about the organization as a potential employer (Walker, Field, Giles, Bernerth, & Short, 2011). People in the contemporary society are connected to various social media platforms more or less constantly, and one of the most frequently used platforms is Instagram (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). The benefits of using Instagram for employer branding purposes are, e.g., that Instagram is more frequently used (ibid.), and that Instagram allows for an employer brand to be highlighted visually through pictures, which can strengthen the effects of the message that the company wants to mediate (Schroeder, 2010; Berlyne, 1971).

2.1.4 Aesthetics

Building on the notion that *how* organizations communicate, rather than what they communicate, is becoming increasingly important (Dahlén, Rosengren & Törn, 2008), organizations' choice of

aesthetic style in their communication is key. Images, and especially images of people (e.g., consumers, employees, models, and celebrities) make up a large part of an organizations marketing communication. Yet, the style of the images has for long been overlooked as an important category of strategic organizational communication, despite being one of the most important branding tools for organizations. The style of the images used by the organization "perform the brand," which is why the style (i.e., the *aesthetics*) of the images constitutes an important communicative tool that needs to be recognized (Schroeder, 2010).

According to marketing literature, there is a common understanding that high-quality images perform best when marketing a brand (Lohse & Rosen, 2001; Pollay, 1986). Existing studies have all been performed on non-social media channels, however (Colliander & Marder, 2018). Social media platforms are considered to be social rather than commercial (Miller, 2008) and bring forth mostly user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), which makes social media different from traditional media. The user-generated pictures shared on these technologies consist of rather straightforward images of everyday life that appear "unposed" and less formal (Nickel, 1998). Snapshots are often characterized by poor focus, off lighting, harsh shadows and blurriness, and can thus be considered a discrepancy from traditional studio aesthetics, which on the contrary is characterized by professional lighting, clear focus and detailed images (Schroeder, 2010).

As snapshot aesthetics enjoys a higher circulation than ever, it seems important to investigate how brands are affected by using snapshots in their communication. According to Schroeder (2010), snapshot images are known to be more authentic, sincere, and less directive. The *authenticity* of snapshot aesthetics will make the receiver perceive the source as more honest and sincere, which are argued to be two main drivers for consumer interaction with brands. The opposite to authentic images are so-called "overproduced hard-sell images," which consists of, e.g., corrected and retouched images that have been portrayed in a traditional studio environment. Further, snapshots are known to be more *sincere*, as they provide a more casual and less formal image of the brand. The "casual style" has become popular both at offices and in private life, and can thus be considered a powerful marketing tool. Lastly, snapshots are perceived to be *less directive*. Brands that are using this stylistic tool are thus often perceived as more flexible and consumer-focused (ibid.).

The arguments made by Schroeder (2010) are derived from investigations made on traditional media, however. In traditional media, such as TV and magazines, it might be easier for individuals to identify the aesthetics as a stylistic tool that the brand has chosen to use. On Instagram, it is possible that individuals fail to understand the snapshot style of the images, and instead, they perceived the images as having no style at all, which can be interpreted as careless and sloppy (ibid.). This problem was adressed by Colliander and Marder (2018), who examined whether pictures with snapshot aesthetics or traditional studio aesthetics works better for a clothing brand on Instagram. The results show that snapshot aesthetics outperform traditional studio aesthetics

on a sales account on Instagram. The authors explain this by arguing that snapshots are perceived to be more congruent with the rest of the user-generated content on Instagram. Hence, consumers are likely to use a different set of rules when viewing and judging brand-initiated images on social media, with the result being that brands need to consider the norms of the media when deciding what content to share.

2.1.5 Ethnic Diversity in Advertising

Diversity is defined as "the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in a defined employment or market setting" (Cox, 2001), and incorporates diversity dimensions such as, e.g., ethnicity, age, and gender. The effects of diversity have been recognized within the literature of human resource management, whereas diversity among employees has been linked to several organizational advantages, such as improved competitiveness and enhanced creativity and innovativeness (Matuska & Sałek-imińska, 2014). Other types of commonly perceived advantages derived from workforce diversity are, e.g., increased probability for attracting talent and a strengthened commitment from employees towards the employer (Konrad, Prasad, & Pringle, 2006; Kirton & Green, 2005). Hence, organizations commence to pursue workforce diversity as a competitive necessity (Matuska & Sałek-imińska, 2014).

In recent years, ethnic diversity has received more attention within the marketing literature and among marketing practitioners. Åkestam (2017) observed that several major brands have started to use ethnically diverse models in their advertisements. She mentions examples such as Coca Cola's campaign "America is beautiful," featuring the nation's wide array of ethnicities, and Dove's "Campaign for real beauty," featuring a group of ethnically diversified women. Ethnic diversity in advertising thus seems to be a strong trend, embraced by some of the world's largest corporations. When investigating the effects of ethnically diversified portrayals in advertising, Åkestam (2017) found that ethnic diversity in advertising can impact both brands and consumers.

It has been argued that the mere act of showing ethnic diversity in advertising send signals about the organization as being forward and including (Joseph, 2014; Vinjamuri, 2015). Åkestam (2017) suggest that when mindfully portrayed, ethnic diversity in advertising can generate effects that are positive for brands, while also reducing consumer's perceived distance to others. Ethnically diverse portraits of people tend to produce positive ad and brand ratings and increase brand attitudes, which is due to the fact that ethnic diversity in advertising cultivates a perception of shared reality among consumers. This, in turn, fosters consumers' thoughts about self and others, which translates into greater perceived empathy and social connectedness.

Job seekers prefer to work for organizations with whom they share primary values (Judge & Bretz, 1992), and it is likely that the presence of good corporate social performance indicate to job seekers that a firm has positive values. Social performance incorporates several soft values, such

as workplace diversity and how the organization treats its employees. If an organization show presence of diversity among its employees, the organization is likely to be perceived as having a better and more welcoming work environment. Further, diversity dimensions create some of the largest changes in opinions about a firm, whereas product issues have a lesser effect. Diversity dimensions thus have significant effects on employer attractiveness dimensions, and it is particularly important when an individual is determining whether to accept a job offer or not (Backhaus et al., 2002)

2.1.6 Theoretical Research Gap

Wilden, Gudergan and Lings (2010) argue that there is relatively little research conducted to explore the role that branding plays in attracting employees, and Breugh (2008) argue that variables like attracting applicant attention have not received much attention in the literature. Within research on employer branding, Instagram has not received attention, despite being the largest photo sharing platform in the world (Chua & Chang, 2016). Building on the notion that employer branding is becoming increasingly important for firms wanting to stay competitive in the war for talent (Katiyar & Saini, 2016), and that many organizations have started to use Instagram as a tool for employer branding purposes, this area of research needs to be recognized.

Research on aesthetics have received more attention in recent years (e.g., Schroeder, 2010; Colliander & Marder, 2018), but this area would benefit from further research. Every year, people are increasing the amount of time that they spend on the image-based social media platform Instagram (Davidsson & Thoresson, 2017), where the aesthetics of the pictures is likely to play a crucial role. Further, the effects of ethnic diversity have (to our knowledge) not received much attention within the field of employer branding. The generic term *diversity* seem to have received plenty of attention (e.g., Backhaus et al., 2002; Matuska & Sałek-Imińska, 2014), but these studies have not focused on the specific effects of *ethnic* diversity in employer branding, and even less on the effects of using ethnically diverse models on social media for employer branding purposes.

2.2 Theoretical Framework & Hypothesis Generation

2.2.1 Aesthetics

Several authors have discussed the importance of aesthetics when it comes to user's satisfaction with technologies, and has come to the conclusion that aesthetic influences are essential in user's satisfaction with technologies and the facets of these technologies (e.g., Hartmann, Sutcliffe, & De Angeli, 2007; Schenkman & Jönsson, 2000). Positive reactions to an aesthetic stimuli depend on the arousal properties of the object (Berlyne, 1971), which in turn is determined by the collative properties of the object, such as novelty, intensity, color, and meaningfulness. Drawing from the literature on aesthetics (Berlyne, 1971; Colliander & Marder, 2018; Schroeder, 2010), we propose that snapshot aesthetics on an Instagram account will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility, higher levels of liking, higher levels of brand attitude, and higher levels of employer attractiveness. This, in turn, will lead to higher levels of intention to apply.

2.2.1.1 Brand Credibility

According to Ohanian (1990, p. 41), source credibility can be defined as a "communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message," and is most commonly argued to be composed of expertise and trustworthiness (Selles, 1998; Smith, Young, & Gibson, 1999). The source (e.g., a brand) of information thus needs to be perceived as unbiased, true and believable in order to be considered credible (Hass, 1981). Colliander and Dahlén (2011) propose that individuals are more open to receiving information from a credible source, and hence, the more persuasive the message will be. If individuals, on the contrary, recognize a persuasive intent, they will respond by becoming more critical when processing the information and evaluate the appropriateness of the message more carefully, which has been shown to have a negative influence on individuals' evaluation of the message and the source (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000).

Colliander and Marder (2018) found that using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on Instagram results in higher levels of perceived source credibility than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics. The authors explain this by arguing that if a brand manages to create meaningfulness by sharing pictures that fit into the aesthetic landscape of the medium, this will signal that the brand successfully understands the medium in which it operates, which in turn signals that the brand is knowledgeable and possesses expertise. Further, the authors argue that snapshot aesthetics signal higher trustworthiness since the style makes the images appear more authentic. This goes hand in hand with Schroeder's (2010) arguments, saying that snapshot aesthetics are perceived as more authentic, sincere, and less directive. Authenticity has also been linked to directly increase trust (Gilmore & Pine II, 2007). Thus we propose the following:

H1a: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

H1b: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

2.2.1.2 Brand Liking

In a study made by Martindale, Moore and Borkum (1990), the results show that meaningfulness is a main determinant of aesthetic preference. Building on the fact that Instagram is an image-based platform where mostly user-generated pictures are shared (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Miller, 2008), it seems logical to assume that pictures with snapshot aesthetics hold a better congruence with the overall practice of the medium. As Instagram is be considered to be social rather than commercial (Miller, 2008), it is likely that hard-sell pictures with traditional studio aesthetics work as a contradistinction to the rest of the images on the platform. Several brands have thus started to use snapshot aesthetics on Instagram (e.g., Topshop and ASOS), in an attempt to better follow the "general etiquette" of social media (Colliander & Marder, 2018).

According to Reber, Schwartz, and Winkelman (2004), individuals tend to do a more positive aesthetic evaluation of objects that they are able to more fluently process. On Instagram, it is thus likely that individuals are more positive towards snapshots since the custom of the medium is to share user-generated content. Testing the theory, Colliander and Marder (2018) found that snapshot aesthetics resulted in higher levels of liking of the images than when using traditional studio aesthetics. The authors propose that snapshot aesthetics carry a higher meaning in a social media setting, as snapshots better fit into the rest of the sphere and are easier for the users to more fluently process. Pictures of traditional studio aesthetics were perceived to be less congruent with the rest of the content on Instagram, which leads to individuals perceiving these pictures as having less meaning. Hence, we propose:

H2a: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of liking of the employer account than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

H2b: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of liking of the sales account than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

2.2.1.3 Brand Attitude and Employer Attractiveness

According to Hoyer and MacInnis (2008), attitude can be defined as an overall evaluation of a person, object or situation. Brand attitude is thus an individual's overall evaluation of a brand, and consists of the various associations that the individual has linked to that brand. Brand attitude is an important factor to consider, since brand evaluation indicates to which extent an individual likes a brand or not. This, in turn, is likely to impact whether an individual chooses one brand over another (Collins-Dodd & Lindley, 2003; Solomon, 2014). Keller (1993) argues that brand attitude develops from an individuals exposure to and interpretation of a brands marketing content. If an individual likes a brand-initiated marketing stimulus, it will ultimately lead to higher brand attitudes (Brown & Stayman, 1992; Gelb & Pickett, 1983; Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012).

