Improving the applicant experience in the summer recruitment process of a case company

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Abstract

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This case study was based on the need to improve the case company's summer recruitment process as an applicant experience. The research and develop aims were creating a framework for research by combining experience management to recruitment and selection in theory, analysing the current state of the applicant experience, and generating grounded development suggestions for enhancing it. Qualitative case study was used as the research method to meet the need to research experiences related to this restricted process and secondly, to develop the process accordingly.

First, what should be researched was defined by identifying the key determinants of an applicant experience's success from both recruitment and selection and experience management. Then the current state of the recruitment experience was examined by interviewing 10 this year's applicants by using the identified themes as a framework. Finally, development suggestions were created jointly with the case company's human resources to overcome the identified shortages and to accommodate less steadily established positive aspects more strongly in the process. A focus group was used as the development method.

The strongest positive element identified in the research was feeling appreciated in the recruitment process. Other most effective positive aspects were perceiving the work atmosphere appealing, refreshments, the video interview, the selling task, fairness, the presence of other applicants, and having fun on the recruitment day.

Poor guidance to starting in the job emerged by far as the most negative aspect. Other negative perceptions varied depending on the department: for sales, almost all related directly to information and communications and all in all, there were also fewer of them. The restaurant's notions chattered more and were more numerous. Encountering mistakes appeared as the second biggest category but also missing contact information, unfairness, and too specific questions in the selling task declined their experiences. Moreover, also technical problems with the video interview and unmet expectations were mentioned by both departments.

The biggest suggested change regarded the end of the recruitment process which is to be completely renewed. To correct also other specified negative aspects, for example job descriptions are suggested to be more inclusively explained, longer notices and more contact information to be provided and mistakes reduced by better planning and communication. Related to the positive findings, for instance good treatment and refreshments were emphasised unexpectedly strongly and the new tasks were welcomed warmly. That is, for example these elements are recommended to be preserved.

All in all, the recommended new practice as a whole is given in 27 corrective and enforcing steps. It builds on the current recruitment process and points out the changes it needs. These guidelines help to implement the future summer recruitment processes more successfully and can also be applied to give direction for organising other recruitments, too.

Keywords

Applicant experience, Recruitment experience, Recruitment process, Recruitment, Selection

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1 Introduction

There is increasing understanding about the suitable employee's meaning for making successful business. Many companies already view the personnel as the most important factor defining either the success or the failure of the company's performance. These suitable employees can be found only by successful recruitment and selection. However, recruitment has been forecasted to become increasingly challenging as the competition for the best employees is also getting tougher. The employers need to be able to differentiate in order to attract the best job applicants. At the same time, experiences are becoming more and more important for people in general as well as for businesses as a means of attracting and satisfying clients. This thesis suggests broadening the use of experiences to attracting applicants as one potential solution to recruitment's challenges. This could be achieved by making the recruitment process *an experience*.

1.1 Aim and delimitation of the thesis

The purpose of the thesis is to improve the applicant experience in the summer recruitment process of the case company. In other words, it examines and develops recruitment and selection of the company's summer employees from the applicant's perspective. The research and develop aims are creating a framework for research by combining experience management to recruitment and selection in theory, analysing the current state of the applicant experience, and generating grounded development suggestions for enhancing it. The theory from both fields is studied in order to understand what themes should be examined. Both research and development of the topic are implemented within a qualitative case study. The end's development suggestions are based on both the individual interviews and a focus group conducted for the human resources of the case company.

The case study covers only the year 2015's summer recruitment process of the case company. The results of it are not aimed to be generalizable or transferable. Moreover, recruitment process is here defined to include recruitment and selection but exclude human resource planning and induction. Taken that the focus is on the applicant's experience, it is justifiable to leave out phases that are more invisible to the applicant or do not directly influence the recruitment experience. They were also excluded so that the investigated area would not get uncontrollably big or lose focus. In addition, also in the existing literature, recruitment and selection seem to be dealt more apart from human resource planning and induction so it feels arguable to build on the same division.

Also, my position should be acknowledged for assessing its possible effects on the research. I observed the recruitment process as a HR trainee and nowadays I am working in

another department of the company. The recruitment process is described from a trainee's perspective. Furthermore, it also means that I knew all the research participants at least somehow.

1.2 Justification for the topic

The study is commissioned by a company X concerning its summer recruitment process. The case company is one of the Finnish locations of business for a globally operating retail business. The company is always looking forward to positively develop and grow as stated already in its core values. The case company wants to improve its summer recruitment process and effort has already been put into improving it. The employer interested in the idea of examining the recruitment process and combining experience management to human resources when I suggested it as a thesis topic and a possible solution.

In addition to the case company, also the literature in the field of recruitment and selection addresses demand for further research on recruitment and selection. For example, Shammot (2014, 67) recommends companies to work on improving their recruitment methods, and Saks and Uggerslev (2010, 362) wish for more research on the effects of the information given during recruitment process. The latter also recommend multi-perspective approach where data would be collected not only from the job seekers but also from the recruiters and other representatives of the organization. Furthermore, several authors ask for research on applicant reactions and decisions in different stages of the recruitment process (Boswell, Roehling, LePine & Moynihan 2003, 34-35; Bauer & al. 2001, 414-415). This thesis is hoped to contribute to these demands and provide more information on the topics.

This paper discusses the customers' demand for experiences making the conclusion that employees and job applicants could be assumed to enjoy the experiences as well. Combining experience management to recruitment and selection could hence help the case company as well as companies in general to provide better recruitment experiences for applicants. This might help to differentiate, build the employer brand and compete for the best candidates in the tightening war for talent. The right people in the right jobs have the potential to constitute a business' biggest competitive advantage but this can be achieved only by successful recruitment and selection.

1.3 Overview on the structure

The thesis begins by creating a framework for research by combining theory of the two examined fields to each other. This is done by identifying the most relevant recruitment

and selection topics in the existing theory and research, and discovering the most important and valid experience management models. Both of them are presented in depth as their own chapters. Then the recognised determinants of an applicant experience's success are combined and together constitute the research framework.

After that the chosen research methods are explained. Case study approach is used to both research and develop the summer recruitment process which is the case. Research consists of interviewing 10 previous job applicants and the development stage, firstly, builds on research findings and, secondly, incorporates the perspective of the case company's HR specialists by organising a focus group for them. Both of these stages are presented as their own chapters. The final suggestions are based on the findings of these both stages and presented in the last chapter of the study. Lastly, the validity, reliability and significance of the case study are evaluated and, in the very end of the paper, the thesis as a whole is assessed.

2   Recruitment and selection

In this chapter I will introduce the key concepts of recruitment and selection as well as define the recruitment process. In the subchapters, I will argue for recruitment's importance, make the reader familiar with the employer brand and employer image and the typical recruitment process. In the last subchapter, I will guide the reader to managing the applicant experience with the help of identified key factors and elements that are each discussed in a new lower subchapter.

There seems to be as many views to recruitment as there are authors. Bratton and Gold (2007, 239) define recruitment as the process of generating a pool of capable people to apply for employment in an organisation. Breaugh and Starke (2000, 45) add also the aspect of identifying the most potential new employees from the applicants. Agrawal and Swaroop (2009, 41) take the definition even further as according to them, recruitment involves also efforts for attracting applicants to accept the job offer if one should be made.

Selection in turn is defined as the task of predicting which applicants would be most successful in meeting the demands of the job, as well as fit best to the existing work group and the culture of the organization (Torrington, Hall, Taylor & Atkinson 2011, 179). Bratton and Gold (2007, 239) correspondingly describe selection as the process by which managers and others use specific instruments to choose from a pool of applicants a person or persons more likely to succeed in the job.

However, despite being two separate human resource functions, in practice, recruitment and selection are typically discussed together. They need each other and go inevitably hand in hand. Recruitment works for generating potential applicants without which there – in most cases – would not be promising candidates to choose from. Selection instead is used for identifying the applicants most likely to make the best employees – without which the recruitment efforts would have been taken in vain and employers could not be sure about making right decisions related to their most important resource, people. (Taylor 2008, 214-215.)

In this thesis, the recruitment process is defined to include the stages of both recruitment and selection, all the way from the first efforts of attracting applications to the acceptance of a job offer. The definition is drawn from Torrington & al. (2011, 158) according to whom the recruitment process covers attracting and receiving applications, shortlisting applications and interviewing candidates till the point where the offer is made and accepted. Human resource planning and induction are thus left out from this study.

2.1 Importance of recruitment and selection

There is a clear consensus in the field of human resources about the importance of effective recruitment. Not to mention being a central HR objective, it has also become a top priority for many organisations in today's so-called "war for talent" (Torrington & al. 2011, 158; Saks & Uggerslev 2009, 351-352). High employment levels, changing workforce demographics and increased understanding of talented employees' value as a source of competitive advantage appear to be the main reasons behind today's tightening competition for skilled staff (Wilden, Gudergan & Lings 2010, 56-57; Boswell & al. 2003, 23). In this chapter, I will present them in more detail as well as go through the possible benefits and risks of recruitment.

Recruitment is one of the key steps enabling staffing of an organisation: that there is a sufficient number of employees in order to meet the business objectives (Taylor 2008, 3). This is often referred to with a phrase of having "the right people in the right place with the right skills at the right time" (Muller-Camen, Croucher & Leigh 2008, 113). However, a long way has been gone from the idea of employees as a mere workforce. According to Vaahtio (2005, 17-18), many companies have even changed the whole focus of their strategy from production to human resources. This reflects a wider ideology where human resources are seen as the most important asset of a company and recruitment as one of the potential competitive advantages of a business (Muller-Camen & al. 2008, 114; Markkanen 2005, 20-22). This demonstrates the influence that predominant ideologies and models have on recruitment.

Also the economic situation affects recruitment to a great extent, mostly by the supply of labour and the amount of competition. According to Markkanen (2005, 19-20), the predicting and preparing aspects of the human resource strategy are emphasised when competition tightens. When the market is tight the employer also needs to increasingly 'sell' its jobs to the potential employees in order to generate an adequate pool of applicants. (Torrington & al. 2011, 158). However, as Arthur (2006, 8-9) specifies, recruiting applicants who truly *want* to work in the company remains equally important regardless of the economy. When the economy shifts the unhappy employees are likely to leave and, even apart from that, unsatisfied employees always harm the business in a way or another. Thus the best possible applicants should be reached out also during the best time. This way an employer earns a reputation for fairness which will be valuable during the weaker times.

When the recruitment process is implemented well it may bring also many other benefits – in addition to finding the suitable new employee for realising the human resource strategy.

First of all, it may help to share positive information and uplift the employer reputation. This way it may elicit a positive circle of actions which will ease not only the current but also future recruitments. At the same time it may also help to gain new customers and other friends by increasing awareness. (Markkanen 2005, 20-22; Vaahtio 2005, 12-13.) Vaahtio (2005, 11-13) encourages that a new hire may bring also other competences alongside the ones originally recruited for. They may for example provide access to new networks and customers. In addition, a new employee has the potential to bring in new ideas and development suggestions and can thus drive the renewal of the organisation.

However, Vaahtio (2005, 11-13) continues by reminding that recruitment includes risks as well: unprofessionally implemented may become expensive in terms of induction and mistakes and may lead in lost revenue, reputation and customers. As Markkanen (2005, 20-21) remarks, poorly planned hires also as such often become remarkably more expensive than ones implemented systematically with care. An employer typically wants to avoid any extra costs as recruitment itself is usually already a big expense (Vaahtio 2005, 11-13). Other risks mentioned by Yeung (2011, 5) are lowering morale among existing employees and, in the worst scenario, the need to launch the whole recruitment process again if the new joiner quits or is fired. Also, when recruitment is implemented poorly, it may lead in a negative circle of actions hindering also the future recruitments as unhappy applicants and employees interact with others in the target groups (Markkanen 2005, 20-22).

It can be concluded that even though the level of challenge varies the goals of recruitment need to remain the same. Well-managed recruitment can bring a company numerous competitive advantages – and even be one – whereas badly-implemented recruitment may have a lot more severe consequences than just losing the opportunity.

2.2   Employer brand and image in recruitment and selection

Employer brand and employer image are two closely related concepts addressing the employer's ideal and perceived characteristics. What comes to their relation to recruitment, the studied authors seem to use the terms rather interchangeably. That is why they are discussed together also here. Both will be defined in the first paragraph and next their importance will be explained. Lastly, tips for improving the employer image will be given.

First of all, a company image is the overall image based on the operation, characteristics and existence of a company. An employer image is a more specific subdivision of it, related to the characteristics of a company as an employer. (Markkanen 2005, 101-103.) Korpi, Laine and Soljasalo (2012, 66-67) further define employer image as the way the employees and applicants see the workplace. An employer brand's role in turn is to manipu-

late the perceived benefits related to an employer in order to position it in the minds of customers as a great place to work (Braham 2001, in Wilden & al. 2010, 57). In other words, it is applying the practices familiar from consumer marketing to employees and applicants. It is also important to notice that each employer has an employer brand whether consciously developed or not. (Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 166-167.)

Countless authors seem to view a strong employer brand as a potential response to human resourcing problems and one of the most effective ways to compete for qualified applicants (Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 166-167; Arthur 2006, 11; Brown & Swain 2009, 44-45). Also Agrawal and Swaroop (2009, 48) list employer image and company's reputation among the factors having the biggest role in determining job seekers' desire to apply for a job in the organisation. Markkanen (2005, 98-101) elaborates that this seems to be especially true with younger age groups which appear to appreciate the renown of the employer over the job description.