Similar conjunctions have been found between source credibility and brand attitude. A high-credibility source is more persuasive than a low-credibility source and will enhance attitudes to the provider (Pornpitakpan, 2004). Building on these theories, Colliander and Marder (2018) found that using pictures with snapshot aesthetics in an image-based social media resulted in higher levels of brand attitude, than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics. The authors explain the results by arguing that snapshot aesthetics lead to higher liking of the images and higher source credibility, which has a positive effect on overall brand evaluation. Thus, we hypothesize:

H3a: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of brand attitude than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

H3b: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of brand attitude than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

Employer attractiveness (i.e., organizational attractiveness) refers to a competitive advantage for employers, that will enhance their likeliness to attract appropriate candidates with the right competencies and skills in their applicant pool (Cable & Turban, 2001). According to Collins and Stevens (2002), attitudes and the overall evaluation of an employer brand can be conceptualized as employer attractiveness. Brands have been shown to play an important role in attracting future employees (Hieronimus et al., 2005), which indicates that a strong brand will have a positive impact on employer attractiveness dimensions. We therefore propose:

H4a: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of employer attractiveness than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

H4b: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of employer attractiveness than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

2.2.1.4 Application Intention

Application intention move beyond the passivity of brand attitudes and company attractiveness, to involve the active pursuit of a job (Highhouse et al., 2003). The literature on consumer branding and marketing shows that higher levels of brand attitude will lead to an increased probability that individuals will interact with a brand and ultimately take action and become a customer. A strong and attractive brand can thus affect consumers' buying behavior (Mitchell & Olson, 1981), and result in more loyal customers (Aaker, 2004). In the recent years, the concept of brands has been applied to the field of human resource management, where research has shown that brands play an important role in job seekers behavior and that organizations can get a competitive advantage in their recruitment by leveraging a strong brand (DeVecchio et al., 2007).

Whereas studies on consumer brand have shown that attitudes towards an ad mediate both brand attitudes and buying intentions (Mitchell and Olson, 1981), studies on employer brand show that there is a high correlation between employer attractiveness and intention to apply (Highhouse et

al., 2003). Further, Katiyar and Saini (2016) argue that that employer attractiveness play an important role in job seekers' intention to apply, and that various forms of social media activities lead to higher levels of intention to apply. Hence, we hypothesize:

H5a: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of application intention than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

H5b: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of application intention than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

2.2.2 Ethnic Diversity

Studies on marketing signals have shown that advertisement that is perceived to be more creative and expensive send signals to consumers that the organization is more innovative and offers higher quality, and that it cares more about its customers. These signals have been shown to have a positive impact on brand attitudes (Dahlén et al., 2008; Kirmani, 1997). Similarly, the presence of ethnic diversity in advertising send signals to individuals that the organization is forward and including (Joseph, 2014; Vinjamuri, 2015), which is likely to also have a positive impact on brand attitudes. Drawing from the literature on ethnic diversity in advertising (Åkestam, 2017) and corporate social performance (Backhaus et al., 2002), we propose that pictures with ethnically diverse models on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility, higher levels of liking, higher levels of brand attitude, and higher levels of employer attractiveness. This, in turn, will lead to higher levels of intention to apply.

2.2.2.1 Brand Credibility

The presence of good social performance, such as the presence of diversity in employees, indicate to job seekers that a potential employer has positive values. An organization with good social performance is thus perceived to have a better and more welcoming work environment (Backhaus et al., 2002). As source credibility can be defined as source's positive characteristics that affect an individual's perception and acceptance of a message (Ohanian, 1990), it can be assumed that an organization that is perceived to have a better and more welcoming work environment will affect individual's acceptance of their communication. It is thus likely to that organizations showing presence of diversity in employees are perceived as more credible. This goes hand in hand with Åkestam's (2017) arguments, saying that when mindfully portrayed, ethnic diversity in advertising can generate effects that are positive for brands. We therefore hypothesize:

H6a: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

H6b: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

2.2.2.2 Brand Liking

According to Greening and Turban (2000), an organization's presence of good social performance helps to inform perceptions of the organizational image. Image management refers to a firm's attempts to create positive perceptions of itself to stakeholders (i.e., potential employees), and findings suggest that such activities can create advantages for recruiting organizations (Backhaus et al., 2002). If individuals perceive that an organization has ethnically diverse employees, they are likely to form a more positive image of the organization. Furthermore, Albinger and Freeman (2000) found that an organization's support for diversity is related to positive perceptions of the firm as an employer, whereas Åkestam (2017) argue that ethnically diverse portraits tend to produce positive brand ratings. Building on these notions, we hypothesize:

H7a: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of liking of the employer account than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

H7b: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of liking of the employer account than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

2.2.2.3 Brand Attitude and Employer Attractiveness

Attitudes are a summary of evaluations that exist in the minds of consumers (Eagly and Chaiken 1993), and research show that attitude is useful in predicting consumer behavior (Mitchell and Olson, 1981). As earlier mentioned, a high-credibility source will enhance attitudes to the provider (Pornpitakpan, 2004), and liking of a brand-initiated marketing stimulus lead to higher brand attitudes (Brown & Stayman, 1992; Gelb & Pickett, 1983; Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012). The assumptions that were outlined in the section for aesthetics are thus applied also onto the area of ethnic diversity. Hence, we propose:

H8a: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of brand attitude than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

H8b: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of brand attitude than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

Diversity has been shown to have an affect of ratings of employer attractiveness. Thus, diversity is an important factor when measuring employer attractiveness, and it is also important when an individual determines whether to take a job offer or not (Backhaus et al., 2002). Furthermore, brands with a more positive reputation attract more potential talents (Joo & McLean, 2006), which indicates that the organization is perceived to be an attractive employer. Thus, we hypothesize:

H9a: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of employer attractiveness than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

H9b: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of employer attractiveness than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

2.2.2.4 Application Intention

Intentions represent personal actions and tendencies relating to the brand, and thus differ from attitudes (Bagozzi, Tybout, Craig, & Sternthal, 1979). Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p. 168) define intentions as a "person's motivation in the sense of his or her conscious plan to exert effort to carry out a behavior." Attitudes towards an ad have been shown to mediate both brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Mitchell and Olson, 1981). Signaling theory suggests that corporate social performance, which includes the factor of diversity among employees, may influence the job seekers in their choice process. As earlier mentioned, diversity is an important factor when determining whether to take a job offer (Backhaus et al., 2002).

Building on the notion that consumers' attitude towards an ad mediates both brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Mitchell and Olson, 1981), it is assumed that job seeker's attitude towards an Instagram account can mediate brand attitudes and employer attractiveness, which in turn affect application intention. Research have shown that there is a high correlation between employer attractiveness factors and intention to apply (Highhouse et al., 2003), and another study suggests that there is a strong relationship between individuals' perception of employer attractiveness and applicant decisions (Chapman, Uggerley, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). Thus, we hypothesize:

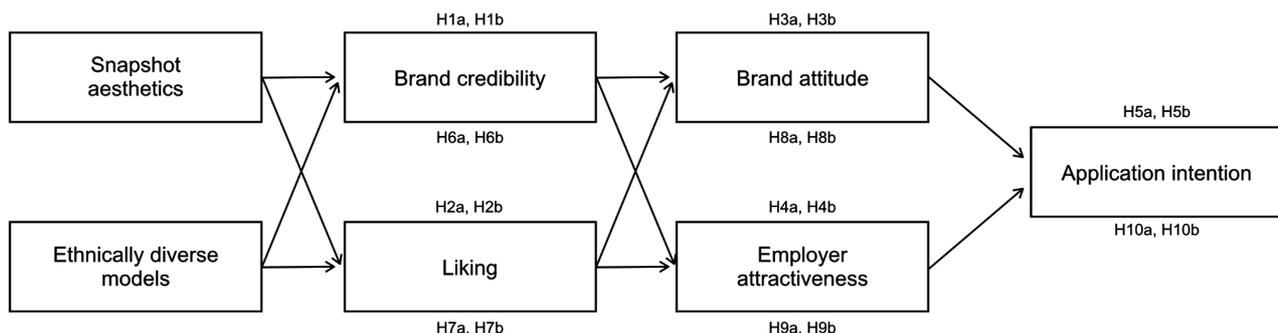
H10a: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of application intention than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

H10b: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of application intention than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

2.2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in the study is inspired by the conceptual framework developed by Colliander and Marder (2018). It states that snapshot aesthetics and ethnically diverse models will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility and liking, which in turn will result in higher levels of brand attitude and employer attractiveness. This, in turn, will result in higher levels of application intention.

Table 1
Conceptual Framework for Employer Account and Sales Account



3. Research Methodology

The following section presents the study methodology. Initially, the scientific research approach is described. Thereafter, the study design and the choice of study objects are presented, before the preparatory work is described. Lastly, the main study is presented.

3.1 Scientific Research Approach

The study is based on existing research within employer branding on social media, aesthetics and ethnic diversity, and aims to contribute with further knowledge to these research fields. The thesis has followed the process of gathering existing research and theory, and then hypotheses have been formulated based on what is already known. Thus, a deductive research approach has been used (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Criticism has been directed towards the deductive approach, since the deductive approach is based on assuming concrete expectations beforehand. The information collected is limited, and hence, there is a risk of overlooking valuable information. Yet, a deductive approach allows the researcher to delimit what to study further by being more accurate about what is necessary to include in the research (Jacobsen, 2002).

In general, using a deductive research method requires a quantitative approach when testing the formulated hypotheses (ibid). Using a quantitative approach enhances the potential generalizability of the results on the entire population (Söderlund, 2010). The dependent and independent variables were tested through online-based self-completion questionnaires, which were designed to be as identical to the real setting as possible (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Further, the study used an individualistic approach, which suggests that the individual person is the most important source of information. I.e., the information was gathered through survey sampling, and based on the information received from the individuals answering the survey, it was possible to identify common characteristics among all respondents (Jacobsen, 2002).

3.2 Study Design

The data collection was separated into two parts. First, a pre-study was conducted to investigate whether the respondents perceived the independent variables correctly. The pre-study made it possible to improve certain aspects of the treatments by adjusting the stimulus materials to suit the independent variables better and thereby minimizing the occurrence of unwanted results. The pre-study was conducted online using a quantitative data collection with a sample of 46 respondents. Once the stimulus materials had been finalized, the survey for the main study was completed and examined further by the supervisor and a number of fellow students, to ensure that the survey was understandable and correct before it was distributed. In total, 321 respondents answered the eight surveys in the main study. The pre-study and the main study were randomly distributed, which was enabled by a randomization feature within Qualtrics. From the independent variables, eight cells were created (see Table 2).

Table 2

Surveys used in the main study

Employee account	Ethnically homogeneous models and snapshot aesthetics	Ethnically diverse models and snapshot aesthetics	Ethnically homogeneous models and traditional studio aesthetics	Ethnically diverse models and traditional studio aesthetics
Sales account	Ethnically homogeneous models and snapshot aesthetics	Ethnically diverse models and snapshot aesthetics	Ethnically homogeneous models and traditional studio aesthetics	Ethnically diverse models and traditional studio aesthetics

3.3 Choice of Study Objects

3.3.1 Established Brand

The study examines the effects of employer branding on Instagram, using two Instagram accounts that were fictitiously created and presented as if they were owned by the established and well-known fashion brand H&M. According to Sinclair (2018), H&M is one of the most sought-after employers among business students in Sweden, and at the Stockholm School of Economics, H&M is ranked as number 6 of the most popular companies to work at after graduating (Wahlund, 2017). Building on these notions, H&M is assumed to be a relevant fashion brand for the population, and thus a relevant brand to be used in the study. Using a familiar brand, however, increase the risk of brand associations which can cause confounding effects. It is also more difficult to influence respondent perceptions using a well-known brand. Yet, a familiar brand increases the perceived realism, meaning that respondents perceive the study as more realistic and applicable to the real world. Furthermore, as it is more difficult to influence respondents perceptions of well-known brands, the hypotheses testing will have a more robust foundation (Dahlén et al., 2008).

3.3.2 Instagram

Instagram is the third largest social media platform in Sweden, and is used by over half of the Swedish Internet-users. Between 2016 and 2017, Instagram had a more extensive yearly growth in terms of users in comparison to the market leader Facebook (SOI, 2017). Being an image-based platform, Instagram allows its user to communicate with other users in a more informal manner. The nature of the platform has created a growing phenomenon where businesses use the platform for employer branding purposes, by creating a separate account where they visually showcase how it is to work at the company (Przybylska, 2017). Since the amount of "life at"-accounts (i.e., employer accounts) on Instagram is growing, the study aims to examine the effects such accounts may have on potential recruits.