However, merely seeming something is not enough in the long term but the employer needs to be that in the reality as well. What comes to the reputation, saving a soiled image is typically more difficult than fixing the problems in the first place (Korpi & al. 2012, 66-69). Korpi & al. (2012, 67-68) introduce the internal and external employer images to further discuss this relation. Internal employer image is mainly how the employees see the employer whereas the external image refers to the way the external players perceive the employer – which is always affected by the internal image. Social media is particularly good at revealing attempts of faking or covering unfavourable characteristics of a workplace as there managers, employees, old employees, partners and customers all have the same power as content producers. Also, attempts of hiding something tend to make communication seem superficial.

Being perceived as an employer of choice is effective in attracting desired kind of employees. Communicating one's leadership in the field in question, developing a talent strategy, offering attractive career opportunities and opportunities for learning and development are aspects often perceived to ease becoming an employer of choice (Brown & Swain 2009, 44-45). When recruiting, it is important to recognise the positive aspects of the employer and actively and positively bring them to the knowledge of applicants. Agrawal and Swaroop (2009, 48) recommend recruiters to work on and emphasise also organisation's associated responsibility, amount of empowerment, compensation and social factors in order to positively develop their brand – as they suggest these factors to have a particular influence on applicants' job decisions.

The employer image can be further improved by creating and distributing positive brand signals. Systematically similar messages in time convince the applicant of the 'true colours' of the company, as Vaahtio (2005, 58-62) and Markkanen (2005, 98-103) advise. These signals should be given also in the recruitment communication. For example, job advertisement has another important function besides making suitable people to apply: the enforcement of the image. (Markkanen, 2005, 98-103.) Displaying consistency, clarity, credibility and associated investments in the brand are some other examples of effective employer brand signals (Wilden & al. 2010, 68-70).

Wilden & al. (2010, 68-70) suggest that employers should also pay more attention to the influence of the company brand as especially less experienced applicants often miss the employer brand and receive only consumer brand signals. Corporate advertising affects also recruitment outcomes by raising job seekers' awareness and the positivity of the view on the company (Collins & Han 2004, 710). Organisations could hence benefit from aligning different brands and messages and evaluating each of them also from the perspective of potential future employees.

Investing in employer brand and the quality of given signals is important also for another reason: preventing losses that giving bad impressions could cause. In the labour market, everything known about an organisation affects decisions to apply for and accept an offer. Both negative and positive findings are likely to travel fast and far when applicants interact with others, as Vaahtio (2005, 58-62) warns. Not only job applicants but also jobs and employers are continuously evaluated and especially more educated individuals tend to scrutinise the organisation thoroughly before applying (Arthur 2006, 8-9; Vaahtio 2005, 58-62). The company is not only in the risk of losing a potentially valuable employee but may also earn a reputation as a bad place to work (Arthur 2006, 10-11).

Taylor (2008, 214-215) and Arthur (2006, 8-9) view selection as a particularly good opportunity for the applicants to evaluate the employer and their fit to each other. It also appears that negative impressions tend to have an especially lasting effect when they occur during the initial contact with a prospective employer, and that ethicalness is strengthening its position as a competitive advantage (Arthur 2006, 10-11; Vaahtio 2005, 12-13; 58). Counting these together highlights the importance of organising a recruitment process of a good quality where every effort is taken to give a positive but realistic image on the employer and the workplace.

To summarise, being perceived as a great place to work helps to attract the desired kind of applicants. Becoming that requires recognising one's strengths and communicating

them through managing the employer brand. The first contact with the prospective employer – often recruitment and selection – seems to influence particularly strongly. It underlines the importance of good recruitment practices. At the same time, it illustrates how employer brand and image affect recruitment while recruitment mutually affects them.

2.3   Recruitment process

Recruitment processes get different forms based on the situations and other characteristics of recruiting organisations. However, they typically have these three stages in common: job analysis, advertising the vacancy and selection of the employee. (Vaahtio 2005, 31.) In this thesis, the recruitment process is understood to cover attracting and receiving applications all the way to shortlisting applications and interviewing candidates, till the point where the offer is made and accepted (Torrington & al. 2011, 158). Also Ivancevich's (2007, 187) definition elaborates the concept within similar lines. According to him, the recruitment process attempts to find people with the abilities and attitudes desired by the organisation and then match them with the tasks to be performed.

In this chapter, the reader will be introduced to the steps of a typical recruitment process and given an overview on the variety of different recruitment and selection methods, which will be discussed more in depth in chapter 2.4.1. The course of a recruitment process is mainly drawn from Breadwell and Claydon (2010, 163-179) but supplemented by others.

Human resource planning, recruitment and selection can each be seen as distinctive functions which are, however, closely related and cannot function properly without one other (Muller-Camen & al. 2008,114-117). In this thesis, human resource planning is excluded so it is only briefly covered. According to Ivancevich (2007, 129-131), it is a process of assessing future supply of and demand for human resources – typically starting by analysing the business environment and the current situation of the organisation. It also makes plans for meeting the estimated demand – for example through internal promotion and recruitment – and constitutes the requirements for recruitment by analysing the job in question (Muller-Camen & al. 2008, 142-143). The importance of human resource planning is growing due to the increasing demand for businesses to react quickly to emerging opportunities and threats. Human resource planning enables acting before vacancies arise. Moreover, it also allows planning career development and training effectively. (Muller-Camen & al. 2008, 114-117.)

When recruitment and selection are defined separately, recruitment includes identifying the skills, abilities and knowledge required as well as choosing the most effective recruitment methods to attract an adequate pool of right kind of candidates (Koivisto 2004, 25-

26). As Ivancevich (2007, 214) compares, selection in turn is the process by which the organisation chooses from the candidates the person or persons who best meet the criteria for the position. In addition to identifying the applicants that have the highest chance of meeting the organisation's standards of performance, it also searches for the match to the characteristics of the organisation.

Many authors however perceive recruitment to reach even further than the previous definitions: it should not just awaken the interest in the first place but also keep the applicants motivated to the job and the organisation all the way through the recruitment process. For example Ivancevich (2007, 187) defines recruitment as organisational activities that influence the number and types of applicants and whether the applicants accept jobs that are offered. Also Saks and Uggerslev (2009, 351-352) identify the main objectives of recruitment as both attracting top applicants and increasing their motivation to accept a job offer. Overall, in addition to external recruiting, standing for recruiting from outside the organisation, recruitment involves also internal recruiting – meaning allocating current employees for new positions (Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 163-165). However, in this thesis – and the summer recruitment process – external recruitment is exclusively focused on.

According to Breadwell and Claydon (2010, 166-169), recruitment process starts with identifying the types of applicants wanted in terms of skills, experience and attributes. The conventional way is to create first a job description, meaning breaking down the job into components and identifying what are the main objectives of the job. Next step is producing a person specification based on the job description. It means working out a list of key attributes that are required to undertake the role successfully. However, also a person-oriented approach is possible. There the search criteria are directly defined by the ideal employee. A job advertisement should include the bullet points of both of these documents as well as the key conditions of the job. (Torrington & al. 2011, 159-160; 163-166.)

When it is clear what the recruiters are looking for, the next step is to decide how by choosing the recruitment methods. As this study covers only external in-house recruitment, only its methods are covered. With them, employees may be searched in local, regional, national and/or international labour markets according to the need. The demand is defined in terms of numbers, skills, competences and experiences and it also depends on the estimated costs and benefits. (Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 164-165.) According to Breadwell and Claydon (2010, 170-172) and Taylor (2008, 216-219), the most common external in-house recruitment methods are informal and formal personal contacts, advertising in printed and other media, the Internet, education liaison, professional contacts, job

centres and career services. Their relationship to other main categories of different recruitment types is drafted in the following figure.

Recruitment

External		Internal
In-house	Using an agency	

- ☐ Personal contacts
- ☐ Professional contacts
- ☐ Printed media
- ☐ Other media
- ☐ The Internet
- ☐ Education liaison
- ☐ Job centres
- ☐ Career services

Picture 1. The most common methods of external in-house recruitment and its relation to other recruitment categories (according to Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 170-172; Taylor 2008, 216-219)

One of the fastest growing recruitment methods is recruiting via Internet. It refers to the use of corporate websites, external recruitment websites, social networking sites, social media, and handling enquiries and applications online, as Breadwell and Claydon (2010, 170-172), Torrington & al. (2011, 167-170) and Madia (2011,19-24) mention a few. However, Vaahtio (2005, 43-44) reminds that magazine advertisements tend to have a bigger boosting effect on the company image and they may also reach the attention of potential job-changers who are less likely to actively search for vacancies. This suggests that despite the progress of e-recruitment, it still seem unlikely to entirely replace the more traditional methods. E-recruitment is discussed in more detail in the chapter 2.4.6.

A combination of a cover letter and a resume remains the most common way to apply for a job. After attracting job applications the next step is to short-list the applicants into suitable and unsuitable ones by comparing the received information to the predetermined selection criteria. Potential candidates will continue to selection. (Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 173-174.)

As mentioned above, after shortlisting, the continuing applicants are invited to selection. There is a variety of selection techniques available. Usually – and preferably –at least two of them are used. Furthermore, recruitment should never rely solely on tests but they

should always be supplemented with an interview. (Koivisto 2004, 27-28.) According to Breadwell and Claydon (2010, 174-175), different types of interviews are still the most popular selection method. However, interviews alone are often too subjective. More formally structured interviews and accompanying the interview with other less subjective selection tools have raised popularity in order to improve the reliability of selection.

Tests, assessment centres and references are other commonly used selection methods. Firstly, there is a variety of test options. Ability tests concern testing skills already acquired by a candidate while aptitude tests measure individual's potential to undertake specific tasks though these skills may not be possessed yet. Intelligence tests assess one's overall intellectual capacity and personality tests aim at measuring the characteristics advantageous in the job. Assessment centre in turn is a process where a group of participants undertakes a series of tests and exercises under observation and the decisions are based on pooled information from all the stages and assessors. (Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 175-177.) Lastly, reference-checking means obtaining information from a third party, e.g. previous employer, whose contact information has been provided by the applicant. It may be used either for confirming the information given by the applicant or for requesting references. (Torrington & al. 2011, 186.)

After assessing the applicants in the wanted ways, it is finally time for the big decisions: who to hire or whether to choose anyone. The idea of recruitment and selection is in the end to provide enough information for making these decisions. (Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 179.) Moreover, decision-making should always base on measuring candidates against pre-determined selection criteria, not against each other (Torrington & al. 2011, 197). Lastly, the course of a typical recruitment process is concluded with a chart below.
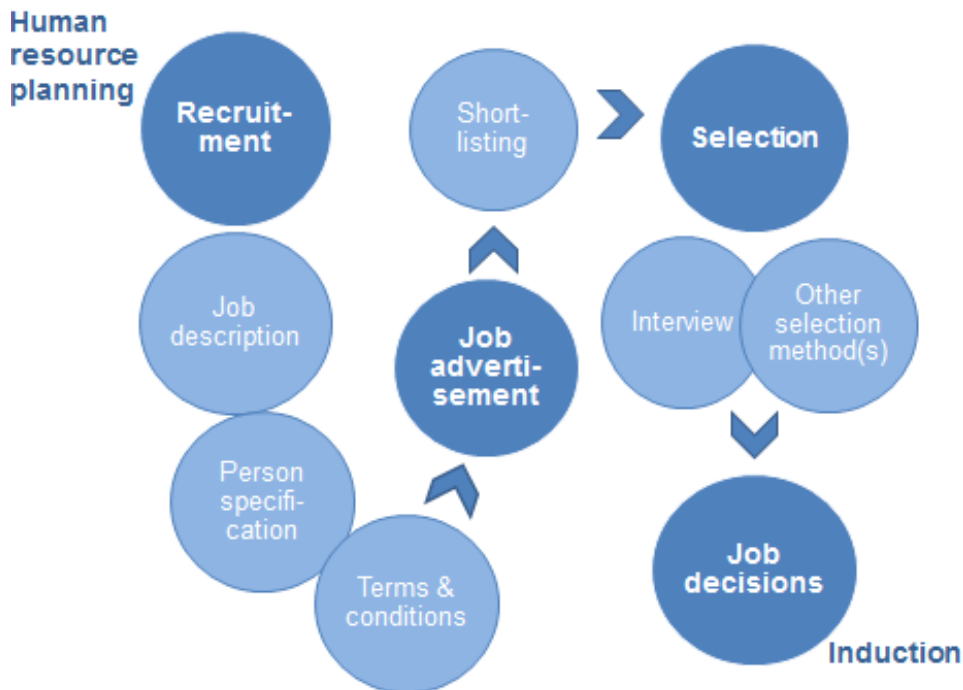
Picture 2. Typical recruitment process (according to Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 163-179)

2.4 Managing the applicant experience in a recruitment process

In this chapter, the importance of a positive recruitment experience will be argued for by explaining applicant experience's effects in a big picture. In the subchapters, the use choice of methods as well as the other recruitment and selection themes that relate most closely to the applicant experience will be addressed.

Many authors do recognise the importance of an applicant's experience in recruitment. Saks and Uggerslev (2009, 360-363) find that the overall recruitment experience, without raising any stage above others, has the biggest impact on how the applicant feels about the recruitment process. Boswell & al. (2003, 32-34) in turn estimate that the recruitment practices are one important factor when choosing on a job, and also the experiences throughout the recruitment process influence heavily the job-choice decision. In addition, Arthur (2006, 10-11) illustrates how the impact of a recruitment experience may be powerful also in a negative sense. Applicants are also potential customers, potential future employees of a competitor and, moreover, they surely share their job search experiences with other potential applicants.

Also Markkanen (2005, 98-101) underscores the importance of the recruitment experience. According to him, the applicant's decision to accept a job offer is influenced, for example, by the way the recruitment process was managed, the people met during it, the communication related to the job, and the company websites. On the other hand, Saks

and Uggerslev (2009, 360-363) emphasise the significance of a holistic and integrative approach to recruitment and advise to specifically pay attention to the recruitment information given during the process. Brown and Swain (2009, 36-38) for one highlight particularly the success of the start in the applicant experience.

Furthermore, according Brown and Swain (2009, 36-38), managing applicant experience successfully requires paying special attention to these practices: managing contacts with the personnel; managing the way the messages are acknowledged; the way to reject; the candidate interview; how the job is offered, and how the candidate is kept in touch during the recruitment process. As Brown and Swain (2009, 38-39) conclude, developing a long-term relationship with applicants is crucial in order to succeed in the war for talent. This is possible only by taking care of their recruitment experiences.

2.4.1   Choosing the recruitment and selection methods

There are countless recruitment methods to choose from and each has its advantages and drawbacks. Being selective is important in recruitment and selection and it starts from the decisions on the strategy and the methods (Boselie 2010, 148). Shammot (2014, 67) reminds that the chosen recruitment methods should also be constantly assessed so that they can be improved when needed to. This subchapter will guide the reader to the effects of the strategy and organisational factors on the choice of recruitment methods. Also advice to making most of the recruitment and selection methods will be given.

The best recruitment strategy depends on the recruiting organisation, the market and the job in question. Collins and Han (2004, 711-715) and Taylor (2008, 214-215) demonstrate how organisational factors and the labour market affect the focus of the recruitment strategy. For example, when the labour market is tight, more attention is given to the recruitment methods and less to selection; correspondingly in a loose market, less focus is on recruitment and more on selection. Moreover, according to Markkanen (2005, 20-22), the recruitment strategy should be created in cooperation with the management, communication, marketing and human resource functions as they all affect the productivity of recruitment and build the employer reputation by their actions. This naturally applies fully only to big organisations that have this kind of distinctive departments.

Also other organisational factors, such as size and the level of renown appear to affect the choice of strategy. Collins and Han (2004, 690-691, 711-715) suggest high-involvement recruitment strategy for companies that are already positively well-known. High-involvement recruitment practices deepen the job-seeker awareness and attraction when there already are some. They provide greater amount of information that is targeted to

already motivated job-seekers instead of giving an introduction to someone hearing about the company for the first time. Also employee endorsements can be included in a high-involvement strategy to positively affect job seekers' notions about the job and the company.

However, even the greatest strategy yet needs to be brought to life by developing a recruitment program for it. Saks and Uggerslev (2009, 360-363) characterise that effective recruitment programs involve interconnected and integrated stages which all contribute to conveying a consisted and wanted kind of message about the job and the organisation. Arthur (2006, 20-21) advises to also avoid cultivating negative impressions and promoting fun at work according to possibilities. Furthermore, displaying work place attributes which employees typically rank high, such as a safe work environment, good relations with supervisors, career growth opportunities, and sociability with peers, is recommendable.

Moving to a recruitment process itself, firstly, a good job advert captures attention, is interesting and attractive while also allows applicants to self-select. This means giving the applicant realistic chances to evaluate their suitability to the requirements and other characteristics and decide whether to apply or not. (Boselie 2010, 151-152; Taylor 2008, 215; 222.) Boselie (2010, 151-152) defines the idea of a realistic job preview to base on that the more realistic the information, the more likely the fit between the candidate and the job is. Moreover, suitability and realistic expectations are connected to increased job satisfaction, employee motivation, trust, commitment and employee retention.

Another common way to hear from vacancies is through education liaison. Graduate recruitment is broadly perceived as an increasingly important source of applicants. For example Branine (2008, 497) and Vaahtio (2005, 39-40) believe that forward-looking employers' future and competitiveness is becoming more and more dependent on the ability to recruit and select the best graduates. Also according to Breadwell and Claydon (2010, 170-172) and Taylor (2008, 216-219), that makes education liaison one of the most common recruitment tools today. Employers choose cooperation with student organisations and universities to invest in their future recruitment and talent, Vaahtio (2005, 39-40) confirms. Cooperation gives the employer and prospective employees the possibility to work with each other already during the studies which may lead in more suitable applicants and easier recruitment after graduation – and enhanced employment chances for students.

After the interest is born, the company websites are often the first place for the applicant to seek information. That is, websites tend to have a crucial role in forming the employer image in the first place. Markkanen (2005, 105) categorises that websites which are up-to-

date, of a high quality and provide true additional value to the applicant by giving a glance at the company as a prospective employer are the likeliest to influence positively.

Also shared experiences of others, word-of-mouth, affect the employer image to a great extent (Markkanen 2005, 101). According to Keeling, McGoldrick and Sadhu (2013, 99-100), too, staff word-of-mouth has a big impact on job seeker attraction and hence it should be leveraged as a recruitment tool. Especially employees who are perceived as role models or opinion leaders should be targeted for promoting positive word-of-mouth as their influence is likely to be the biggest. However, it is vitally important to identify possible work issues and sources of dissatisfaction and solve them before starting to purposely yield word-of-mouth. The organisation should also ensure that the current employees know about their staff benefits and are motivated as it is likely to increase their commitment and spontaneous and unforced communication in a positive sense. Creating attractive content and messages that the employees genuinely want to share is also a good idea. Moreover, real staff members should be featured in the advertisements and also elsewhere in the recruitment process whenever possible. (Keeling & al. 2013, 99-100.)

The next step is selection. First of all, the selection process should preferably involve using at least two selection methods. Selection tests should always be supplemented with an interview whereas the objectivity of interviews should be improved by the use of other less subjective selection methods or more formal structuring. (Koivisto 2004, 27-28; Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 174-175.) This suggests choosing at least two different selection methods of which one is an interview and another one could be for example some kind of test depending on the job and other factors determining the need.

Despite its frequency, also interviewing requires consideration and skills. According to Yeung (2011, 1-7), the main functions of an interview are to evaluate the candidate accurately while also giving a good impression and helping the candidate to understand the nature of the job. Finding the right balance between them may feel challenging at first. For example, unstructured chat interviews may frustrate the applicant and make them feel like they are not getting the possibility to give full account of themselves; while too many hard-hitting questions may make the candidate feel that they are not treated respectfully. As a solution, Markkanen (2008, 212) advises to aim for the middle and always remain professional and respectful. It may also be useful to help candidates relax in the end of the interview so that they can leave the situation in a positive mind set. An effective interview should also allow time for applicant's questions about the organisation, job and anything else they have on mind so that they can better discover whether they want to work there.

2.4.2   Recruiters' role and recommended behaviour

All in all, recruiters have a major role in the applicant's recruitment experience and seem to particularly influence the assessment of the organisation. One main reason is applicants' interest in the quality of the relationships in their prospective work place to which treatment during the recruitment process provides a preview (Boswell & al. 2003, 32-34). This chapter will present the identified keys to good recruiter behaviour.

According to Arthur (2006, 4-7), nice, organised, personal and flexible treatment of applicants is advantageous whereas for example delays and poor behaviours by the recruiters affect negatively and should be avoided. Furthermore, recruiters that are enthusiastic and seemingly like working in the company are more likely to appeal to make a positive decision on taking the job. Moreover, Saks and Uggerslev (2009, 360-363) add that besides being friendly and personable, the recruiters should also be informative.

Arthur (2006, 10-11) puts things into perspective by demonstrating how giving a good impression in the end bases on simple things and following the common rules of politeness. One must keep appointments, book enough time for meetings, apologize when needed to, be prepared, focus on the applicant, be present, and reply promptly. Finding the right approach where the recruiter can conformably both appear professional and demonstrate enthusiasm, pride and involvement in the company is the key to success.

What comes to the behaviour when interviewing, Boswell & al. (2003, 32-34) deem that good interview behaviour has much smaller impact than bad behaviour. This notion underlines the need to eliminate the risk of bad treatment or behaviour. It can be overcome by giving the recruiters training in interviewing. Training should cover organisational skills and suitable ways of sharing information as well as ways of demonstrating interest and positive attitude towards an applicant.

2.4.3   Person-environment fit and ways to enable its assessment

As already said, also jobs and employers are evaluated in the labour market and when candidates are attending recruitment processes (Vaahtio 2005, 58-62; Markkanen 2005, 106). Applicants search for cues to access their fit to the employer and the job: the person-environment fit. In this chapter, different types of person-environment fit will be explained and the importance of highlighting them will be argued for. Moreover, recommendations will be given on how to give a positive but realistic image when recruiting.

Boselie (2010, 147-148; 151-152) explains person-environment fit as the alignment between a person and the job and the organisation. It consists of person-job fit and person-organisation fit. Both of them build on the idea that similarly than it is important for the employer to be able to evaluate the applicants' suitability, it is essential that the candidates are able to do the same. Also Breadwell and Claydon (2010, 166) believe that applicant's understanding in the job, and in the culture and values of the organisation plays a crucial role for recruitment's success. Torrington & al. (2011, 179-180) add that the overall organisational context should be displayed properly also for its influence on the development of psychological contract – starting already in the recruitment process. In addition, the two-way nature of selection is emphasised: particularly good opportunity for assessing the employer is provided in this stage.

As presented above, many authors recommend recruiters to emphasise person-organisation fit during the recruitment process. There are many reasons for it. Firstly, it may encourage suitable job seekers to apply, as suggested by Roberson & Collins (2005, 336-337). Secondly, it is likely to increase the share of suitable applicants by allowing the unsuitable to self-select themselves out. Furthermore, the hires will also have more realistic expectations which has been connected to increased job satisfaction, employee well-being, productivity and quality of work. (Boselie 2010, 147-148; 151-152.) As Breadwell and Claydon (2010, 166) conclude, unsuitable hires in turn are more likely to perform weaker and leave earlier.

To enable assessing fit effectively, the employer should highlight the characteristics that are likely to be the most important for the type of applicant in question. This helps to demonstrate more clearly the ability – or inability – to meet the needs of the applicant (Arthur 2006, 4-7.) Roberson and Collins (2005, 336-337) give development opportunities, compensation and benefits, and organisational policies as examples of aspects that tend to be important for applicants. When these factors are perceived to positively exist in the organisation, they may further motivate the applicant to apply and make a positive job-decision. Moreover, Catanzaro, Moore and Marshall (2010, 657) recommend organisations with supportive organisational cultures and values to highlight these features, too, for they appear to be specifically effective as well.

Applicants are also interested in the expected quality of the relationships in their potential future work place and make conclusions about it during the recruitment process as already earlier presented by Boswell & al. (2003, 32-34). They thus look for opportunities to interact with organisation members, especially during site visits (Saks & Uggerslev 2009, 360-363). That is why Boswell & al. (2003, 32-34) encourage recruiters to let applicants

meet several organisation members and to make them feel welcome. Similarly, providing information about the culture and displaying good relations is likely to be helpful. One more tool, suggested by Keeling & al. (2013, 99-100), is the use of staff word-of-mouth. It tends to weight in the perceptions of a work environment and in determining the job seeker attraction in the first place. Notifying its role is important for both decreasing negative word-of-mouth and leveraging positive word-of-mouth in the recruitment process.

2.4.4   Information and communications during the recruitment process

This chapter starts by making the reader familiar with the role of information and communications in the recruitment process. It will also illustrate what kinds of communications and information are needed. Lastly, aspects that the information should cover and some methods of information-sharing will be recommended.

The connection between quality information and a successful recruitment process is addressed by many authors. According to Saks & Uggerslev (2009, 360-363) and Boswell & al. (2003, 32-34), information given in a recruitment process is deemed to be particularly important because it makes the applicant more aware of important job characteristics and thus shape their decisions to the right decision. Also Roberson and Collins (2005, 336-337) and Markkanen (2005, 98-101), confirm that the recruitment process and experience may be enhanced by providing accurate information to the applicants.

When recruiting, it is important to first of all be informative and give the applicants the information they are looking for (Arthur 2006, 4-7). Saks and Uggerslev (2009, 360-363) specify that this information should be specific enough and the communications and follow-up should be fast and well-timed. Furthermore, Boswell & al. (2003, 32-34) recommend organisations to also provide more and more prompt feedback and explanations as well as to keep them updated of their status in the recruitment process. In addition, deadlines and other schedules make the process more expeditious and, as a consequence, seem to be favourable to applicants as long as there is also flexibility within them.

As explained in the previous subchapter, information should be given especially about aspects that are typically important to applicants, such as development opportunities, compensation and benefits, and organisational policies (Roberson & Collins 2005, 336-337). Agrawal & Swaroop (2009, 47-48) advise recruiters to also aim at understanding an individual applicant's needs better in order to communicate the employment opportunities in a more customised way. Also a possible positive reputation and other good things related to working for the company should be emphasised and lived up to during the re-

cruitment process. That way the applicant can be made more familiar with the package been offered. (Brown & Swain 2009, 44-45; Boswell & al. 2003, 32-34.)