3.3.3 Images in Feed

The images used when creating the eight different stimulus materials were carefully chosen in order to get the eight Instagram feeds looking as similar as possible, to ensure that no other factors than the intended ones would affect the results. The following three factors were intended

to affect the results: (1) type of account (sales vs. employer account), (2) aesthetics (snapshot aesthetics vs. traditional studio aesthetics), and (3) ethnic diversity (ethnically diversified models vs. ethnically homogeneous models). The pictures were chosen based on the praxis that the stimulus treatments differed, while all other things remained identical. Thus, the models in the images had the same type of pose, wore similar clothing and had similar facial expressions.

The chosen images were intended to be unknown, and did not include any celebrities or influencers since that could cause undesired effects on the results. All images with snapshot aesthetics were collected from a number of small Instagram accounts that were assumed to be unknown for the general public, and most of the traditional studio images were found on H&M's website, either in the e-commerce store or the career page. These pictures were chosen to reflect the H&M brand more realistically. For each of the eight stimulus materials, different images needed to be used since the combinations did not generally allow for images to be reused in another stimulus material due to the independent variable combinations. When it was possible to reuse images in another stimulus material this was done. However, it was not possible to reuse images from the stimulus material of an employee account in a sales account since the type of images posted on these two accounts are too different from each other (see Appendix 1).

3.4 Preparatory Work

A pre-study measuring the perception of the study treatments (diversification and aesthetics) was conducted with the purpose of identifying whether the selected images for the fictive Instagram account feeds were perceived by the respondents as intended.

3.4.1 Stimulus Materials

The stimulus materials for the study consisted of an iPhone screenshot of H&M's official Instagram account. The screenshot was edited so that only six full images would be visible in the feed along with the initial description of the page. The pictures were manipulated in terms of aesthetics (snapshot aesthetics vs. traditional studio aesthetics), and ethnic diversity (ethnically diversified models vs. ethnically homogeneous models). For the sales account, all but the images were kept identical to H&M's official sales account. The employee account, on the other hand, needed more extensive modifications such as a modified account name, a modified account description, and a modified amount of followers. For both Instagram accounts, everything apart from the manipulations were kept identical (Boerman, Willemsen, & Van Der Aa, 2017). To make the accounts feel more realistic the stimulus materials were added to the screen of an iPhone mock-up (see Appendix 1).

3.4.2 Pre-Study Design

In order to test two of the main treatments (aesthetics and ethnic diversity), four online-based self-completion questionnaires were created and conducted through the online survey tool

Qualtrics. All surveys included four pictures (i.e., stimulus materials) in total, whereas every survey tested how the respondents perceived one of the following treatments: (1) pictures with snapshot aesthetics, (2) pictures with traditional studio aesthetics, (3) pictures with ethnically diversified models, and (4) pictures with ethnically homogeneous models. E.g. all stimulus materials including the treatment snapshot was tested in one survey. To ensure that the respondents were unable to make comparisons between images, they were exposed to one image at a time and were unable to move backward in the survey.

Along with every picture, the respondent was asked the following question; "To what extent do you experience that the images are taken in a professional manner?" for the testing of whether the respondent perceived the picture to be of snapshot aesthetics or traditional studio aesthetics. When testing the respondent's perception of whether the models in the images were ethnically diversified or ethnically homogeneous, the respondent was asked; "To what extent do you experience that the people in the pictures have different ethnicities?". A seven-point Likert scale was used for both questions, with the end-points: "To a very little extent"/"To a great extent." Lastly, the respondent was asked whether he or she recognized any of the pictures, in order to make sure that the main survey did not include any recognizable images. If the respondent had seen the picture before, the respondent was asked to state when and where.

When conducting the pre-study, a convenience sample was used as fellow students were asked to answer the online questionnaire via social media (Jacobsen, 2002). The surveys were sent out to respondents via Facebook between the 29th and 31st of January, and 46 respondents completed the surveys after the removal of unfinished answers. All surveys were written in English, to enable responses from international students and graduates currently living in Sweden. Among the respondents, 31 were women and 15 were men, with an average age of 25 years. The surveys were distributed via a Qualtrics-link that randomly assigned the respondent one of the four surveys.

3.4.3 Pre-Study Results

The results from the surveys indicated that the respondents perceived the treatments as intended. The data showed that the treatments Diversified (6.375) and Studio (6.550) had mean values above the midpoint of 3.500, while Homogenous (2.425) and Snapshot (1.975) had values below the midpoint of 3.500 (see Table 3). The results from the overall treatment perception were also consistent with the results for each stimulus material individually (see Table 4). Further, one image in one of the Instagram feeds was replaced since a respondent stated that they recognized the model in it.

Table 3

Pre-study: Overall treatment perception

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	p
Diversified	16	6.375	0.562	p<0.001**
Homogeneous	10	2.425	1.280	p<0.001**
Studio	10	6.550	0.856	p<0.001**
Snapshot	10	1.975	0.931	p<0.001**

One-Sample T-Test

**p < 0.01 *p < 0.05

Table 4

Pre-study: Treatment perception per stimulus material

Employee account	Homogeneous/ Snapshot	Diversified/ Snapshot	Homogeneous/ Studio	Diversified/ Studio
Mean	2.300/2.000	6.380/1.900	2.600/6.500	6.690/6.300

Sales account	Homogeneous/ Snapshot	Diversified/ Snapshot	Homogeneous/ Studio	Diversified/ Studio
Mean	2.300/1.700	5.880/2.300	2.500/6.700	6.560/6.700

Means descriptive

3.5 Main Study

Based on the knowledge gained from the preparatory work and the results derived from the pre-study, the main study was designed. The main study consists of survey design, sampling and sample, data collection and is concluded with an assessment of the quality of the data.

3.5.1 Survey Design

The main study consisted of eight surveys, which were created based on the three independent variables; type of Instagram account, aesthetics, and ethnic diversity. To measure the independent variables effects on the dependent variables an experiment was conducted through self-reporting questionnaires (Söderlund, 2010). The experiment aimed at investigating the respondents initial response to the treatment, and thus, the respondents were only exposed to one of the eight surveys. When clicking on the survey link, the respondent was automatically assigned one of the surveys, and once the respondent had been exposed to the stimulus material they were unable to go back and see it again.

To ensure that the respondents would leave sufficient answers and not miss or choose not to answer certain questions, the function for forced answers was used. Hence, the respondent could not move forward in the survey without answering all questions. The logic of the survey was to initially ask questions regarding liking, credibility, and attitude towards the Instagram page and the brand, which was followed by questions regarding employer attractiveness and application

intention. Personal measures concerning social effects and psychological measures were placed at the end of the survey, and the survey was finalized with demographic questions (see Appendix 2). The survey design was made with input from the study's supervisor, Jonas Colliander.

A randomization feature was used so that the respondents would randomly and evenly be exposed to one of the eight surveys, which is necessary to decrease bias in the study (Söderlund, 2010). To increase the response rate, the survey was designed to be as short as possible (approximately under 6 minutes) and the respondent was informed about the estimated time before starting the survey. With the aim of making the survey progress more transparent to the respondents, a progress bar was added at the top of every page in the survey, and at the bottom of the pages, the current page and the total amount of pages was shown. Hence, the respondent was always informed about the number of pages that she or he had left before survey completion.

The survey was conducted in English, to enable international students and graduates to answer the survey. The survey was sent out to students (at Bachelor and Master's level) and graduates in Stockholm, Sweden. The majority of the respondents are assumed not to have English as their first language, yet when studying at a higher academic level, basic knowledge in English is generally required. Hence, it was assumed that the respondents would have no problem understanding the survey.

3.5.1.1 Dependent Variables

The dependent variables were measured on a seven-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to evaluate to what extent they agreed with the statement, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

Brand credibility

Brand credibility was measured with four items; "H&M is credible/honest/competent/reliable." The first two measurements are adopted from MacKenzie & Lutz (1989), and the second two are adopted from Burner, Hensel & James (2005). The index internal reliability was accepted with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.838.

Liking

Liking of the Instagram account was measured with an index of two items; "I like the images in H&Ms Instagram account" and "I associate positive things with the images in H&Ms Instagram account." The measurements are adopted from Sánchez & Espinoza (2010), but they are slightly modified to better fit the study. The index internal reliability was accepted with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.815.

Brand attitude

Brand attitude towards H&M was measured with three statements: "My impression of H&M is good/pleasant/favorable." The three-item index was adopted from MacKenzie & Lutz (1989). The index internal reliability was accepted with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.929.

Employer attractiveness

Employer attractiveness was measured using a three-item index developed from Highhouse et al. (2003); "This company is attractive to me as a place for employment", "I am interested in learning more about this company", and "A job at this company is very appealing to me". The index internal reliability was accepted with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.918.

Application intention

Application intention was measured with a four-item index developed from Highhouse et al. (2003); "I would accept a job offer from this company", "I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer", "If this company invited me for a job interview, I would go", and "I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company". The index internal reliability was accepted with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.865.

3.5.1.2 Manipulation Check

To make sure that the respondents observed the treatments which they had been exposed to correctly, a manipulation check was added to the questionnaire right before the demographic measures. The perception of the treatments is essential to the study. In order to measure this, the respondents were asked two questions regarding the independent variables aesthetics and ethnic diversity. To ensure that the respondent perceived the image aesthetics correctly, they were asked; "The photos in the Instagram feed you saw in the beginning of the survey was ..." with the possible answers "Professionally taken/Unprofessionally taken/Not sure." When measuring the perception of the level the ethnic diversity among the people in the images, the respondents were asked; "The people in the photos in the Instagram feed you saw in the beginning of the survey was..." with the possible answers "Ethnically diversified/Not ethnically diversified/Not sure."

As earlier mentioned, the respondents perceptions of the treatments are essential to the study. Yet, as the aim of the study is to measure the respondents initial reaction to the stimuli, incorrect answers in the manipulation check have been accepted. Thus, no cases have been excluded from the study based on incorrect answers in the manipulation check. According to O'Keefe (2003), a manipulation check cannot be a genuine assessment of treatment perception since regardless of what the respondents subjective perception is they were presented with the treatments and responded based what they were exposed to.

3.5.2 Sampling and Sample

Bryman & Bell (2017) state that the data collection and sampling process consist of two stages; (1) establishing the setting of the research, and (2) the choice of respondents. Based on previous research and the aim of the study, Instagram was chosen as the context for the research, and (young) potential recruits were set as the target group. As the study was to be performed in Sweden, H&M was used as the potential employer brand in the study. H&M is a well-known brand in Sweden, and it is a popular employer among newly graduated (Sinclair, 2018).

The larger population of all new recruits was moreover restricted to that of students and recent graduates at the Stockholm School of Economics, and a small selection of students from other schools such as Stockholm University and KTH. During the sampling process, a convenience sample was utilized when finding appropriate respondents (Jacobsen, 2002). When using a convenience sample, the data may be biased, and the results are more difficult to generalize on the whole population (ibid). However, students can be considered a highly relevant group since they are job seekers in the near future and the chosen company is sought after as a place for employment at the chosen schools (Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013). Using students can also strengthen the design since it is a homogenous group and this helps avoid disturbance by isolating the relationships being studied (Bollen, 1989). When a sample is homogeneous, the variations are smaller, which means that the sample does not have to be as large as for heterogeneous samples (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

3.5.3 Data Collection

3.5.3.1 Survey Pilot Test

Once the main study questionnaire design was completed, it was coded into the online survey tool Qualtrics. For the main study, a total of eight surveys were created. Apart from the stimulus materials, all surveys were identical. In order to identify potential mistakes or other technical issues which may have a negative impact on the study, a pilot test was performed (Jacobsen, 2002). The pilot test was conducted by receiving feedback from fellow students at Stockholm School of Economics. As the surveys were conducted in English - which is assumed not to be the first language of the majority of the respondents - feedback was essential to ensure that the survey was understood correctly. Once oral feedback had been received, adjustments were made to improve the survey. In one of the measures regarding social effects, the meaning of the word "considerate" caused some confusion, and it was thus replaced by the more common synonym "caring."