Presenting realistic information about characteristics that are common to many jobs seems to be another particularly effective factor in improving the attractiveness of an employer. Unlike the most common theory about the fit – discussed in the previous subchapter – Thorsteinson, Palmer, Wulff and Anderson (2004, 134-136) suggest that the biggest reason for this phenomenon might lie in the increased perceptions of the challenging nature of the job. Other possible reasons are positive perceptions of organisational features, such as honesty, as well as applicants' enhanced possibilities to self-select out of the recruitment process for an unsuitable job.

Moreover, as familiar from the previous chapter, job seekers often approach personnel members for information. That way it is, firstly, useful to make sure that the existing employees have accurate information and favourable views on the organisational characteristics. (Keeling & al. 2013, 99-100.) Secondly, as Arthur (2006, 4-7) suggests, existing employees could also be intentionally harnessed to messengers. Wilden & al's (2010, 68-70)'s findings defend this idea. According to them, word-of-mouth seems to be perceived as the most credible source of employer information; at the same time, applicants in general wish for more information about their potential future employer. Developing employee referral programs can respond to these both at once. They could help in attracting to apply and ease deciding on the job offer as well as make the employer appear more approachable. Employee referral could also help to ensure that the information available is both correct and favourable.

2.4.5 Perceived fairness of the recruitment process

To shed light on the importance of fair recruitment, Vaahtio (2005, 11-13) starts by warning about the use of unprofessional recruitment practices which may easily soil the company reputation. Unethical methods and discrimination are specifically dangerous and may even take the organisation to juridical problems in the worst case. Also, as specifically more experienced applicants tend to weight fairness characteristics heavily, an employer that uses unfair methods is in danger of driving away its most conscious – and perhaps also most competent – applicants (Ababneh & al. 2013, 125-126; Dineen & al. 2004, 141-142). Altogether, no organisation should be able to afford discriminatory practices and the bad reputation deriving from them, as Vaahtio concludes (2005, 58).

On the other hand, when the recruitment process is successfully and fairly executed, the organisation shares positive information and provides insights to its products and services

at the same time. This may result in gaining also new customers and other allies. Moreover, ethicalness is strengthening as a competitive advantage and can help to compete for the best applicants. (Vaahtio 2005,12-13; 58.) All in all, ensuring fairness in the recruitment process is not just preventing negative consequences but has also the potential to lead in additional value.

According to Ababneh, Hackett and Schat (2013, 125-126), selection seems to be perceived as the most risky part of the recruitment process. Dineen, Noe & Wang (2004, 141-142) encourage organisations to ensure that this concern is unnecessary by making sure that their selection systems satisfy justice rules. This makes applicants more satisfied and enhances their overall perceptions of the employer whereas negative perceptions of the selection system deteriorate the employer reputation and attractiveness of it

Perceived fairness of selection can be improved by using transparent selection policies and practices. They make it more likely that the applicants attribute the cause of a disappointing result to factors related to them and not to the system. This may cause some damage to the self-esteem of the applicants which organisations can however decline by giving them feedback in a professional and sensitive way. Also the subjective nature of interviews has been under criticism. Thus subjectivity can be decreased by structuring interviews more or supplementing them with another more objective selection method. (Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 174-175.) Ababneh & al. (2013, 125-126.) suggest that organisations could also proactively influence applicant attributions beforehand by, for example, providing applicants with informational material about the fairness and effectiveness of the selection system.

It is also essential to simply treat applicants well as discussed in the chapter 2.4.2. Recruiters should always remain professional, fair and friendly when interacting with candidates, as summed up by Yeung (2011, 6-7) and Markkanen (2008, 212). Moreover, Koivisto (2004, 28) underscores the importance of prompt communication also from the fairness point of view. Also unselected applicants should be treated considerately as they inevitably work as messengers for the company – for either good or bad. Negative comments may spread quickly and a negative impression may stay long in the minds of potential applicants.

The importance of taking care of fairness aspects applies also to Internet-based recruitment and selection methods which are presented in more detail in the following subchapter (Thielsch & Träumer 2012, 65). Moreover, Shammot (2014, 67) sees stopping the use of methods that enable favouritism towards friends and relatives in particular importance.

Altogether, Bauer & al. (2001, 414) define the complexity of assessing fairness by reminding that different selection procedures are typically perceived as fair in some ways but unfair in others rather than just simply fair or unfair.

To conclude, ensuring fairness in the recruitment process is crucial both for the experience and for the reputation of the company. All stages and methods involve risks in terms of fairness and recognising them is the first step to avoiding them. Fair implementation, in the end, is based on simple things, such as common good manners, keeping the process transparent and ensuring being able to justify the made decisions.

2.4.6 E-recruitment – what and how?

E-recruitment refers to the use of corporate websites, external recruitment websites, social networking sites and social media as recruitment methods. Moreover, it also involves handling enquiries and applications online (Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 170-172; Torrington & al. 2011, 167-170; Madia 2011,19-24). This chapter will address its position in today's recruitment as well as discuss its methods and good practices.

Thielsch & Träumer (2012, 59) rationalise online recruitment's increasing popularity firstly with its cheaper costs compared to the traditional media. Secondly, e-recruitment is typically also faster which answers to today's growing competitive pressure for speedy recruitment. Moreover, it enables employers to build new kinds of relationships to job-seekers and hence opens also new possibilities to managing the employer brand.

According to Allen, Biggane, Pitts, Otondo and Scotter (2012, 279-282), organisation web sites are one example of the methods that are becoming more used in recruitment. Especially perceptions of content, design and communication features seem to influence the applicant's evaluations of a web site. Simultaneously they also affect the attitude towards an organisation, and intentions to apply for a job. Also presentation style, usefulness as well as problems with reading and orientation appear to play particular roles in shaping attraction to the organisation. Moreover, Markkanen (2005, 105) argues that websites, which are up-to-date, of a high quality and give applicant a glance at the company as the prospective employer, are most likely to have a positive effect.

As already mentioned in the previous subchapter, fairness issues need to be well handled in e-recruitment, too. Thielsch & Träumer (2012, 65) deem that particularly feedback seems to play even bigger role in e-recruitment than within traditional recruitment methods. Giving quality feedback has the potential to lead in increased number of accepted job offers and also otherwise improve applicant attitudes towards the organisation. In many

cases, feedback could be improved simply by setting automatic responses notifying applicants of their status in the process and by providing more detailed and personalised feedback when the applicant did not get the job.

Other aspects that Thielsch and Träumer (2012, 65) find advantageous for perceived fairness are providing flexibility in online applications and providing contact information for possible enquires. Giving information about the application procedures and the selection criteria beforehand are also believed to increase perceptions of fairness by improving transparency. Dineen & al. (2004, 141-142) recognise many same factors but emphasise consistency and ability to provide additional information above all. Moreover, to improve the overall experience, the recruiters should also use human screeners, make the applicants more familiar with the way the automated systems work, or at least provide the ability to contact a human representative during the automated processes.

Social media is the newest chapter in e-recruitment. As Korpi & al. (2012, 15-17) explain, it builds on behaviour and discussion of individual people, which makes it inherently different from other online methods. Social media's first benefits are fastness and typically rather affordable costs. It also has the unique potential to reach a larger audience than any other media ever before – while also providing better targeting possibilities than any traditional media. Moreover, a job-seeker can get more information about the company with less effort on social media. Social media can also be used for head-hunting i.e. searching for professionals to be directly contacted about upcoming vacancies. However, one thing is crucial to bear in mind: after receiving an application, the applicant can be searched online only with the applicant's permission. (Korpi & al. 2012, 50-52.)

Korpi & al. (2012, 30; 38-40) also emphasise the significance of long-term participation in online networks. For example social media should not be used merely as a campaign as achieving its full potential requires building trust and relationship to the audience. This can be reached only by being present and active also when there is no financial purpose or other benefit related to it. That way telling about vacancies will be natural and easy when it is the time. Unlike, starting the use of social media straight from recruitment content is less likely to prove successful or give a favourable image. The greatest opportunities of social media pose also its greatest risks: as anyone can create and share content, revealing negative aspects is also easier and more influential (Korpi & al. 2012, 66-69).

2.4.7 Diversity management in recruitment and selection

Discrimination refers to unequal treatment of people based on one or several grounds for discrimination: age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, health, disability, sexual orientation, lan-

guage, religion, political opinion, family relations, belonging to a work union or other alike (Työsuojeluhallinto 2015). This chapter will present the main reasons for effective diversity management as well as introduce the main approaches to it.

Discrimination law's purpose is to guarantee that employers treat people equally no matter what distinctions they have (Taylor 2008, 90). Breaches to it may take the employer to juridical problems, as warned by Vaahtio (2005, 11-13). Discrimination is prohibited also when recruiting. According to Taylor (2008, 90), the recruiters need to bear equality in mind especially when drawing up person specifications, advertising, short-listing and selecting employees. It is forbidden to for instance set criteria or wishes for applicants that do not influence the ability to perform in the job. Unequal treatment of an applicant group is similarly discriminative than unequal treatment of an individual applicant. It is also set that employers are obligated to take "reasonable actions" for employing a person with a disability. (Työsuojeluhallinto 2015.)

According to Torrington & al. (2011, 474-478), there are two predominant approaches to equality at work. First one is called equal opportunities. It bases on the idea that legislation and procedural justice are enough to create fair outcomes. Actions are also typically targeted to the distinctive groups. Another approach, management of diversity, on contrary considers everyone as individuals without dividing them into groups. It also recognises the role of organisational culture and aims at shaping it in order to prevent inequality. It is perceived as more integrative and deeper view on equality. This approach seems potential to be used also in recruitment.

Huhta & al. (2005, 112-113) list several benefits that companies gain by implementing equality in the workplaces. They include firstly the improved quality: good working life is connected to happier, healthier and more diverse employees who perform better. That way it is also likely to raise the quality and productivity of the business. Torrigton & al. (2011, 477) complement that better work satisfaction and commitment are positively linked to improved retention and reduced absence levels as well. Secondly, diversity, equality and mutual understanding will also give more space for innovation and positive competition by ensuring that everyone is able to give their full contribution (Huhta & al. 2005, 112-113; Torrigton & al. 2011, 477). Moreover, Huhta & al. (2005, 112-113) continue that gaining reputation as an equal and fair employer also helps in competing for the best job applicants and in attracting cooperation partners and customers

All in all, diversity and equality are values that each employer should pursue. They can benefit the company in countless ways whereas neglecting them can throw the employer

into significant troubles, such as juridical problems and bad reputation which may stick for a long time.

2.5 Future of recruitment and selection

Future remains unknown but there are some predictions that many authors seem to agree on. These forecasts include for example increasing competition, globalisation, unbalance of demand and supply, increasing importance of recruitment, and new recruitment methods. In this chapter, they are all discussed from the Finnish labour market's perspective.

Koivisto (2004, 30-31) forecasts the forthcoming chances in recruitment to be increasing use of Internet, internationalisation, bigger weight on the use of networks, and the rising importance of competence and education. However, Vaahtio (2005, 219-224) remarks that another change in Finnish labour market is, somewhat conversely, lessening practical skills. She views it alarming as everyone cannot be a developer or a specialist and the demand for practical skills needs to be met as well. As both unemployment and labour shortage are likely issues, the underlying cause seems to lie in the unbalance of the quality of demand and supply. Koivisto (2004, 30) sees also applicants' improved job search skills as one more reason making the future's recruitment more challenging.

Another major topic in recruitment is globalisation. According to Taylor (2008, 37-39), it refers to the notion that national economies are, to an increasing extent, emerging into a single global economy in which companies operate across national boundaries. Regardless of the operating model of a company, the phenomenon affects all in a way or another: even though a company would serve only national customers it is more often competing for these customers with its overseas competitors. The increasing competition for customers tightens competition for the best-qualified and most suitable employees, too. Korpi, Laine and Soljasalo (2012, 59) estimate that this will change the structures of the labour markets and employment models, too. For example, renting workforce is brought up as one of the fastest growing phenomena. It could eventually create a labour market where work is no longer done directly to the company benefiting from it.

Continuing about the competition, Wilden & al (2010, 56-57) forecast obtaining suitable human resources to become increasingly difficult particularly in the labour markets of high competition. Markkanen (2005, 30-31) views also filling key positions as a growing challenge. Developing strategies for ensuring sufficient human resource base will thus become even more essential for competitive business (Wilden & al. 2010, 56-57). As a consequence, Koivisto (2004, 30-31) estimates that recruitment will not just remain central to businesses but its pace and requirements will also tighten. He forecasts that more ag-

gressive approaches to recruitment will be taken and companies will also invest more in developing their internal resources to compete for the competence.

Competition is likely to get tougher also as the worldwide population ages (Wilden & al. 2010, 56-57). Retiring baby boomers are already affecting the Finnish labour market (Markkanen 2005, 27-29). Tilastokeskus (2012) defines baby boomers as an exceptionally big generation born in the years 1945-1949, straight after the Second World War. According to Markkanen (2005, 27-29), due to the baby boomers, the Finnish population will grow only in its oldest age segments after the year 2010. This means that the percentage of the population in the working age will grow smaller and the society will need to place more weight on it. Baby boomers' withdrawal from working life embarks a cycle of filling opening vacancies which again open new ones (Markkanen 2005, 37-38).There has been lots of discussion also about another changing democratic characteristic: immigration and emigration. However, Markkanen (2005, 30-31) does not view them similarly significant to the Finnish labour market as these two more or less cancel each other's effect.

As discussed in the chapter 2.4.6, one of the fastest growing recruitment methods is recruiting via the Internet – and particularly on social media (Breadwell & Claydon 2010, 170-172; Torrington & al. 2011, 167-170; Madia 2011,19-24). They are taking over part of recruitment, job advertisement in particular, but as Korpi, Laine, and Soljasalo (2012, 60-61) estimate, they are however unlikely to ever replace all the other media. The use of social media is becoming so usual that the use of it itself is diminishing part of its differentiating effect. In the future, a company may rather be perceived to send a message by staying out of the social media.

3   Experience management

Pine and Gilmore (1999, 2-4) were among the first to present the idea of the Experience Economy. Their theory bases on the idea that goods or services are no longer enough but something more is needed for engaging today's customers. They introduce experiences, a new economic offering, as a response to this demand. People desire experiences because of their lasting value as a memory (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 18-19). Also Tarssanen and Kylänen (2004, 14) confirm that it is becoming more and more difficult to satisfy customers and compete for them and this is why experiences grow in meaning.

Pine and Gilmore (2011, 17; 3) explain that an experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as stage and goods as props to engage an individual. They define an experience as a series of memorable events that a company stages in a theatrical manner to engage a customer in an inherently personal way. Tarssanen (2004, 4) in turn defines an experience as multi-sensory, positive, comprehensive, individual and highly memorable experience.

Like services, experiences are intangible, customisable and perishable. However, memorability, personality and richness in sensations are also essential parts of experiences and distinguish them from services. Experiences occur within an individual engaging in them. Each experience elicits from the interaction between the staged event and the individual's mind set and prior experiences so there can never be two experiences alike – this brings a deeper dimension of challenge to managing services and experiences. Furthermore, even though the moment goes past the value of the experience lives in the memory of an individual engaged by it. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 12; 17-19.)

A customer experience is also a common concept in services. Traditionally it has referred to what a customer goes through in the course of the service and how the actual experience meets the beforehand formed expectations which function as standards for the assessment of the provider's performance, as presented by Meirovich and Little (2013, 40). However, it can be argued that also in this instance it is in the end the emotional response in a customer that counts and makes the experience favourable or unfavourable. Hence Macintyre, Parry and Angelis (2011, 7-8) define an experience as a set of awakened emotions. They emphasise its importance by suggesting that also when designing service, emotions should be placed at the centre of it, by identifying what kind of emotions the service is hoped to evoke (Macintyre & al. 2011, 10-11).

In the following subchapters, I will firstly present a model of evaluating and categorising experiences. Secondly, I will introduce two different experience development models. I will also combine experience management theories to each other and to recruitment and selection. Based on the findings, the research framework for the case study will be decided.

3.1 Experience realms

Developing experiences, like any development, starts from evaluating their current state. That means that there must be tools for identifying and assessing them. Pine and Gilmore (2011, 45-47) present the two dimensions of experience for this purpose: the axis illustrating the level of guest participation – from passive to active – and the axis describing the kind of connection to the environment – from absorbing it to immersing into it. Different combinations of these two dimensions form the four experience realms that are presented below, both in a chart and in text.

Absorption

Entertainment	Educational

Passive ← **Experience core** → **Active**

Esthetic	Escapist

Immersion
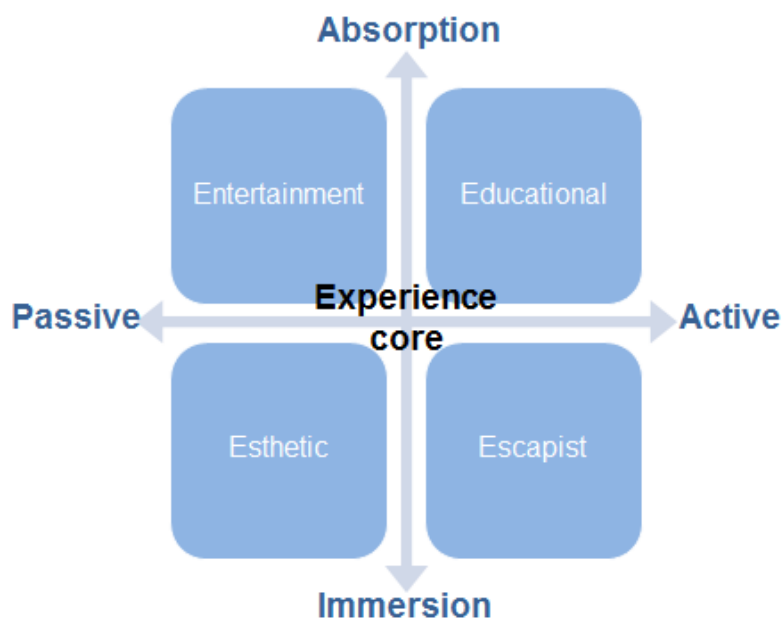
Picture 3. The experience realms (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 47-60)

Typically the most easily recognised dimension is entertainment. Entertainment consists of passive absorption through senses. That can be, for instance, watching a performance or listening to music. Educational experiences involve absorption as well but differ from entertainment by requiring active participation from the individual engaged in it. Especially the new approach to education with the focus on doing and interaction is a good example of it. Escapist experiences in turn involve massively greater immersion than the previous two: they combine immersion to active participation. One can think of, let's say, gambling in casinos and roleplaying for an example. The fourth and last kind of experience realm is the aesthetic. In aesthetic experiences the guest is fully immersed in but they have little or

no effect on it, meaning that their participation is passive. Enjoying a view or art at a gallery provide some examples of it. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 47-56.)

Pine and Gilmore (2011, 56-60) add that even though many experienced can be categorised as presented, the most successful experiences blur the boundaries and incorporate elements of all realms. This makes the experience richer and more compelling. The elements can be intentionally developed and added. With the help of the experience realms it is possible to evaluate what is missing from the experience and hence could be considered to be added for engaging the experiencer even more deeply.

3.2   THEME-ing the experience

The first experience development model presented is also from Pine and Gilmore (2011, 65-67; 91). Here they provide steps to what was recommended in the previous subchapter – to enrichening experiences by incorporating elements of more realms. It makes experiences more versatile, complete and appealing. The five development steps presented below together constitute the process called experience THEME-ing.

First of them is theming. Well-defined and implemented theme enables the customers to organise their impression around something more concrete and hence makes the experience more memorable. All kinds of businesses providing experiences are assessed to benefit from the use of a suitable theme. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 67-68.) Richest themes alternate the ordinary reality, are presented in a coherent way and fit to the character of the provider (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 73-77).

Secondly, the given impressions should be harmonised with positive cues. Cues are small signals that convince the guest about the nature of the experience when they are in line with each other and the theme (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 78-79). Thirdly, negative cues should be similarly eliminated as their existence harms the coherence and perceived authenticity of the experience. For example, behaviour and clothing of the personnel play a crucial role in implementing these two steps. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 79; 82-84.)

Moreover, experience should be mixed in memorabilia, meaning providing something tangible related to the experience. This raises memorability for the guest can keep something as a concrete memory of the experience. It also eases telling others about it. Pine and Gilmore give food for thought by claiming that the use of memorabilia aids any business that offers something that people *want* to remember. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 85-88.)

The fifth and last step is to engage all senses. Again, the more effectively the senses are engaged, the more memorable the experience is. In fact, senses are so powerful that this stage alone may turn a service into an experience. However, it works both ways: only a single contrary sensation can destroy the experience. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 88-90.)

All in all, most of these criteria for a successful experience seem to relate to the coherence of perceptions, depth of the experience, and memorability.
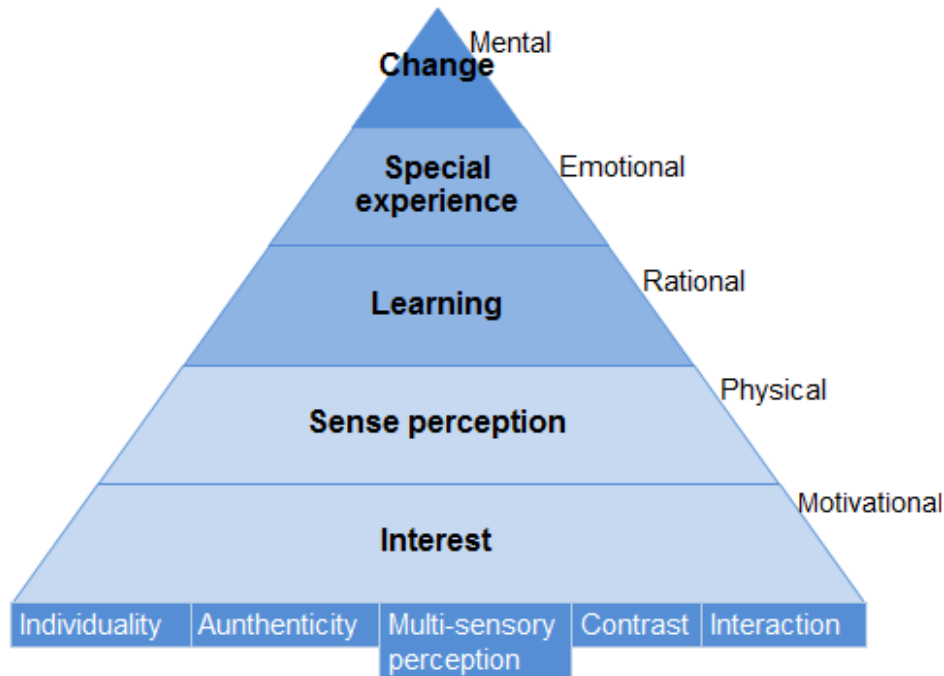
3.3   The experience triangle

The second experience development model is created by Tarssanen and Kylänen (2004, 8-9). This model, called the experience triangle, represents 'the ideal product' in which every element of a successful experience is reflected on all the levels of it. Similarly than the experience realms of Pine and Gilmore (2011, 45-47), also this tool helps to discover ways to develop an experience by identifying which aspects it may lack or perform weaker at. However, it also provides more concrete suggestions on how to develop these dimensions.

The perfect experience consists of five elements: individuality, authenticity, multi-sensory perception, contrast and interaction. Individuality means the product's uniqueness compared to the other similar. It can however also be assessed by the level of ability to tailor the experience according to the customer's wishes. Authenticity is the second element of the triangle. It refers to the credibility of the experience: genuineness of its relationship to its environment and origins, and the coherence between its details. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2004, 9-10.)

Also according to Tarssanen and Kylänen (2004, 10-11), as many senses as possible should be engaged. All sensory stimuli should be in harmony with each other and strengthen the desired impression and possible theme. The more senses involved, the deeper the effect and the more lasting the memory of the experience will be. Contrast in turn refers to difference and novelty from the client's perspective. The experience should provide the individual with something new and exotic compared to the everyday routine.

Lastly, interaction means all interaction between the experience, the providers and other customers. All of these always influence the experience. The feeling of community is important for an experience to be successful. One can also experience alone but usually at least the awareness of the fact that the experience is appreciated and raising one's social status or level of belonging to a community is still present. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2004, 11-12; 15-16.)

According to Tarssanen and Kylänen (2004, 12-13) the vertical axis of the model in turn describes how the experience evolves within an individual. All the elements should be present in all the stages to enable proceeding on them. Picture 4 maps the different levels of the experience, the main functions of them as well as the ingredients – the five elements – needed for advancing.

Picture 4. The experience triangle (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2004, 9-14)

The first stage is the motivational level where the guest's interest is awakened. The experience is brought to the consciousness of the customer and expectations and desires related to the experience are formed. Second level is the physical. Here the environment and the product are experienced in practice, through senses.

Third step is the rational level, the stage where the sensory stimuli is processed and reacted to – by learning, applying knowledge and forming opinions. On this level, the individual decides whether he or she is satisfied or not. The fourth stage is the emotional level. Here what has been experienced becomes a special experience. Emotions are difficult to predict but if the experience has been successful on all the previous levels it is likely that positive emotions are evoked. However, in addition to being positive, these emotions need to be also significant. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2004, 13.)

The fifth and last is the mental level. Success in the emotional level may lead in fulfilment of this stage which means achieving fairly permanent modifications, such as change in physical state, world view or lifestyle. In other words, the person feels like having changed positively and remarkably. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2004, 13-14.)

Tarssanen and Kylänen (2004, 15-16) remind that also the cultural background, and prior experiences and notions influence the experience. Moreover, experiences can also be evaluated from the quality point of view. This means that the overall quality of different aspects is assessed and the higher the combined overall quality, the more satisfying the experience is.

3.4 Applying experience management to recruitment and selection

As Pine and Gilmore (2011, 6-7) note, consumers are not the only ones to enjoy experiences. Businesses are made of people and more experiences could be brought to business environments as well. They suggest providing experiences to business-to-business customers by, for example, bringing surprising extra value to the service or joy to meetings through experience elements. Experiences may also provide an opportunity for the customers to try out the products before making the purchasing decision.

If customers demand experiences, business customers appreciate them and any meeting or work environment can be made more fun and meaningful with the aid of them, the logical following assumption is that also employees would love experiences just the same. The suggestion made here is that, following the same logic, also job applicants are expected to enjoy experiences and *the recruitment process would become a more positive and significant experience with experience elements*. Trying bringing these elements to recruitment processes could be worth trying in order to differentiate from others and attract the best and the most suitable candidates both now and in the future.

Comparing the case summer recruitment process to the experience realms of Pine and Gilmore (2011, 47-56), it can be arguably said that recruitment process is closest to an escapist experience combining immersion to active participation. The participants are fully involved in the situation and they can shape the event by the actions they take. However, attending to the recruitment process also includes passive listening and following which makes it verge on the other two directions of the dimension spectrums as well: absorption and passive participation. According to Pine and Gilmore (2011, 56-60), the most successful experiences combine all the dimensions and blur realm borders which suggests that this can be taken as an advantage, not a drawback.