3.5.3.2 Main Data Collection

The data collection took place between the 21st of February and 14th of March 2018. When conducting the data collection, a convenience sample process was utilized. The choice of using a sample of students was relevant to the study, however. The surveys were distributed via a link to previous and current classmates, as well as graduates. Further, the link was posted in Facebook

groups belonging to different classes (e.g., Master in Business and Management 2017-2019) at the Stockholm School of Economics. The link was distributed to one class-group at the time to keep track of the response rate. Class-groups that had a low perceived response rate were individually contacted via the school email.

A total of 321 surveys were collected. During the collection process, uncompleted surveys were continuously excluded in Qualtrics, and the random assignment of surveys was supervised to make sure it worked properly. Every time a respondent clicked on the link to the survey, the randomization feature would record it as a completed survey and facilitate the surveys thereafter. But far from everyone who clicked on the link completed the survey. This had to be supervised to ensure that the respondents would be evenly distributed between the groups. When the database was downloaded from Qualtrics it had no unfinished surveys, so exclusions due to unfinished surveys were thus not needed. The response rate could therefore not be calculated. The continuous clearing of uncompleted surveys was done to ensure that a sufficient amount of completed surveys would be collected. All groups in the data collection had more than 30 respondents (see Table 5) which is the least amount of respondents needed to perform sufficient statistical tests (Söderlund, 2010).

Table 5
Total amount of respondents per group

Employee account	Homogeneous/ Amateur	Diversified/ Amateur	Homogeneous/ Studio	Diversified/ Studio	Total
N	40	43	41	40	164

Sales account	Homogeneous/ Amateur	Diversified/ Amateur	Homogeneous/ Studio	Diversified/ Studio	Total
N	38	40	39	40	157

Frequencies

3.5.4 Data Quality

When conducting a study, it is essential to ensure that the study actually measures what it is meant to measure, whether the results can be generalized to other areas, and if the study is trustworthy (Jacobsen, 2002). To ensure the quality of the data, it will be assessed based on three criteria; reliability, validity, and replicability (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

3.5.4.1 Reliability

Reliability concerns questions regarding the repeatability of the study results, which involves consistency and trustworthiness of the measures used in the study over a period of time (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

Stability

The stability part of reliability aims to determine whether the measures used in the study are stable over time. One way of doing this is by performing a re-test on the same sample to ensure that the results do not vary from the initial testing (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Due to time restrictions, a re-test will not be performed in this study. However, the questions used in the survey are already established measures used by published researchers, and these measures can thus be considered stable over time.

Internal reliability

The internal reliability aims to examine to what extent the items within a multi-item index or scale are consistent and trustworthy with measuring the same dependent variable (Bryman & Bell, 2017). To ensure the internal reliability of the study all multi-item scales were obtained from existing research. The more researchers using a measure, the more reliable the measure becomes since it has been tested several times. This indicates well-formulated measures as well as correct measuring of the dependent variables (Jacobsen, 2002). Also, no measurements were translated from their original language, English, which can increase the internal reliability. Yet again, since English is assumed not be the first language for the majority of the respondents, the language in the survey may have affected the reliability.

Despite using established multi-item index measures in the study, the indexes were further controlled through Cronbach's Alpha to increase the internal reliability. For indexed questions, the internal reliability was accepted with a Cronbach's Alpha of $>0,700$ which is the minimum limit for basic research (Söderlund, 2005). The use of indexed multi-item measures and then testing the Cronbach's Alpha is the most dominating approach for testing reliability (Söderlund, 2010). Before distributing the main survey, it was pre-tested and examined by our supervisor, Jonas Colliander, who is experienced within the field (Jacobsen, 2002).

3.5.4.2 Validity

Validity refers to whether a measure actually measures what it is intended to, and it also measures to what extent a measure is free from systematic and random measurement errors (Söderlund, 2005).

Measurement validity

The issue regarding measurement validity is related to whether the study measures what it aims to measure. As previously mentioned, all multi-item scales were obtained from existing research relevant to this study, which ensures high measurement validity. If measurements have been used in previous research, the risk for incorrect formulations and misinterpretations is reduced. The probability for correct measurements for the dependent variables is thus high (Jacobsen, 2002).

Internal validity

The internal validity concerns whether the findings in the study was caused by the experimental treatment, i.e., if the independent variables caused the changes in the dependent variables (Fromkin & Streufert, 1976; Weber & Cook, 1972). To ensure internal validity, the measurements used in the study were carefully chosen and included only established measurements. Using several items to measure the same phenomenon and creating an index of these can increase the internal validity (Jacobsen, 2002). The process of finding these measures included a thorough and careful development of the theoretical framework and the survey design. Regarding the survey design, the order of the different sets of measures was considered to reduce the effects of the questions affecting each other. Further, the survey design was examined by our supervisor Jonas Colliander, who is experienced within the field (ibid).

The survey was conducted via the Internet, which can lead to a deterioration of validity, as the authors cannot guarantee in which environment or condition that the respondents took the survey (Söderlund, 2010). Thus, external factors may have affected the questionnaires submitted. However, the effect of external factors was minimized by collecting all surveys within a limited timespan of 16 days (2018-02-21 until 2018-03-14). To further increase the internal validity of the study, all surveys were randomly assigned to the respondents, which is argued to decrease threats against the study validity (Campbell, 1969; Cook & Campbell, 1976).

External validity

External validity refers to whether the results of the study can be generalized and applied beyond the specific area of research (Bryman & Bell, 2017; Söderlund, 2010). The convenience sample consisting only of university students and graduates is highly relevant to this study, yet as the sample is skewed, it is not possible to generalize the results on to the entire population which decrease the external validity (Jacobsen, 2002). The overrepresentation of women in the sample is considered to be acceptable since there is a similar overrepresentation of women among Instagram users (SOI, 2017).

According to Jacobsen (2002), results can only be generalized to the population from which the study sample was selected. This means that the study results can be generalized to the entire population of university business students in Sweden. Whether the results can be generalized to the entire population of university students in Sweden cannot be explicitly stated, as the vast majority of the respondents were business students, which can be seen as a limitation of the study.

The results were measured using high levels of significance to increase the external validity. The significance levels used in the study are $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$, which makes the results more precise and generalizable (Jacobsen, 2002). Results that failed to live up to the high level of significance were rejected. Since an existing brand was used as a study object, there is a risk that the brand may

have associations which can cause confounding effects. However, since it is more difficult to influence respondents perceptions of familiar brands rather than the perceptions of unfamiliar brands, the hypotheses testing is assumed to have a more robust foundation (Dahlén et al., 2008).

Ecological validity

Ecological validity refers to whether the findings can be applied to natural situations where the studied phenomenon normally occur (Bryman & Bell, 2017). When collecting the surveys, the intention was to avoid to hand out printed copies of the survey in classrooms. By distributing the survey online, the distance to the natural setting of where the phenomenon naturally occurs could be reduced, since the respondents were able to complete the survey either on their computer or phone. The respondents could also complete the survey at any chosen time and location, similarly to how they would act if they were to check Instagram. Further, the study object was designed to look exactly like an Instagram account normally does. H&M's Instagram account is number 11 on the list of the largest company-owned Instagram accounts in the world with its 23,9 million followers (Statista, 2018), meaning that many people follow H&Ms Instagram account and thus perceive it as a natural account to be exposed to. Using H&M as a study object was also relevant to the sample.

3.5.4.3 Replicability

Replicability is similar and connected to the reliability of the study. If a researcher would want to reproduce a previous study due to contradicting results from other studies, the study needs to be replicable. Thus, the study needs to contain details of how the study was carried out (Bryman & Bell, 2017). To ensure the replicability of the study the procedure regarding theory, methodology and empirical findings has been described in detail. The measures used are established which has reduced the risk of faulty measures and thus can it be argued that the study can be replicated in the future.

3.5.5 Statistical Methods

The data from the main study was downloaded from Qualtrics, and all eight surveys were gathered in one database in SPSS in order to conduct statistical analysis. The significance levels used in the study were $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$. The statistical tools used to analyze the collected data were Cronbach's Alpha, independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA with post-hoc test (Scheffe), descriptive means analysis and means analysis.

4. Results and Analysis

In this section, the empirically collected data is presented and analyzed. First, data regarding sample demographic is presented followed by the results of the manipulation check. Second, the results of the study's research questions will be explained with hypotheses H1a-H10b being accepted or rejected. Further analysis is conducted within the employer account to examine which combinations of the independent variables that have the largest effect on the result. The section is concluded with a summary of the results.

4.1 Description of Sample Demographics

Each survey had a sample size of 38-43 respondents (see Table 5), which is above the minimum limit of 30 respondents that is required to perform a sufficient statistical analysis (Söderlund, 2010). The respondent distribution between the groups is considered even. In Table 6, a detailed description of the sample demographics is presented, and based on the data the two main groups, employer account and sales account, can be regarded as homogeneous which means that demographic differences should not affect the results of the study. Since the surveys were randomly assigned the demographics should be the same for all the cells within the main groups (Verma, 2015). For the overall sample of 321 respondents, the gender distribution was 63% women and 37% men, with an average age of 24 years.

Table 6
Demographics of respondents

		Entire sample	Employer account	Sales account
N		321	164	157
Age	Mean	24	24	24
	Median	24	24	24
Gender	Women	63 %	63 %	62 %
	Men	37 %	37 %	38 %
Occupation	University student	84 %	84 %	86 %
	Alumni <2 years	14 %	15 %	12 %
	Alumni >2 years	2 %	1 %	2 %

4.2 Manipulation Check

The study manipulation check is meant to measure the respondents perception of the treatments in the study. As the aim of the study is to measure the respondents initial reaction to the stimuli, incorrect answers in the manipulation check have been accepted. Thus, no cases have been excluded from the study based on incorrect answers in the manipulation check. O'Keefe's (2003) statement further motivated this decision.

4.2.1 Aesthetics

Regarding the aesthetics of the images in the feed 45 respondents (14%) were either not sure or gave incorrect answers while 276 respondents (86%) gave correct answers of the entire sample. When testing the snapshot aesthetics, 82% chose the correct answer, and for the traditional studio aesthetics, 91% did.

Table 7
(The photos in the Instagram feed you saw in the beginning of the survey was ...)

		Professionally taken	Unprofessionally taken	Not sure	N
Snapshot	Frequency	20	131	10	161
	Percent	12 %	82 %	6 %	-
Studio	Frequency	145	4	11	160
	Percent	91 %	2 %	7 %	-

4.2.2 Ethnic Diversity

The manipulation check showed that 47 respondents (15%) either were not sure or answered wrong on the question regarding whether people in the images of the Instagram feed were diversified or not. This means that 274 respondents (85%) answered the question correctly. When looking at the results individually, 93% of the respondents answered correctly when the models were diversified, and 77% answered correctly when the models were not ethnically diversified.

Table 8
(The people in the photos in the Instagram feed you saw in the beginning of the survey was...)

		Ethnically diversified	Not ethnically diversified	Not sure	N
Diversified	Frequency	152	5	6	163
	Percent	93 %	3 %	4 %	-
Homogeneous	Frequency	11	122	25	158
	Percent	7 %	77 %	16 %	-

4.3 Hypotheses Testing

To make the hypotheses testing more clear and easy to follow the formulated hypotheses will be tested in the order of the conceptual framework.

4.3.1 Main Effects

To measure the main effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables within the two Instagram accounts, employer account and sales account, a series of independent-samples t-tests were conducted with the dataset split to compare the two accounts. When checking the

assumptions of the Levene's test for equality of variances a $p < 0.05$ indicate that the variances of the two groups are not the same (Pallant, 2016). Further, the p-value will be complemented with an indication of the effect size, eta squared (Cohen, 1992). The eta squared values will be interpreted according to the following guidelines; 0.01 = small effect, 0.06=moderate effect and 0.14=large effect (Cohen, 1988).

4.3.1.1 Aesthetics

In order to compare the mean scores between the two groups snapshot aesthetics and traditional studio aesthetics within the two different accounts, employer and sales, a series of independent-samples t-tests were conducted. The mean comparisons were conducted to investigate hypothesis H1a-H5b.

Brand credibility

For the employer account, equal variances were assumed ($F=1.594$, $p=0.209$) and there were significant differences in the scores showing that the brand credibility when using snapshot aesthetics ($M=5.169$, $SD=1.023$) was significantly higher than when using traditional studio aesthetics ($M=4.395$, $SD=1.168$; $t(162)=4.515$, $p < 0.001$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.112) indicate a large effect size. **H1a has empirical support.**

For the sales account, equal variances were assumed ($F=3.733$, $p=0.055$) and there was no significant difference in scores for the snapshot aesthetics ($M=4.446$, $SD=0.964$) and traditional studio aesthetics ($M=4.183$, $SD=1.178$; $t(155)=1.524$, $p=0.130$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.015) indicate a small effect size. **H1b lack empirical support**

Table 9
Brand credibility: Account main effects for aesthetics

		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	p
Employer account	Snapshot	83	5.169	1.023	4.515	$p < 0.001^{**}$
	Studio	81	4.395	1.168		
Sales account	Snapshot	78	4.446	0.964	1.524	0.130
	Studio	79	4.183	1.178		

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

H1a: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

H1b: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

Liking

For the employer account, equal variances were assumed ($F=0.825$, $p=0.365$) and there were significant differences in the scores showing that the liking of the account when using snapshot aesthetics ($M=5.247$, $SD=0.964$) was significantly higher than when using traditional studio aesthetics ($M=4.698$, $SD=1.156$; $t(162)=3.310$, $p=0.001$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.063) indicate a moderate effect size. **H2a has empirical support.**

For the sales account, equal variances were not assumed ($F=5.265$, $p=0.023$) and there was no significant difference in scores for the snapshot aesthetics ($M=4.186$, $SD=1.063$) and traditional studio aesthetics ($M=4.139$, $SD=0.816$; $t(146.159)=0.313$, $p=0.754$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.001) indicate a small effect size. **H2b lack empirical support**

Table 10

Liking: Account main effects for aesthetics

		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	p
Employer account	Snapshot	83	5.247	0.964	3.310	0.001**
	Studio	81	4.698	1.156		
Sales account	Snapshot	78	4.186	1.063	0.313	0.754
	Studio	79	4.139	0.816		

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

H2a: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of liking of the employer account than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

H2b: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of liking of the sales account than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

Brand attitude

For the employer account, equal variances were assumed ($F=0.624$, $p=0.431$) and there were significant differences in the scores showing that the brand attitude when using snapshot aesthetics ($M=5.289$, $SD=1.157$) was significantly higher than when using traditional studio aesthetics ($M=4.317$, $SD=1.108$; $t(162)=5.495$, $p<0.001$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.157) indicate a large effect size. **H3a has empirical support.**

For the sales account, equal variances were assumed ($F=1.267$, $p=0.262$) and there was no significant difference in scores for the snapshot aesthetics ($M=4.560$, $SD=1.086$) and traditional studio aesthetics ($M=4.262$, $SD=1.185$; $t(155)=1.644$, $p=0.102$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.017) indicate a small effect size. **H3b lack empirical support**

Table 11
Brand attitude: Account main effects for aesthetics

		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	p
Employer account	Snapshot	83	5.289	1.157	5.495	p<0.001**
	Studio	81	4.317	1.108		
Sales account	Snapshot	78	4.560	1.086	1.644	0.102
	Studio	79	4.262	1.185		

**p < 0.01 *p < 0.05

H3a: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of brand attitude than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

H3b: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of brand attitude than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

Employer attractiveness

For the employer account, equal variances were not assumed (F=4.077, p=0.045) and there were significant differences in the scores showing that the employer attractiveness when using snapshot aesthetics (M=5.060, SD=1.526) was significantly higher than when using traditional studio aesthetics (M=4.185, SD=1.294; t(158.931)=3.964, p<0.001, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.088) indicate a moderate effect size. **H4a has empirical support.**

For the sales account, equal variances were assumed (F=0.035, p=0.852) and there was no significant difference in scores for the snapshot aesthetics (M=4.141, SD=1.294) and traditional studio aesthetics (M=3.895, SD=1.306; t(155)=1.188, p=0.237, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.009) indicate a small effect size. **H4b lack empirical support**

Table 12
Employer attractiveness: Account main effects for aesthetics

		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	p
Employer account	Snapshot	83	5.060	1.526	3.964	p<0.001**
	Studio	81	4.185	1.294		
Sales account	Snapshot	78	4.141	1.294	1.188	0.237
	Studio	79	3.895	1.306		

**p < 0.01 *p < 0.05

H4a: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of employer attractiveness than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

H4b: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of employer attractiveness than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

Application intention

For the employer account, equal variances were assumed ($F=0.000$, $p=0.997$) and there were significant differences in the scores showing that the application intention when using snapshot aesthetics ($M=5.416$, $SD=1.043$) was significantly higher than when using traditional studio aesthetics ($M=4.716$, $SD=1.063$; $t(162)=4.254$, $p<0.001$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.100) indicate a moderate effect size. **H5a has empirical support.**

For the sales account, equal variances were assumed ($F=0.245$, $p=0.621$) and there was no significant difference in scores for the snapshot aesthetics ($M=4.555$, $SD=1.244$) and traditional studio aesthetics ($M=4.378$, $SD=1.126$; $t(155)=0.923$, $p=0.357$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.005) indicate a small effect size. **H5b lack empirical support**

Table 13

Application intention: Account main effects for aesthetics

		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	p
Employer account	Snapshot	83	5.416	1.043	4.254	p<0.001**
	Studio	81	4.716	1.063		
Sales account	Snapshot	78	4.555	1.244	0.923	0.357
	Studio	79	4.378	1.126		

**p < 0.01 *p < 0.05

H5a: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of application intention than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

H5b: Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of application intention than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.

4.3.1.2 Ethnic diversity

In order to compare the mean scores between the two groups ethnically diversified and ethnically homogeneous within the two different accounts, employer and sales, a series of independent-samples t-tests was conducted. The mean comparisons were conducted to investigate hypothesis H6a-H10b.

Brand credibility

For the employer account, equal variances were not assumed ($F=5.483$, $p=0.020$) and there were significant differences in the scores showing that the brand credibility when using ethnically diversified models ($M=5.096$, $SD=1.231$) was significantly higher than when using ethnically homogeneous models ($M=4.469$, $SD=0.994$; $t(156.529)=3.593$, $p<0.001$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.073) indicate a moderate effect size. **H6a has empirical support.**

For the sales account, equal variances were not assumed ($F=5.514$, $p=0.020$) and there was no significant difference in scores for the ethnically diversified models ($M=4.431$, $SD=1.225$) and ethnically homogeneous models ($M=4.192$, $SD=0.990$; $t(145.045)=1.400$, $p=0.166$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.012) indicate a small effect size. **H6b lack empirical support**

Table 14
Brand credibility: Account main effects for ethnic diversity

		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	p
Employer account	Diversified	83	5.096	1.231	3.593	$p<0.001^{**}$
	Homogeneous	81	4.469	0.994		
Sales account	Diversified	80	4.431	1.225	1.400	0.166
	Homogeneous	77	4.192	0.990		

$^{**}p < 0.01$ $^*p < 0.05$

H6a: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

H6b: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

Liking

For the employer account, equal variances were assumed ($F=0.026$, $p=0.873$) and there were significant differences in the scores showing that the liking of the account when using ethnically diversified models ($M=5.398$, $SD=0.962$) was significantly higher than when using ethnically homogeneous models ($M=4.543$, $SD=1.058$; $t(162)=5.413$, $p<0.001$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.153) indicate a large effect size. **H7a has empirical support.**

For the sales account, equal variances were assumed ($F=0.004$, $p=0.949$) and there was no significant difference in scores for the ethnically diversified models ($M=4.231$, $SD=0.931$) and ethnically homogeneous models ($M=4.091$, $SD=0.927$; $t(155)=2.912$, $p=0.346$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.006) indicate a small effect size. **H7b lack empirical support**

Table 15
Liking: Account main effects for ethnic diversity

		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	p
Employer account	Diversified	83	5.398	0.962	5.413	$p<0.001^{**}$
	Homogeneous	81	4.543	1.058		
Sales account	Diversified	80	4.231	0.931	2.912	0.346
	Homogeneous	77	4.091	0.927		

$^{**}p < 0.01$ $^*p < 0.05$

H7a: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of liking of the employer account than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

H7b: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of liking of the employer account than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

Brand attitude

For the employer account, equal variances were assumed ($F=2.851$, $p=0.093$) and there were significant differences in the scores showing that the brand attitude when using ethnically diversified models ($M=5.181$, $SD=1.257$) was significantly higher than when using ethnically homogeneous models ($M=4.428$, $SD=1.083$; $t(162)=4.104$, $p<0.001$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.094) indicate a moderate effect size. **H8a has empirical support.**

For the sales account, equal variances were not assumed ($F=5.514$, $p=0.005$) and there was no significant difference in scores for the ethnically diversified models ($M=4.488$, $SD=1.312$) and ethnically homogeneous models ($M=4.329$, $SD=0.937$; $t(143.158)=0.873$, $p=0.384$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.005) indicate a small effect size. **H8b lack empirical support**

Table 16
Brand attitude: Account main effects for ethnic diversity

		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	p
Employer account	Diversified	83	5.181	1.257	4.104	$p<0.001^{**}$
	Homogeneous	81	4.428	1.083		
Sales account	Diversified	80	4.488	1.312	0.873	0.384
	Homogeneous	77	4.329	0.937		

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

H8a: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of brand attitude than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

H8b: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of brand attitude than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

Employer attractiveness

For the employer account, equal variances were assumed ($F=2.547$, $p=0.112$) and there were significant differences in the scores showing that the employer attractiveness when using ethnically diversified models ($M=4.968$, $SD=1.480$) was significantly higher than when using ethnically homogeneous models ($M=4.280$, $SD=1.402$; $t(162)=3.055$, $p=0.003$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.054) indicate a small effect size. **H9a has empirical support.**

For the sales account, equal variances were assumed ($F=0.265$, $p=0.607$) and there was no significant difference in scores for the ethnically diversified models ($M=4.125$, $SD=1.370$) and

ethnically homogeneous models ($M=3.905$, $SD=1.226$; $t(155)=1.060$, $p=0.291$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.007) indicate a small effect size. **H9b lack empirical support**

Table 17
Employer attractiveness: Account main effects for ethnic diversity

		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	p
Employer account	Diversified	83	4.968	1.480	3.055	0.003**
	Homogeneous	81	4.280	1.402		
Sales account	Diversified	80	4.125	1.370	1.060	0.291
	Homogeneous	77	3.905	1.226		

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

H9a: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of employer attractiveness than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

H9b: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of employer attractiveness than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

Application intention

For the employer account, equal variances were not assumed ($F=3.955$, $p=0.048$) and there were significant differences in the scores showing that the application intention when using ethnically diversified models ($M=5.313$, $SD=1.138$) was significantly higher than when using ethnically homogeneous models ($M=4.821$, $SD=1.022$; $t(160,891)=2.916$, $p=0.004$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.050) indicate a small effect size. **H10a has empirical support.**

For the sales account, equal variances were assumed ($F=0.936$, $p=0.335$) and there was no significant difference in scores for the ethnically diversified models ($M=4.538$, $SD=1.279$) and ethnically homogeneous models ($M=4.393$, $SD=1.082$; $t(155)=0.763$, $p=0.446$, two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (0.004) indicate a small effect size. **H10b lack empirical support**

Table 18
Application intention: Account main effects for ethnic diversity

		N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	p
Employer account	Diversified	83	5.313	1.138	2.916	0.004**
	Homogeneous	81	4.821	1.022		
Sales account	Diversified	80	4.538	1.279	0.763	0.446
	Homogeneous	77	4.393	1.082		

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

H10a: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of application intention than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

H10b: Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of application intention than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.