Following Pine and Gilmore (2011, 65-91), an occasion can be brought to a next level, into an experience, by theming it, harmonising it with cues suiting the theme and eliminating contradictory ones, engaging all five senses, and providing some kind of memorabilia. According to Tarssanen & Kylänen (2004, 8-12) in addition to those points, the event

should also be unique, authentic and different from the attendant's everyday life. It should also include interaction with the hosts, the theme and other participants.

All the above-mentioned elements can be included for example in a selection event, a site visit or an encounter related to recruitment advertisement – and also developing just some of them can be assumed to make the occasion more special, more memorable and the employer and the job appear more attractive. However, of course it is inherently crucial to reflect what the job and the organisation are truly about in order to find the best fit to them. This is why extra meaning should be placed into Tarssanen's element authenticity refer-ring to fitting to the characteristics and origins of an environment, and being based on and inspired by them. Regarding recruitment, it can be taken to mean that the whole recruit-ment process should be built on displaying the real characteristics of an employer, a workplace and a job and this truthfulness is of top priority to its success.

As explained in the chapter 1, this thesis seeks to research and develop the case summer recruitment process from the experience point of view. To know *how* it should be exam-ined – and developed later on – both recruitment and selection and experience manage-ment have been studied. The factors that appear to be the most critical determinants of the success of a recruitment experience were looked for from these two fields. Together they compose the theory for the thesis and also guide the research and development of the case study by creating it a research framework.

Half of the needed research themes were identified from recruitment and selection re-search and literature by studying them thoroughly and recognising what were the ele-ments that emerged the most strongly in the context of the applicant experience – in the chapter 2. Other criteria were that the topics should remain meaningful regardless of the recruitment process, used methods, the job, or the stage of the recruitment process. The chosen elements are
- positive presentation of the employer
- good recruiter behaviour
- enabling the candidate to evaluate their fit to the organisation
- good quality of information and communications
- fairness.

The other half of the research themes were hence searched from experience manage-ment – with the same criteria. In order to find the most suitable and relevant ones, all ele-ments of the experience development models – experience THEME-ing and the experi-ence triangle – were examined. The analysis process can be followed in the picture 5 on the next page. Firstly, all 10 elements of the two models were included. They make the

figure's hexagons so that the five on the left are from experience THEME-ing whereas the five more on the right side originate from the experience triangle. However, also other main aspects mentioned by the same sources are included: personality from Pine and Gilmore (1999, 2), quality from Tarssanen & Kylänen (2004, 15-16) and memorability from Tarssanen (2004, 4). They stand as individual words around the hexagons.

The idea was to combine all the elements so that the ones with the most credibility – standing for being mentioned by more than one source – could be merged into a theme and selected for the research. Also recruitment and selection's standards for a successful applicant experience were counted for this back-up: they are the five squares on the right hand's side. The analysis progressed by colour coding the themes with similar purposes in the applicant experience. The grouping is demonstrated in the picture below.
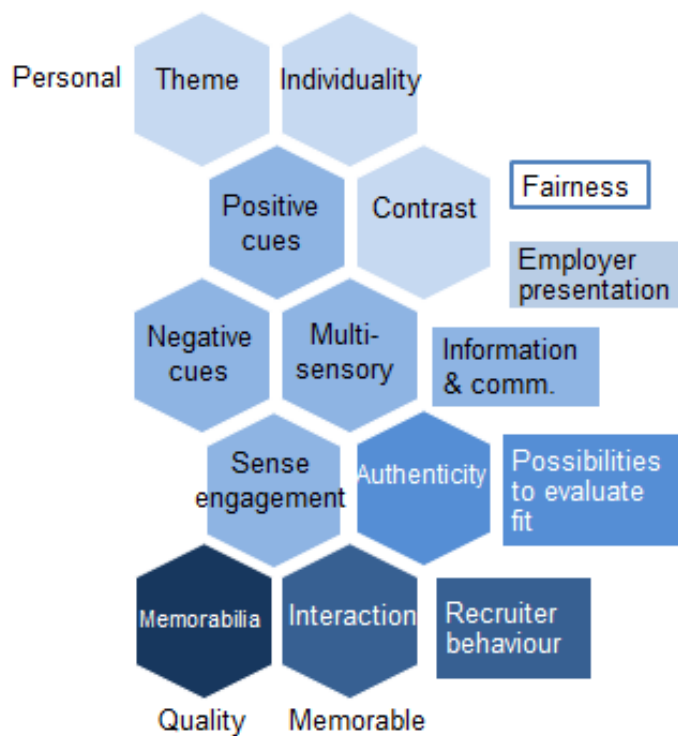
Picture 5. Applicant experience influencers from experience management and recruitment and selection research and literature

The first finding was that the theme's role appeared to be making the experience more concrete and unique whereas also both individuality and contrast targeted to differentiating the experience into a more special and customised one. Moreover, also both individuality and personality concerned the experience's ability to be individual according to the experiencer – which was already included in the grouping. So, together these four themes were merged into the theme "uniqueness". They can be seen in the top of picture 5 on the lightest blue.

Similarly, there were many themes regarding the coherence of cues: the ones marked with the second lightest blue. Harmonising positive cues, eliminating negative cues, engaging all senses, and multi-sensory perception were all combined into the theme "coherence of cues and senses". In addition, it was noticed that also information and communications handled largely the same topics by the use of different messages. The presentation of the employer instead was perceived to place somewhere between the first two themes. On one hand, it can be used as a theme for a recruitment process and contribute to the experience's uniqueness; on the other hand, through employer brand signalling – for example – it is also discussed in the coherence of cues and senses.

The third theme "authenticity" did not have a counterpart in the experience literature but, however, it was verified by one central factor discovered in recruitment and selection theory: the applicant's possibilities to evaluate their fit to the employer, the workplace and the job. Same applies to the fourth research theme "interaction" as it was confirmed by another important element for the applicant experience: the recruiter behaviour. Lastly, the last theme "memorability" was addressed by both experience sources and thus it was chosen as the fifth research theme.

The only experience element that was not merged to anything but was completely left out from the themes was Tarssanen and Kylänen's (2004, 15-16) "quality". However, the quality influences each of the themes and the extent to which they are successful in the recruitment experience – and vice versa. That way it does not need to stand as a theme to be present in the theme interview and its results.

All in all, this analysis did not only discover the most valid experience elements but also confirmed that the identified recruitment and selection themes are meaningful and relevant as almost all of them were echoed in experience management. Fairness was the only recruitment and selection value that did not have anything corresponding there. However, it was earlier defined as one of the most crucial elements for the whole recruitment process's success. Thus it is found irreplaceably important and is included anyhow.
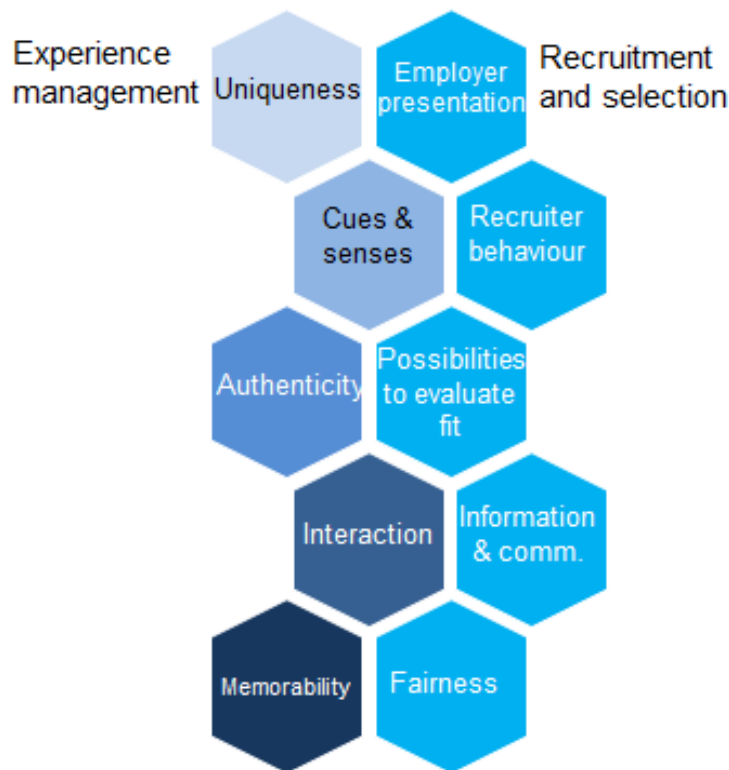
Picture 6. The 10 most important determinants of an applicant experience's success

Picture 6 illustrates the final choice of the identified most important success determinants for an applicant experience. The hexagons in different colours on the left side represent the most important experience definers from experience management. By following their colour codes back to picture 5 it is also possible to track how they were composed. In turn, the turquoise hexagons on the right stand for the most significant standards for a successful recruitment experience from human resources management. The interview themes will be built on these 10 elements. They will also be utilised in analysing the interview data.

To recap, the themes were identified as the determinants of a recruitment process' success – or failure. Also, the criteria for their selection specified that they should be meaningful in all stages of the recruitment process. It is important to understand that the goal is not to simply *add them* to different parts of the recruitment process. In this research, the elements were identified likely to already count in the applicant experience as sort of axes, whether intended or not – either successfully or unsuccessfully (for example as negative or even non-existent presence). For example, without information, the applicant would miss information and that would decline the experience. So, instead, the aim should be to perform as positively as possible related to all these elements throughout the recruitment process. Further research on this particular recruitment process helps to recognise which aspects of it are in need of development in order to incorporate these themes positively.

4   Research and development methodology

The need driving this study is to improve the applicant experience in the summer recruitment process of the case company. When breaking down this need into research and develop aims, they are creating a framework for research by combining experience management to recruitment and selection in theory, analysing the current state of the applicant experience, and generating grounded development suggestions for enhancing it. The research and development questions to be asked for achieving them are the following:

- What in the theory appear to be the most crucial factors determining the success of the applicant experience in a recruitment process?
- How is the recruitment process perceived by the applicants?
- What aspects of the recruitment process do the applicants find the most pleasant and the least pleasant?
- What aspects of the recruitment process are the most important and the least important to the applicants?
- How could the recruitment process be improved?

The generated theory is used for identifying what are the right themes to be researched in order to gain the information needed for making development suggestions. The theory built upon is drawn from combining experience management to human resource management. Case study is chosen for the research method as it meets best the need to both research the current situation of an entity and develop it. Qualitative research methods are utilised due to the interest in individuals' experiences, perceptions, images and ways of describing them. The end product is the development suggestions formed within the study. The development suggestions are based on the research results and refined within a combined development process so that they would be multi-sided and well-argued.

4.1   The case company

The commissioning party is a globally operating retail business that employs 150,000 people in over 40 countries. It is a value-driven company that has a precisely established human resources idea. Both the values and the human resources policy are actively communicated to its employees and hoped to be present in its everyday operations.

The case company more specifically is one of the retailer's Finnish places of business. It employs approximately 250 employees of which 45 are managers. The average age is 31.9 years whereas the average in Finnish retail is 39 years (HR manager 20 August 2015; Wallin & Kandolin 2014). The staff turnover in 2014 was 11 % whereas the average in Finnish retail is typically around 25 % – for example in 2012 the general staff turnover was 23 % (HR manager 20 August 2015; Kaupan liitto 2013). Also the work satisfaction

rate of the employees appears to be above the average: it has won several employer prizes within the recent years (Great Place to Work 2015).

Each of the Finnish locations of business has its own human resource department. In the case company there are currently three HR business partners and an HR assistant working in addition to an HR manager. Each HR business partner has own responsibility departments and functions.

The case company has a precisely defined recruitment policy which key points are searching for people who share the same values as well as have the competence and the potential for the job. The competence is defined as the skills, motivation and ability to function in all situations according to the requirements of the job. Recruitment is always undertaken in cooperation of the recruiting manager and a HR business partner. Manager's role is to identify the need for recruiting and make the final hiring decisions. The recruiting department's HR business partner supports the manager throughout the process and takes care of following all the regulations. HR business partner also does the administrative work: publishes the job adverts, invites the candidates, keeps them up-dated on their status in the process, and so on. In addition to the values, also quality communication and timely progress are standards for the successful implementation of the recruitment process. (Case company.)

4.2 The case recruitment process

Each spring the company organises a summer recruitment process for finding summer employees. All of its Finnish places of business organise similar processes. Multiple departments can be recruited for at once when just the selection events are organised on different days and modified according to the department in turn. The recruiting departments are chosen based on the human resources needs of the company. In picture 7 (p. 39), the typical course of a summer recruitment process is presented. I have gained all this information by working as the case company's HR trainee during the planning and implementation stages of this year's summer recruitment process.

The case company has typically published the job announcements internally and on a couple of job websites as well as presented them in an undergraduate fair. After the application deadline has arrived, the job applications have been screened. The most potential applicants have then been invited to attend a group assessment day which consists of three stages: interview, group task and a written test. The written test has asked job and company related questions as well as included simple tasks related to mathematics and languages. Both the company's HR experts and the managers of recruiting departments

have participated as assessors and interviewers. They have discussed the candidates jointly but the managers have had the last word on hiring decisions. Each applicant has got a lunch coupon for their participation in the recruitment day. The candidates have been informed on their results within two weeks.