4.3.1.3 Conclusion

Based on the results presented above significant results could only be identified for the employer account where all hypotheses were empirically supported. For the sales account, only tendencies to support the hypotheses could be identified, however, no mean differences were significant. Hence, further analysis will only include the employer account and will investigate what combinations of the independent variables that may have the most effect on the dependent variables.

4.3.2 Employer Account

A series of one-way ANOVA with post-hoc test (Scheffe) was conducted to explore how much the independent variable combinations would impact the dependent variables, and which combinations that would perform better within an employer account. In total, the means of four groups were compared with each other. Further, the p-value will be complemented with an indication of the effect size, eta squared (Cohen, 1992).

Brand credibility

Statistically significant mean differences could be found between Group 1 (M=5.552) and Group 2 (M=4.606, $p=0.001$, eta squared=0.148)/Group 3 (M=4.756, $p=0.010$, eta squared=0.151)/Group 4 (M=4.189, $p<0.001$, eta squared=0.338). The results show that the combination of ethnically diversified models and snapshot aesthetics within an employer account resulted in higher levels of brand credibility than any other combination.

Table 19

Brand credibility: Employer account

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Diversified/ Snapshot	Diversified/ Studio	Homogeneous/ Snapshot	Homogeneous/ Studio
Diversified/ Snapshot	-	0.001**	0.010*	$p<0.001$ **
Diversified/ Studio	0.001**	-	0.939	0.370
Homogeneous/ Snapshot	0.010*	0.939	-	0.124
Homogeneous/ Studio	$p<0.001$ **	0.370	0.124	-
Mean	5.552	4.606	4.756	4.189
N	43	40	40	41

Results of Scheffe post-hoc test: P-values

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Liking

Statistically significant mean differences could be found between Group 1 (M=5.663) and Group 3 (M=4.800, $p=0.002$, $\eta^2=0.201$)/Group 4 (M=4.293, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.332$) as well as between Group 2 (M=5.113) and Group 4 (M=4.293, $p=0.004$, $\eta^2=0.126$). The results show that the combination of ethnically diversified models and snapshot aesthetics within an employer account resulted in higher levels of liking. However, when using traditional studio aesthetics the use of ethnically diversified models resulted in higher levels of liking as compared to using ethnically homogenous models.

Table 20
Liking: Employer account

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Diversified/ Snapshot	Diversified/ Studio	Homogeneous/ Snapshot	Homogeneous/ Studio
Diversified/ Snapshot	-	0.093	0.002**	$p<0.001$ **
Diversified/ Studio	0.093	-	0.568	0.004**
Homogeneous/ Snapshot	0.002**	0.568	-	0.148
Homogeneous/ Studio	$p<0.001$ **	0.004**	0.148	-
Mean	5.663	5.113	4.800	4.293
N	43	40	40	41

Results of Scheffe post-hoc test: P-values
** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Brand attitude

Statistically significant mean differences could be found between Group 1 (M=5.698) and Group 2 (M=4.625, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.182$)/Group 3 (M=4.850, $p=0.006$, $\eta^2=0.134$)/Group 4 (M=4.016, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.462$) as well as between Group 3 (M=4.850) and Group 4 (M=4.016, $p=0.008$, $\eta^2=0.147$). The results show that the combination of ethnically diversified models and snapshot aesthetics within an employer account resulted in higher levels of brand attitude than any other combination. However, when using homogenous models the use of snapshot aesthetics resulted in higher levels of brand attitude as compared to using traditional studio aesthetics.

Table 21

Brand attitude: Employer account

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Diversified/ Snapshot	Diversified/ Studio	Homogeneous/ Snapshot	Homogeneous/ Studio
Diversified/ Snapshot	-	p<0.001**	0.006**	p<0.001**
Diversified/ Studio	p<0.001**	-	0.832	0.095
Homogeneous/ Snapshot	0.006**	0.832	-	0.008**
Homogeneous/ Studio	p<0.001**	0.095	0.008**	-
Mean	5.698	4.625	4.850	4.016
N	43	40	40	41

Results of Scheffe post-hoc test: P-values

**p < 0.01 *p < 0.05

Employer attractiveness

Statistically significant mean differences could be found between Group 1 (M=5.411) and Group 2 (M=4.492, p=0.030, eta squared=0.010)/Group 4 (M=3.886, p<0.001, eta squared=0.260). The results show that the combination of ethnically diversified models and snapshot aesthetics within an employer account resulted in higher levels of employer attractiveness.

Table 22

Employer attractiveness: Employer account

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Diversified/ Snapshot	Diversified/ Studio	Homogeneous/ Snapshot	Homogeneous/ Studio
Diversified/ Snapshot	-	0.030*	0.130	p<0.001**
Diversified/ Studio	0.030*	-	0.943	0.279
Homogeneous/ Snapshot	0.130	0.943	-	0.086
Homogeneous/ Studio	p<0.001**	0.279	0.086	-
Mean	5.411	4.492	4.683	3.886
N	43	40	40	41

Results of Scheffe post-hoc test: P-values

**p < 0.01 *p < 0.05

Application intention

Statistically significant mean differences could be found between Group 1 (M=5.645) and Group 4 (M=4.482, p<0.001, eta squared=0.276). The results show that the combination of ethnically

diversified models and snapshot aesthetics within an employer account resulted in higher levels of application intention as compared to using homogeneous models and traditional studio aesthetics. Overall, the mean for Group 1 indicate that ethnically diversified models and snapshot aesthetics increase the application intention more than the other combinations, however the results are only significant for Group 4.

Table 23

Application intention: Employer account

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Diversified/ Snapshot	Diversified/ Studio	Homogeneous/ Snapshot	Homogeneous/ Studio
Diversified/ Snapshot	-	0.029	0.224	p<0.001**
Diversified/ Studio	0.029	-	0.838	0.237
Homogeneous/ Snapshot	0.224	0.838	-	0.033
Homogeneous/ Studio	p<0.001**	0.237	0.033	-
Mean	5.645	4.956	5.169	4.482
N	43	40	40	41

Results of Scheffe post-hoc test: P-values

**p < 0.01 *p < 0.05

4.4 Summary of Results

AESTHETICS			
H1	H1a	Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.	✓
	H1b	Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived brand credibility than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.	-
H2	H2a	Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>liking</i> of the employer account than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.	✓
	H2b	Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of liking of the sales account than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.	-
H3	H3a	Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>brand attitude</i> than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.	✓
	H3b	Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>brand attitude</i> than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.	-
H4	H4a	Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>employer attractiveness</i> than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.	✓
	H4b	Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>employer attractiveness</i> than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.	-
H5	H5a	Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>application intention</i> than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.	✓
	H5b	Using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>application intention</i> than using pictures with traditional studio aesthetics.	-
DIVERSITY			
H6	H6a	Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived <i>brand credibility</i> than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.	✓
	H6b	Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of perceived <i>brand credibility</i> than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.	-
H7	H7a	Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>liking</i> of the employer account than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.	✓
	H7b	Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>liking</i> of the employer account than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.	-
H8	H8a	Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>brand attitude</i> than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.	✓
	H8b	Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>brand attitude</i> than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.	-
H9	H9a	Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>employer attractiveness</i> than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.	✓
	H9b	Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>employer attractiveness</i> than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.	-
H10	H10a	Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on an employer account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>application intention</i> than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.	✓
	H10b	Using pictures with ethnically diversified models on a sales account on Instagram will result in higher levels of <i>application intention</i> than using pictures with ethnically homogeneous models.	-

5. Discussion

This section will present a discussion of the results derived from the hypothesis testing. The discussion is divided into five parts. First, the difference in results for the sales account and employer account are discussed. Thereafter, the discussion focuses solely on the results derived from the employer account. Aesthetics, ethnic diversity, and the combined effects of the two are discussed at a deeper level. Lastly, a general discussion of the findings is provided.

5.1 Sales Account vs. Employer Account

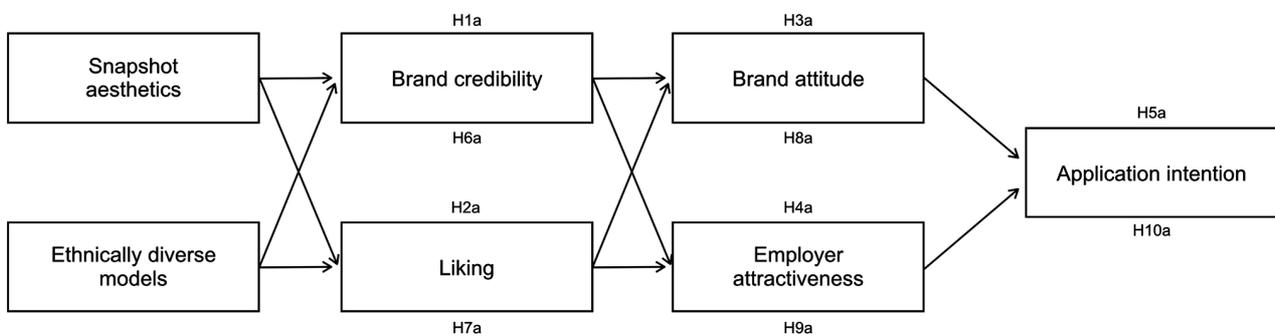
All hypotheses generated within the sales account failed to live up to the requested significance level. Hence, the results derived from the sales account contradicts previous research, both when it comes to aesthetic preference and the effects of communicating ethnic diversity. Starting with aesthetics, it was hypothesized that the study would have similar results as those obtained by Colliander and Marder (2018); namely, that snapshot aesthetics would outperform traditional studio aesthetics on a sales account on Instagram. As mentioned, the results were not significant, but tendencies to support the hypotheses could be identified. One explanation for this might be that an established brand was used in the study, which obstructs the possibility to influence respondents perceptions and obtain significant results (Dahlén et al., 2008). Colliander and Marder (2018), on the other hand, used a fictive brand in their study.

It was also hypothesized that the presence of ethnic diversity would outperform the presence of ethnic homogeneity on a sales account on Instagram. Tendencies to support the hypotheses could be identified here as well. The hypotheses are formulated based on earlier studies arguing that ethnic diversity in advertising increase brand attitudes (Åkestam, 2017), and that the presence of good social performance (such as the presence of diversity in employees) send signals about the organization as having a better and more welcoming work environment (Backhaus et al., 2002). Yet, within the sales account, the manipulation of ethnic diversity did not create any significant differences in any of the dependent variables.

Hence, the study cannot argue that it is beneficial for an organization to use snapshot aesthetics on a regular sales account since the results fail to support such notions. Neither can the study argue that it is beneficial for an organization to share pictures portraying ethnically diverse models on a sales account on Instagram. It is important to note, however, that the result within the sales account showed clear tendencies to support the hypotheses, and within the employer account, all hypotheses were supported. Thus, within the employer account, the results support previous research. To answer the first research question ("Is it beneficial for an organization to have an employer account on Instagram in order to be attractive for potential employees?"), it seems as if the answer would be that it is beneficial for an organization to have an employer account on Instagram in order to attract potential employees.

The benefits derived from having an employer account on Instagram is assumed to depend on contextual factors. As individuals are argued to play by another set of rules when judging marketing images on social media than on traditional media (Colliander & Marder, 2018), we have reasons to believe that individuals use another set of rules when judging pictures on an employer account compared to a sales account on Instagram. When assessing marketing images on an employer account, individuals seem to view the pictures through the eyes of a job seeker, and hence, they evaluate marketing signals such as the aesthetics style of the images and the presence of ethnically diverse models more carefully. Drawing from the non-significant results within the sales account, it seems as if individuals are not as prone to value these variables when assessing information through the eyes of a consumer.

Table 24
Updated Conceptual Framework for Employer Account



5.2 Aesthetics

Within the employer account, the aesthetic manipulation had a significant impact on all five dependent variables. Hence, H1a, H2a, H3a, H4a, and H5s were all supported. To answer the second research question (“How should the pictures on an employer account on Instagram be presented in terms of aesthetics [...] in order to be attractive for potential employees?”), the study shows that snapshot aesthetics outperform traditional studio aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram. These results go hand in hand with the results derived by Colliander & Marder (2018).

Regarding brand credibility, the results show that individuals perceive snapshot aesthetics as more credible than traditional studio aesthetics on image-based social media (H1a). According to the literature, this might be due to the fact that individuals perceive snapshots as unbiased and true (Hass, 1981), and less persuasive (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000). Thus, by using pictures with snapshot aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram, an organization can create an image of being more trustworthy (Selnes, 1998; Smith et al., 1999), which subsequently will lead to individuals becoming less critical when they evaluate the message and the source. This goes hand in hand with Schroeder’s arguments (2010), saying that snapshot aesthetics is perceived to be more authentic and sincere. Further, snapshots result in higher levels of liking on image-based

social media (H2a). Individuals tend to do more positive aesthetic evaluations of objects that fit into the rest of the sphere, as the objects then are perceived to carry higher meaning and are easier for the receiver to more fluently process (Reber et al., 2004).

Snapshots resulted in higher levels of brand attitude (H3a) and employer attractiveness (H4a), compared to using traditional studio aesthetics. When comparing mean values for the dependent variables between snapshot aesthetics and traditional studio aesthetics, brand attitude shows the largest difference in mean values (0.972), whereas employer attractiveness shows the second largest difference in mean values (0.875). As brand attitude tells to which extent a person likes a brand or not, and is likely to impact whether an individual chooses one brand over another (Collins-Dodd & Lindley, 2003; Solomon, 2014), brand attitude and employer attractiveness was hypothesized to have an impact on individual's application intention.

The results support the theory on employer brand, saying that there is a correlation between employer attractiveness and intention to apply (Highhouse et al., 2003; Katiyar & Saini, 2016) since the results show that snapshot aesthetics lead to higher levels of application intention compared to traditional studio aesthetics (H5a). When looking at the effects of the aesthetic manipulation, the mean value for application intention is the highest (5.416). Thus, the conclusion is that snapshot aesthetics outperform traditional studio aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram, since snapshots result in higher levels of intention to apply.

5.3 Ethnic Diversity

Within the employer account, the ethnic diversity manipulation had a significant impact on all five dependent variables. Hence, H6a, H7a, H8a, H9a, and H10a were all supported. To answer the second research question ("How should the pictures on an employer account on Instagram be presented in terms of [...] ethnic diversity in order to be attractive for potential employees?"), the study shows that the presence of ethnically diverse models outperform the presence of ethnically homogeneous models on an employer account on Instagram.

In the theoretical framework, it was hypothesized that the presence of ethnically diverse models on an employer account on Instagram would be perceived as a signal for a better and more welcoming work environment (Backhaus et al., 2002), which in turn would have a positive effect on perceived source characteristics (Ohanian, 1990). As source credibility can be defined as a source's positive characteristics that affect an individual's perception and acceptance of a message (ibid.), it was assumed that ethnic diversity would lead to higher levels of perceived source credibility. Building on the results derived from the study, these assumptions are likely to be true, since the presence of ethnically diverse models resulted in higher levels of perceived brand credibility as compared to the presence of ethnically homogenous models (H6a).

The presence of ethnically diverse models also resulted in higher levels of liking (H7a). The result support theory saying that an organization's presence of good social performance, such as showing ethnic diversity in employees, helps to inform perceptions of the organizational image (Greening & Turban, 2000). As an organization's support for diversity is related to positive perceptions of the firm as an employer (Albinger & Freeman, 2000), it is likely that the presence of ethnically diverse models on an employer account on Instagram creates a more positive image of the brand as a potential employer. Hence, individuals rate the images and the brand more favorably.

Further, the results show that ethnically diverse models on an employer account on Instagram results in higher levels of brand attitude (H8a) and employer attractiveness (H9a), compared to using ethnically homogeneous models. As earlier studies have found connections between credibility and attitude dimensions (e.g. Pornpitakpan, 2004) as well as liking and attitude dimensions (Brown & Stayman, 1992; Gelb & Pickett, 1983; Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012), it was not a surprise that the presence of ethnic diversity resulted in higher levels of brand attitude and employer attractiveness. There are also studies that argue for the importance of diversity when rating and measuring employer attractiveness (Backhaus et al., 2002).

Lastly, ethnic diversity resulted in higher levels of intention to apply (H10a). Signaling theory suggests that corporate social performance, including diversity in employees, inform the job seekers job choice process (Backhaus et al., 2002). Further studies argue that there is a high correlation between employer attractiveness factors and intention to apply (Chapman et al., 2005; Highhouse et al., 2003). Drawing from the results derived from this study, it surely seems as if ethnic diversity is an important factor when individuals are to determine whether they want to apply for a job at an organization or not. The results thus support Åkestam's (2017) arguments, saying that communicating ethnic diversity can generate effects that are positive for brands.

5.4 General Discussion: Combined Effects

The study shows that the combined effects from using both snapshot aesthetics and ethnically diverse models on an employer account on Instagram have the strongest effect on individuals' intention to apply. By combining the two, the levels of perceived brand credibility reaches its highest mean value (5.552). The same goes for liking (5.663), brand attitude (5.698), employer attractiveness (5.411), and intention to apply (5.645). Thus, the results indicate that an organization can benefit from creating an employer account on Instagram on which it shares snapshots that include ethnically diverse employees.

6. Conclusions

The conclusions of the study are presented in this section. Initially, key findings from the prior discussion are summarized, before the theoretical contribution and managerial implications of the thesis are presented. Further, the concluding section accounts for possible limitations of the study, and is finalized with suggestions on future research.

First, this study shows that it is beneficial for organizations to have an employer account on Instagram in order to attract potential employees. When individuals are exposed to a traditional sales account, they seem to be "in a mindset of a consumer", and thus, they play by a different set of rules when judging the images. When individuals contrariwise are exposed to an employer account, they seem to evaluate the images through the eyes of a job seeker. Thus, they become more sensitive to marketing signals regarding aesthetics and ethnic diversity, and are likely to evaluate the images based on more "soft values". Hence, it is more important that the images appear authentic and real, and that they showcase a welcoming work environment through the presence of ethnically diverse employees.

Further, the results show that snapshot aesthetics outperform traditional studio aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram. The use of snapshot aesthetics will enhance levels of perceived brand credibility and liking, which mediate higher levels of perceived brand attitude and employer attractiveness and consequently lead to higher levels of intention to apply. Using ethnically diverse models create the same effects, which is why the combination of using snapshot aesthetics and ethnically diverse models on an employer account on Instagram result in the highest levels of application intention.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

With the above conclusions, the study contributes to the aim of gaining additional insight on how organizations can use Instagram for employer branding purposes. The main theoretical contributions of the thesis are grounded in the identified research gap, in which it was argued that (1) within the research area on employer branding, Instagram has not received much attention, despite being the largest photo-sharing platform in the world (Chua & Chang, 2016), (2) research on the effects of aesthetics would benefit from further research, as the use of the image-based social media platform Instagram continues to increase (Davidsson & Thoresson, 2017), and (3) the specific effects of ethnic diversity in employer branding has not received much attention, despite the fact that the demographics of our workforce is changing (Backhaus et al., 2002). Thus, the thesis provides three theoretical contributions.

First, this thesis provides theoretical contributions to the limited area of research on employer branding on Instagram, and conclude that it is beneficial for organizations to have an employer account on Instagram for employer branding purposes. Second, the thesis contributes with more

knowledge to existing research on aesthetics, where it argues that snapshot aesthetics outperform traditional studio aesthetics on an employer account on Instagram. Third, the study contributes with findings to a relatively unexplored area of research, namely the effects of using ethnically diverse models in employer branding in image-based social media. Findings suggest that the presence of ethnically diverse models in employer branding outperforms the presence of ethnically homogeneous models.

6.2 Managerial Implications

The study provides a number of managerial implications. First, brands should consider using Instagram for employer branding purposes by creating an employer account that visually showcases the "life at" the organization. When doing so, it is crucial for brands to consider the norms of the media when deciding what content to create and share. Managers should follow the findings from this study, saying that snapshot aesthetics outperforms more traditional studio aesthetics on image-based social media, and that pictures of ethnically diverse models (i.e. employees) outperform pictures of ethnically homogeneous models.

For managers that work with the social media technologies themselves, this study would advise that they promote the use of snapshot aesthetics and presence of ethnically diverse employees in the images that are shared. Managers should opt for the arguably less cost of using snapshot aesthetics, and the improved organizational performance that is likely to come from welcoming a diversified workforce (Matuska & Sałek-Imińska, 2014). Further, it is advised that the employer account visualizes the "life at" the organization in an authentic and honest way, as individuals seem to value that when assessing employer branding communication. Thus, it is important that the consumer brand and the employer brand are separated, yet at the same time connected. To achieve a good balance between the two on Instagram might be a crucial task for managers.

Lastly, it is important for managers to understand that the results derived from this study are applicable on image-based social media, where the norm is to share user-generated content. Thus, other social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, are likely to be different. Individuals on LinkedIn are likely to use another set of rules when assessing information, with the conclusion being that managers should be careful to apply the results in this study directly to other types of social media platforms. As earlier mentioned, it is important that brands consider the norms of the media when deciding what type of content to share.

6.3 Limitations

Methodological approach

The use of a deductive research approach and performing a quantitative experiment is generally required when the aim is to test formulated hypotheses (Jacobsen, 2002). Nonetheless, this does limit the study to only measure the intentions of respondents and not their actual behavior. This means that the results may not reflect the actual behavior of potential recruits.

Experiment design

The experiment performed in this study only focuses on an established and familiar brand (H&M) within the fashion industry on Instagram. Thus, we cannot explicitly say that the results can be applied to unfamiliar brands, other industries or other types of social media which does limit the implication of the findings. However, according to Dahlén et al. (2008), it is more difficult to influence respondents perceptions of well-known brands than the perception of unknown. Due to time restrictions no other brands or industries were included in the study which is, as mentioned, a limit to the study.

Stimulus materials

The images used in the feeds of the stimulus materials were carefully chosen based on the praxis that the stimulus treatments differed, while all other things remained identical. However, this is difficult to achieve perfectly when it is not the same models and camera angles used in the feeds. The ideal situation would have been to take all the images ourselves using the same models. It was considered, but we decided against it due to time restrictions. Also, Colliander and Marder (2018) chose images in a comparable way as done in this study. Hence, it was considered sufficient.

Adding the stimulus materials onto an iPhone mockup was done in order to make the images more relatable for the respondent. They were looking at an iPhone with the Instagram feed open as they would naturally do on their own phones. However, normally they would be physically holding an iPhone which means that it would have been better for the study if respondents were asked to examine the feed physically on a phone and afterward conducting the survey. The way the respondents were exposed to the stimulus materials can thus be considered a limit to the study.

Survey design

The placement of questions and the length of the survey may have affected how the respondent answered the questions in the survey. Some questions may have affected the answers to the following questions, and the length of the questionnaire may have caused the respondent to get tired toward the end and therefore did not answer the questions correctly. The survey was designed to avoid this by keeping the survey short and placing the most important questions in the beginning, but it can still be a potential bias.

Manipulation check

When performing the manipulation check, we decided to include data from respondents who had incorrectly answered what stimulus they had been exposed to. In section "3.5.1.2 Manipulation check" we explain why this was done. Despite, some of the respondents who were included may not have examined the stimulus material thoroughly and was thus not correctly exposed when answering the questions which may be a bias affecting the study results negatively.

Sample

The sample used in the study is a convenience sample and is thus not representative of the entire population. Since it is not representative, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of new recruits (Jacobsen, 2002). As previously mentioned in section "3.5.2 Sampling and Sample" the results can only be considered generalizable to new recruits which are business students. The sample selection of only using business students was intentional but nonetheless a limit to the study.

6.4 Suggestions on Future Research

The study has examined whether an organization's employer branding on the social media platform Instagram in terms of having an employer account - in addition to a traditional sales account - will enhance the organization's ability to attract employees. Further, the study investigated how the pictures on such an employer account should be presented - in terms of aesthetics and ethnic diversity - to attract employees. We believe that further studies on the subject presented in this study are needed for companies to work more strategically with their employer branding efforts on Instagram.