This year, spring 2015, the recruitment process was already renewed a bit. First of all, there was an extra round between the job applications and the group assessment days. After shortlisting applicants, the continuing ones were asked to give a video interview implemented by a video interviewing tool Recruitby.net. This tool enables interviewers to record questions that are sent to the applicants who are asked to reply by recording own videos. The applicants were then invited to the group assessment days based on both their videos and applications. Another change was that the written test, which was considered old-fashioned, was replaced by a selling task. Active selling has been in a strong focus in the operator's training and development recently so the applicants were each asked to proactively sell customers something within the given situation. The current summer recruitment process is captured in bullet points in picture 7.

Picture 7. Case company's summer recruitment process 2015

New employees were recruited to two different functions: sales and the restaurant. There were altogether 66 applicants that made it to the final stage of the summer recruitment process. They consist of 30 candidates on the sales recruitment days, 27 candidates on the similar day organized for the restaurant, and nine restaurant applicants that were interviewed individually afterwards. 16 of these applicants were finally hired for the summer and the rest were turned down. In total, seven of these summer employees' employment relationships were mutually continued after the summer. In brief, relatively more appli-

cants were recruited to the restaurant whereas summer-recruited employees continued 44 % more often in sales than in the restaurant.

The success of the summer employee induction has been researched in the case company but not the summer recruitment process. Last year there was however one question related to summer recruitment in the induction research. 15 summer employees were asked to which extent they think that a realistic picture of the work was given in the recruitment process. 9 out of 15 answered that the picture was very realistic, 4 somewhat agreed with the claim and 1 somewhat disagreed with the claim. (HR manager 20 August 2015.)

As said, recruitment in the case company follows its national and global policies. The new step in 2015, video interviews, was due to national new approach that was tested. The new task type and slight chances in the structure of the selection days were smaller adjustments that were independently taken. This means that not necessarily all the suggested changes can be implemented in the near future. However, the research is believed to at least shed light on the possible less successful aspects of the recruitment process so that they can be corrected. Moreover, new ideas are expected to prove their value as a reference while deciding the future direction or otherwise in a longer run.

4.3 Qualitative case study as the research and development method

The chosen research and development method is a theory-driven qualitative case study. A case study is chosen for the research and development method as it is perceived to be the most suitable way to examine a single process of an organisation, a case, and generate development suggestions for enhancing it. A case study's strength is in generating deep and detailed knowledge from a precisely restricted case rather than large amount of information from a broad context. (Ojasalo, Moilanen, Ritalahti 2014, 52-53.) Moreover, a case study is at its best at answering questions how and why and examining a case in its realistic environment (Yin 2014, 4). In this thesis, finding answers to these enables creating accurate development suggestions (Ojasalo & al 2014, 52-53).

Next Ojasalo & al. (2014, 53-54) describe a typical case study design, the one that will be adapted to this research. Firstly, case study starts from a real-life goal that is wanted to be reached. Using existing knowledge helps to define the research aim and goals more precisely so the second step is getting familiar with the phenomenon in existing theory and research. A case study needs to relate to these wider contexts by being aware of its relationship to them. The third phase is then to generate data, often with the help of qualitative methods. The last stage is to create development suggestions based on the findings.

In this thesis, the research design is applied from the model described above. It starts from the need to develop the applicant experience in the summer recruitment process, which forms a clear case for research and development. The criteria of a successful applicant experience are then studied in the existing research and literature in order to identify what are the factors that should be looked for in the research. In other words, the research framework is built on this definition. Next research data is generated in interviews and analysed into results in qualitative analyses (Patton 2015, 427; 541). Then preliminary development suggestions are built on these findings and refined with the case company's human resources experts – following Ojasalo & al.'s (2014, 57) another recommendation, to use multiple methods for a more versatile and accurate picture. Finally, the development suggestions are shaped into their final form and presented. The whole research and development process is visualised in the following figure.

Picture 8. The research and development process in the case study

As already mentioned, the interest of this case study is in individuals' perceptions, feelings and meanings related to a particular restricted case. According to both Patton (2015, 22) and Silverman (2013, 11-13) they are best described by people's own words and stories rather than with numbers, referring to the use of qualitative methods. Moreover, as Patton (2015, 22-26) explains, qualitative methods are also better in facilitating depth and detail from a small number of people while quantitative research produces more comparable and statistically usable data out of a bigger number of cases. These are the two reasons why qualitative methods are selected for carrying the study.

4.4 Generating data by interviewing

Qualitative interview is an interview where the interviewer's questions are motivated only by the aim of gaining information for a study. Interviews are for finding out things that cannot be directly observed and understood, such as feelings and thoughts. The purpose of interviewing is to enter other person's perspective. (Patton 2015, 425-426.)

Interview behaviour has a big impact as an interview is always an interaction where the interviewer has an influence on what the interviewee tells (Patton 2015, 427-428). As also Yin (2014, 111-112) remarks, there may born a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee and the actions of each inevitably influence one other. Acknowledging it helps to reduce this factor's negative effects and improves reliability. It is also important to be clear, non-judgemental, trustworthy, present, and emphatic but still neutral. The interviewer needs to know how to listen and observe and should guide the interviewee with smooth transitions and logical order. Other types of questions, such as follow-up questions and probing, may be appropriate for specifying but otherwise the questions should always be kept open-ended. (Patton 2015, 427-428.)

In this case study, the answering behaviour and patterns are not in the focus but the interest is instead in how the interviewees perceive things and what they tell (Silverman 2013, 201-202). Also Yin (2014, 111-112) presents an interview type where special attention is paid to interviewee's personal rendition of the event. The perceptions and own sense of meaning are the material to be understood (Merton, Fiske & Kendall 1990, in Yin 2014, 111-112). This approach is the most useful option as the case study examines the applicants' experiences and memories, not the actual course of events. Moreover, the interviews will be arranged after the whole recruitment process has finished as getting an insight into what in the experiences matters in the end is targeted to.

According to Silverman (2013, 203), the amount of needed cases depends on the research problem. The best way to define it is to critically think about the parameters of the population examined and decide the sample case based on what reflects the population best. Furthermore, one can choose the interviewees purposively based on the groups that the research problem addresses. Ojasalo & al. (2014, 111) add that also the nature and the goals of the research influence the needed amount. The purpose is to reach a saturation point after which new interviews do not provide relevant new information anymore.

4.4.1 Theme interview

The selected interview method is a theme interview. Theme interview, also known as an interview guide, lists the questions or themes that are to be discussed in the interview and prepares a checklist for them (Patton 2015, 439; Ojasalo & al. 2014, 41). The interviewer is free to explore within these topics as long as all of them are covered with all the applicants. The interviewer can decide which topics to focus more deeply based on what is found in the course of an interview and, in case other topics emerge during it, they can also be discussed. (Ojasalo & al. 2014, 41.)

As explained in chapter 3.4, the choice of the interview themes is based on the theory's 10 key determinants of an applicant experience's success. The theory was generated to understand what aspects seem to play the biggest role in creating a successful applicant experience and, in other words, what should be researched. That way the case study is also theory-driven. It uses the themes as a means to approach the research topic from the current understanding's perspective.

In the theory, it appeared that positive presence of these factors has a positive influence on the applicant experience. However, to assess the experienced kind and extent of these elements and whether they were perceived positive or negative, these things need to be asked neutrally. Hence the themes are translated into the forms presented below. Moreover, it is important to notice that the applicants are not guided into the themes in the same order than in which they are presented here. Similarly, the themes are not questions as such but topics that are aimed to be discussed with the help of appropriate questions. Example questions that were used as a back-up list can be viewed in appendix 1.

1. Presentation of the employer
2. Recruiter behaviour
3. Possibilities for the candidate to evaluate their fit to the organisation
4. Quality of information and communications
5. Perceptions of fairness or unfairness
6. Coherence of cues and elements with the theme
7. Perceived authenticity
8. Other interaction types
9. Extent of memorability
10. Level of uniqueness

In addition, to gain more information about the meaning of the recruitment experience itself, the applicants are also encouraged to put their total experiences into words with different questions prompting to it. The overall experience makes the 11th interview theme. It also relies on experience management ideology but however, unlike the other interview themes, it is not a factor improving the recruitment experience but rather a tool for as-

sessing the level of its success as a whole. Instead of estimating what made the experience special, the level of speciality in total is examined. Also the experience's relationship to expectations is aimed to be discovered. This idea is also familiar from the course of experience management.

Moreover, the case company is known to be particularly interested in getting an insight into the way the selection methods are perceived. They are each particularly visible parts of the recruitment process. They may also be the most distinctive element compared to other corresponding processes and, taken that, they appear most likely to be remembered, too. That is why their success is of particular importance. So, one more theme is added outside the experience determinants for getting a closer look at the selection methods: the perceived suitability of the selection methods. Altogether there are finally 12 interview themes, the last two of which are listed below.

11. Overall experience
12. The suitability of selection methods

4.4.2 Implementation

For this research, the needed amount and kind of interviewees was determined by taking a closer look to the applicant types that made it to the final stage of the recruitment process – to the interview. Applicant categories do not refer just to the recruiting departments but also to the core elements of personal experiences and the statuses of their employment relationships. Some applicants were selected in the first place, some were first turned down but hired later on, and some were not selected at all. Moreover, two restaurant applicants denied the made job offer. In addition, not everyone went through the exactly same process. As said, nine restaurant applicants were interviewed outside the recruitment days. Also, a few applicants ended up skipping the video interview step.

Realistic representation of both recruiting departments, different statuses and different recruitment processes was thus the first priority guiding sample decisions. There were no precise target amounts when starting. Rather, they were formed along the process when getting more familiar with the different categories as some of them – the continuing and the quitting employees – were confirmed when interviews had already been started. The idea was to continue interviews till the point where it would feel like everything important had been covered. Eventually, ten interviews were needed to incorporate all the different applicant groups.

First of all, realistic representation of the departments means that five of the interviewees were applying to sales and five to the restaurant. In order to reflect different situations, half of the interviewees were applicants selected by the first job offers whereas two interviewed applicants were first rejected but eventually hired. Moreover, a summer employee that was planning to continue in the job was interviewed for both departments and so was at least one quitting summer worker for each. The sample also included one rejected candidate for both departments as well as a restaurant applicant who denied the job offer. All these applicant categories and their sizes are pictured in table 1. In order to cover also all recruitment paths, one of the ten interviewees was employed without the recruitment day and one was hired without the video interview. These exceptions are also regarded in the table and can be found from the right down corned on blue.

Table 1. Applicant categories and numbers

Sales		Restaurant	
2	Hired by the first offers	3	Hired by the first offers
1	First turned down – later hired	1	Denied the job offer
1	Later hired to another job	1	Not hired at all
1	Not hired at all		
		1	Skipped the video inteview
		1	Skipped the recruitment day

The suitable applicants were mostly contacted informally at work. The interviews were started before the quitting summer employees had left so that it was possible to include them as well. The choice of people was based on chance as the first potential interviewees met were asked to participate. I kept track on the representation of different applicant groups to make sure that there would not be, for example, overbooking for one category that would lead in overemphasising it in the findings. Only one of the asked employed candidates denied from participation. The rest seven agreed without needing much persuasion. Participating employees each got a 1-hour-pay.

The three applicants that were not hired were a lot more difficult to recruit. Eventually all of them were reached with the help of common acquaintances. However, before finding them, four other people were invited: two of them denied because they had moved to another city and two agreed first but withdrew later on. Sensitivity was used in choosing who to contact and the way of contacting. Only applicants that had given permission to the further use of their contact information for recruitment purposes and who, in addition, had

the same school in common with me or who I otherwise felt more connected to, were approached. I found this sensitivity essential in order to preserve a good image of the commissioning party. E-mails were used for contacting and they were sent from behalf of a Haaga-Helia student and Haaga-Helia university of the applied sciences. The only compensation for these participants was covering the costs of the cafeteria visited.

The interviews were dated to 5-week-period between 31st August and 5th October. They were organised quite evenly and were started to be transcribed at the same pace. This enabled starting preliminary analysis straight away and helped to notice when the saturation point was reached. Six of the interviews were held in the case company's premises: three in its meeting rooms, two in a rest room and one in the furthest corner of its restaurant. The meeting rooms were heavily used at that time and booking them required contacting the human resources beforehand. As also other options were sufficiently good for the purpose – ensuring privacy and a peaceful environment – I mostly did not book the rooms beforehand but just chose from the options on the spot. Another reason was that often the meeting time was agreed on in a short notice. All three external interviews were held outside the business premises. Also one internal interview was organised elsewhere due to the interviewee's wish. These interviews took place in various cafés.

In the course of interviews, I learnt that the meeting rooms appeared to create the most pleasant atmosphere for a deeper level of discussion and connection. They probably felt more official and special to the interviewees who usually do not have access to them. Other locations in the house were more commonplace. All of them however provided sufficient peace and privacy and did not expose to any remarkably disturbances. The coffeehouses were the most risky and noisy as interview environments. Anyhow, everything went relatively well. I found only one café disturbingly noisy and uncomfortable but it luckily did not seem to bother the interviewee: in fact the longest interview took place there.

The questions used to guide the interviewees into the themes varied according to the situation. Similarly, the focus of the whole interview was shaped according to the applicant and the story in question. Also topics that were not included in the plan were discussed whenever the applicant mentioned something interesting. A couple of the interviewees needed more directing in order to understand the asked questions and themes while the rest did with less structuring. The interview help questions can be viewed in the appendix 1. They were used as examples for approaching the 12 interview themes.