In the research area of employer branding, Instagram has not received much attention, despite being the largest photo sharing platform in the world (Chua & Chang, 2016) and the social media platform where individuals spend most of their time (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). For companies, such research regarding employer branding on Instagram is of utmost importance since social media is a huge part of their marketing efforts toward both consumers and potential employees. Still, companies have little research to depend upon, and thus their online presence could be more of a guessing game and randomly testing what might work best based on likes and comments. This can harm the organizations' brand attractiveness and decrease potential recruits willingness to apply for a job at the organization.

For future research within this area, it would be interesting and useful to conduct a similar study like this one within several different industries such as tech, banking and consulting, as well as using both familiar and unfamiliar brands to ensure that the results are generalizable. Future research could potentially result in different recommendations based on industry. For a fashion brand, as used in this study, people may want to follow a separate employer account to keep

fashion inspiration and job opportunities separate. However, this may not be the case for other industries. Further, the research should also be tested on a larger group of students which is more mixed, either using business students from several schools or just university students in general to achieve more generalizable results.

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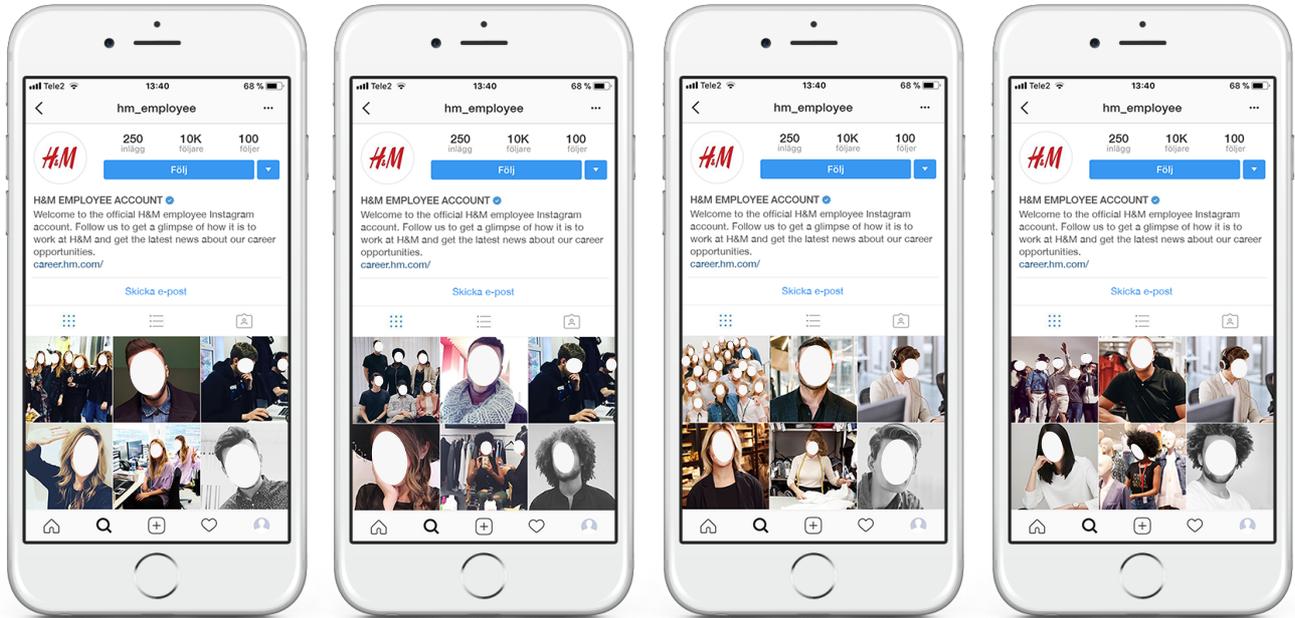
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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Stimulus materials¹

a) Employer account:



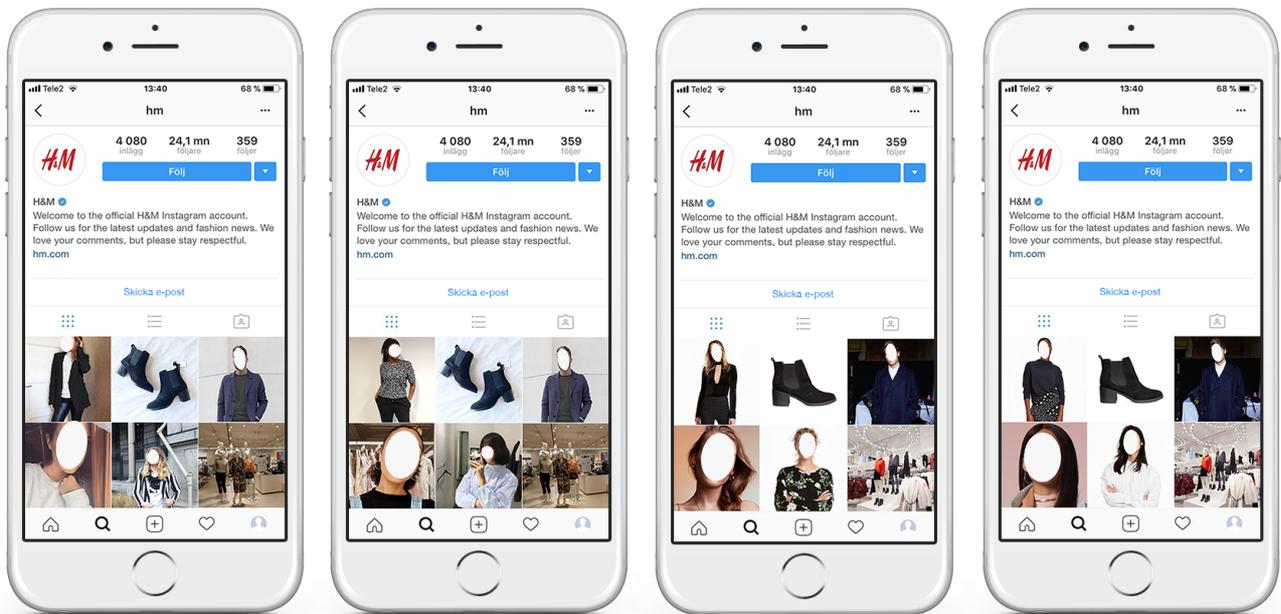
Homogenous/Snapshot

Diversified/Snapshot

Homogenous/Studio

Diversified/Studio

b) Sales account:



Homogenous/Snapshot

Diversified/Snapshot

Homogenous/Studio

Diversified/Studio

¹ The faces of the people featured in the stimulus materials has been covered in the published version of this thesis in order to respect their privacy.

Appendix 2 - Survey

Introduction message:

Hi!

We are two students from the master's program in Business & Management at the Stockholm School of Economics, and we are currently writing our master thesis. Thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to complete our survey, we greatly appreciate it.

The survey should not take more than 6 minutes to complete and you will be able to track your progress while answering the questions. The survey is completely anonymous and there are no incorrect answers, follow your intuition!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us!

Alide Gyllner, 50293@student.hhs.se
Karin Haglund, 50294@student.hhs.se

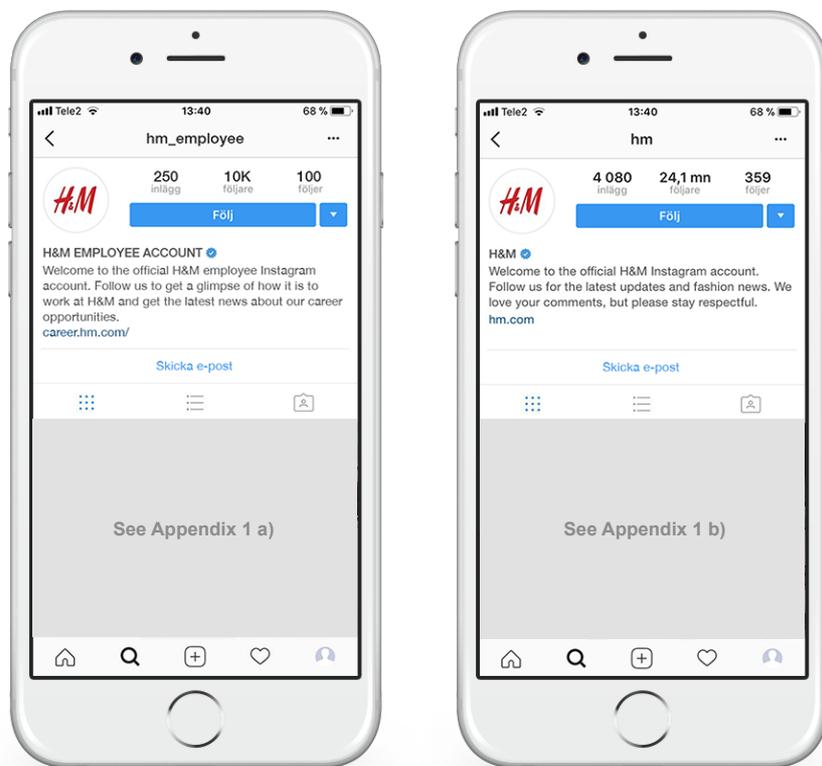
Employer account description:

Imagine that you are on Instagram and you have just opened H&M's Instagram employee account. On the official employee account, H&M shares how it is to work at H&M and provides the latest news about career opportunities.

Sales account description:

Imagine that you are on Instagram and you have just opened H&M's Instagram sales account. On the official sales account, H&M shares the latest updates and fashion news.

Please study the Instagram feed carefully before answering the following questions.



(Employer account or Sales account
stimulus material)

Liking

(1 = Completely disagree; 7 = Completely agree)

I like the images in H&Ms Instagram account

I associate positive things with the images in H&Ms Instagram account

Brand credibility

(1 = Completely disagree; 7 = Completely agree)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

H&M is credible

H&M is honest

H&M is competent

H&M is reliable

Brand attitude

(1 = Completely disagree; 7 = Completely agree)

My impression of H&M is good

My impression of H&M is pleasant

My impression of H&M is favorable

WOM intentions

(1 = Completely disagree; 7 = Completely agree)

It is likely that I would recommend others to follow H&M's Instagram account.

It is likely that I will talk to others about H&M's Instagram account.

It is likely that I would recommend this company to a friend looking for a job.

I would 'follow' this Instagram account

Application intention

(1 = Completely disagree; 7 = Completely agree)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

I would accept a job offer from this company

I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer

If this company invited me for a job interview, I would go

I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company.

Employer attractiveness

(1 = Completely disagree; 7 = Completely agree)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

This company is attractive to me as a place for employment

I am interested in learning more about this company

A job at this company is very appealing to me

Buying intention

(1 = Completely disagree; 7 = Completely agree)

I would like to buy something from H&M

I would like to own something from H&M

Personal factors (Social effects: social connectedness & empathy)

(1 = Completely disagree; 7 = Completely agree)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Right now, I feel that I belong with other people

Right now, I find other people important.

Right now, I feel caring.

Right now, I feel compassionate

Personal factors (Attitude toward diversity)

(1 = Completely disagree; 7 = Completely agree)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Knowing someone from a different ethnic group broadens my understanding

I am only at ease with people of my race and culture

It is good to know people from different countries or cultures

Personal factors (Openness to experience)

I experience myself as...

Incurious (1)/Curious (7)

Realistic (1)/Imaginative (7)

Uncreative (1)/Creative (7)

Calm (1)/Emotional (7)

Conservative (1)/Liberal (7)

Personal factors (Experience with diversity)

(1 = Not at all; 7 = To a great extent)

Have you grown up in an ethnically diverse community?

Have you grown up with friends from different ethnic groups?

Do you currently have friends from different ethnic groups?

Social media
(Yes/No)

Do you use Instagram?

Control questions

The photos in the Instagram feed you saw in the beginning of the survey was... (Professionally taken/Unprofessionally taken/Not sure)

The people in the photos in the Instagram feed you saw in the beginning of the survey was... (Ethnically diversified/Not ethnically diversified/Not sure)

Demographics

You are currently a...

- University student
- Alumni (Completed university studies less than 2 years ago)
- Alumni (Completed university studies more than 2 years ago)
- Other

What is your age? (Use numbers)

What is your gender identity? (Female/Male/Other)

Clarification message:

The Instagram account shown in this survey is fictional and has been used for research purposes only.

End of survey