Moreover, the duration of the interviews varied, too. The shortest interview was just 25 minutes long whereas the longest interview took 1 hour and 3 minutes. Two interviews

were relatively shorter due to an unfortunate time pressure that was born because either the interviewee or the interviewer arrived late. All the interviews were recorded with the permission of the applicants. The tapes were transcribed from word to word later on.

4.5 Qualitative content analysis

According to Silverman (2013, 209), interviews should be always recorded and transcribed as the quality transcriptions are the only way to reliably analyse the content. Hence he recommends writing down everything heard on tape – questions,'hm hms', variations in the volume and so on – as the real message is not only in the words. In this case study, these guidelines are followed in order to prepare the data for content analyses.

Content analysis is a sense-making process that attempts to identify consistencies and meanings from the qualitative data; in other words, it makes the data more usable by generating relevant findings out of it (Patton 2015, 427; 541). According to Patton (2015, 541-543), an inductive analysis discovers patterns, themes and categories from the data and organises the data around them. A deductive analysis in turn grounds the found consistencies with the existing theoretical framework. In this research, both deductive and inductive analyses are used.

Data is analysed in a variety of ways in order to be able to look at it from all the relevant perspectives. First analysis focuses purely on the interviewees' own perceptions regardless of the theory; the second analysis oppositely builds on what the theory said *should* matter to the applicants, and the task analysis examines the selection methods more inclusively apart. As Patton (2015, 541-543) argues, using multiple approaches brings the case study depth. Also, the reliability of findings increases as the results of these methods can help to confirm each other by being similar. The analyses are carried out by examining the transcriptions, and grouping together parts and themes that are related to the theme analysed at a time. The research results are presented in the next chapter.

4.5.1 Inductive analysis

The first analysis is inductive which means that the categorisation framework is drawn directly from the content itself (Kananen 2013, 104-105). In this analysis, each individual experience is first looked at as its own unit and its central themes are identified and categorised. The categories are the positive aspects of the experience, the negative aspects of the experience, and the applicants' development suggestions. The latter is expected to both further verify the perceived weak points as well as incorporate the applicants' ideas in the development stage. This approach is chosen for enabling the main aspects of the

experiences – that in the end only the experiencer themselves can define – will come up regardless of existing theories and understanding.

As intended, everything that the applicants told and indicated to have either positive or negative influence on their experiences was taken into the analysis. Similarly all development suggestions were included for closer examination. After going through all the experiences, the elements of each category were combined into one covering all the applicants' renditions. Also the repetitiveness of the elements and their weight in the applicants' experiences were noted.

4.5.2 Deductive analysis

The second analysis is deductive, meaning that the analysis categories are oppositely taken from the studied theory (Kananen 2013, 104-105). The majority of interview themes were derived from the existing understanding of recruitment and selection, and models of experience management. 10 of these themes are elements that were identified as the biggest determinants of an applicant experience's success whereas the eleventh interview theme, the overall experience, is rather a mirror to the experience's meaning to the applicant and helps to assess the weight of everything else found in the analyses. The theory-based themes are reflected in the analysis in order to find out how the theory's concepts emerged in the data.

The analysis was implemented by going through the data and paying attention to everything positively or negatively perceived that related to the 11 theory-based themes. The themes worked as the analysis categories and all the reported perceptions were drawn under them.

4.5.3 Task analysis

The third analysis, the task analysis, focuses on the twelfth and last interview theme: the suitability of the selection methods. This theme is dealt separately because, unlike the other themes, it was not directly drawn from the theory but rather added for including a practitioner's approach. Examining the tasks as their own entities was perceived making also the research part itself more usable for the commissioning party and easing development by making the results more relatable.

The task analysis was implemented by going through data from the perspective of the four selection methods. In other words, the selection methods were used as the analysis cate-

gories. All the identified negative and positive perceptions as well as development suggestions related to them were taken into the analysis and elaborated within it.

4.6 Focus group with the human resources department

According to Ojasalo et al. (2014, 41-42), a focus group is a discussion-like research tool that is especially useful for development. Its strengths are the ability to gather information from multiple participants at once, the likelihood to remember things more clearly, and generating better argued opinions due to the influence of others. Also, the results are often more reliable as the interviewer's role in the discussion diminishes and the interviewees' input correspondingly grows. The goals of the discussion should be carefully defined beforehand in order to decide the right themes and participants (Ojasalo et al. 2014, 111-112). The participants are encourages to free discussion related to the topic and the moderator of the discussion facilitates it by encouraging interaction with each other, not by asking interview questions (Silverman 2013, 213). As Yin (2014, 111-112) adds, a focus group is a particularly effective tool for discussing some aspect of a case study.

In this case study, a focus group was used in its development stage, for working on development suggestions with the case company's human resources professionals. After the interview data was analysed, I identified development needs and created preliminary development suggestions to overcome these shortages. These tentative suggestions are introduced in the chapter 6.1. All the HR personnel were then invited to the development group. However, it was finally decided that just the HR manager and the HR business partner, who is responsible for the recruitment function and the recruiting departments of this year's summer recruitment, would attend. The same trio – including me – was developing the latest modifications to this year's summer recruitment process so this combination was useful also in that sense.

The focus group was held in one of the company's meeting rooms. First the findings and the tentative development suggestions were presented. The team was encouraged to discuss and evaluate findings as well as correct recommendations and make new ones also during the presentation. After the presentation, more time was given to freely discuss further development solutions. The participants were also asked to write ideas down on paper. I, as the moderator, made notes on the contributions of the participants and joined the discussion mostly just to ask for confirmations. The whole occasion took 2 hours. All the findings and suggested changes were discussed and all the identified downsides received development recommendations in the course of the focus group. The received feedback and generated new development suggestions are presented in the chapter 6.2.

5 Applicants' experiences

All three analyses on applicant's experiences generated similar results despite the opposite approaches used. The results are presented analysis by analysis in the following three subchapters. The first one is the inductive analysis, the second the deductive analysis and the third one focuses on the selection methods as their own whole.

5.1 Results of the inductive analysis

This analysis listed all the aspects that the interviewed applicants specified either positive or negative in their experiences, as well as the given development suggestions. The results are organised into three categories which make the lower subchapters of this chapter. They are positive aspects, negative aspects and the applicants' development suggestions. Each category is started by the results of sales applicant interviews and followed by the results generated from the restaurant applicants.

5.1.1 Positive aspects

<u>Sales</u>
Firstly, all the interviewees were asked to discuss the image the recruiters gave of themselves. All the interviewed sales applicants mentioned positively that everyone met during the recruitment process seemed nice. Other positive aspects related to the work environment were that the work place seemed equal and that its team spirit was visible. Other perceptions were getting an image that the case company is a workplace where every day is fun and that the recruiters appeared open and easy to approach. Also being inspired by the career stories heard on the recruitment day was mentioned to improve the experience.

Another big category identified was more precisely about the treatment of applicants as its own entity. The heard sales applicants mentioned things such as everyone being treated fairly and equally as well as flexibility related to the implementation ways. Moreover, the recruiters were reported of being positive, supportive and informative in their roles. Also being greeted by personnel that were not involved in the recruitment process had a positive influence. The aspect mentioned the most often was that, all in all, the employer seemed to appreciate its applicants by showing that it was excited about them and by giving an image that lots of resources were invested in the summer recruitment process. Things such as overall positivity, fast replies and offering refreshments were mentioned to contribute to giving this impression. Most of these comments were generated by the recruiter theme or related to the truthfulness of the picture given of the workplace.

The interviewees were also guided to evaluate the selection methods which in fact generated comments about the most distinctive recruitment methods, too. Overall, the interviewed sales applicants seemed to perceive many tasks of the recruitment process as positive factors. Starting in a chronological order, the only applicant met in the recruitment fair evaluated that recruiters appeared easy to approach and encouraged her to apply to a big extent. The video interview was also mentioned in a positive light, mostly by being a useful tool but also due to being perceived fun. Furthermore, most of these sales applicants referred to the interview situation as pleasant, relaxed and functional for its purpose. However, the task that received the most self-imposed and strongest positive feedback was clearly the selling task. Most of the sales candidates viewed it as a positive chance to demonstrate one's skills and expertise, and moreover experienced it fun.

Refreshments given in the course of the recruitment day were not mentioned by the interviewer at all. However, most of the interviewed applicants proactively talked about offered candy, coffee, hot chocolate and lunch coupons. One of the sales applicants mentioned them repeatedly during the interview, more often than any other element. Moreover, several applicants said that the refreshments indicated caring about applicants.

The interviewees were also asked to discuss the possible fair and unfair aspects of the recruitment process. Most of the interviewed sales participants told that they had perceived the whole recruitment process fair but for only one applicant it seemed to play a particular role. This applicant said that the recruitment process was both surprisingly and exceptionally fair and applicant-friendly.

Also various other single aspects of the recruitment process were reported positive along the interviews. One applicants said that the quality of the recruitment process was outstanding compared to other corresponding. Another applicant was delighted by the diversity of the process, referring to combining practice to theory and performance in a group to individual performance. The recruitment process was also mentioned to be delightfully fast and well-timed. Moreover, two interviewees emphasised how much fun they had on the recruitment day. One applicant also told about having been inspired by the career stories heard on the recruitment day.

Finally, the interviewees were asked to tell what experiences in their life participating in this recruitment process reminded of most. For two sales applicants – the same ones who highlighted the extent of fun – it reminded something else than applying to something. One of them said that it reminded of her other biggest accomplishments in life and another one compared it to an orientation event with a relaxed atmosphere and being offered food

while completing some kind of tasks. These comparisons suggest that the former applicant perceived the recruitment process as an important opportunity to achieve something big and that the latter applicant truly had a good time in the recruitment process.

To conclude, the most influential positive elements in the interviewed five sales applicants' experiences appeared to be getting a positive image of the work atmosphere and community, feeling appreciated, the existence of the selling task, being given refreshments and having fun on the recruitment day.

<u>Restaurant</u>

Altogether, the interviewed restaurant applicants rated the overall treatment along the recruitment process by far the biggest single positive factor, making the category also relatively bigger than for sales. The biggest cause of it however seemed to the same than for sales: the perceived appreciation towards applicants. These applicants told about having been impressed, for example, by the way the employer seemed to want to sell itself to the applicant similarly than they needed to sell themselves to it. Some also mentioned that everything was planned just like they would have been guests and that it seemed like the company was recruiting permanent employees and not just a quick fix for the summer. These candidates also mentioned that the recruiters seemed dedicated to the process and appeared to really want the applicants to come and enjoy working there. Also treating and remembering applicants individually and using the word form "we *want* you here" when offering the job were told to impress. Flexibility with times was regarded positively, too. Furthermore, not making the day too heavy as well as offering refreshments and lunch coupons were also presented to have a positive impact. These observations were reported quite evenly throughout the interview. However, if a single biggest source was to be mentioned, it would be asking the applicants how they perceived the recruiters.

Also the work atmosphere seemed to be perceived positively by the interviewed applicants but it did not play similarly big role in their experiences than for sales or than the previous aspect did. One of the restaurant interviewees also rated presenting career prospects important to his experience. By this the applicant referred to the career stories heard on the recruitment day, seeing a trainee participating in organising the day and being told about possibilities to advance within the company in the individual interview.

Also the selection methods were emphasised with different shares than in sales. Out of all the tasks, the video interview seemed to be viewed the most positively and appeared to have the biggest positive influence on the experiences of the heard restaurant applicants. The video interview was estimated to be useful and fair as more applicants were able to

get into an interview and the recruiters got a chance to screen the applicants more realistically. Moreover, the novelty of the task appeared to weight positively in the experience. Also the question videos of it were explained to be perceived positive as they made the task easier to approach and more fun. Also here the sales task was thanked because of being fun and suitable but it was done by just one candidate.

Also the restaurant interviewees were asked about the fair and unfair elements of the recruitment process. Similarly than for sales, one of the interviewees said that the fairness of the process exceeded expectations. Moreover, the versatility of assessment – that was extended to include also the possibility to complete some of the tasks beforehand in addition to the aspects familiar from the sales interviews – was brought up positively. As al-mentioned above, also the video interview was estimated to improve fairness. However, fairness seemed to have a big positive impact on just one experience – for the applicant whose expectations were exceeded.

Addition to these, two restaurant candidates viewed the presence of other applicants very important for the experience when asked what its role was. Also the pre-tasks – referring to the video interview – as well as the novelty of the experience were mentioned to have a positive impact on the experiences of the individual applicants in question.

All in all, the aspects contributing most to the positivity of the restaurant interviewees' experiences seemed to be the treatment during recruitment process – especially feeling appreciated –, the video interview, and the presence of the other applicants. Also presenting career prospects can be added. Even though they were mentioned by just one applicant they seemed to affect his experience to a great extent. Bringing both departments together, feeling appreciated emerged as the biggest and the most positive aspect.

5.1.2 Negative aspects

<u>Sales</u>
The biggest portion of the negative aspects in sales interviewees' experiences appeared to gather around information and communications which was also one of the interview themes. Two applicants reported about being unsure about the job description. One of them would have wanted to read more about it or ask more but did not find it suitable to the situation while another one was actually applying to job other than the recruitment process was targeted for without realising it. Moreover, for one person, the biggest draw-back in the experience seemed to be the big extent of repetition of the same information in the recruitment process. In addition, the applicant told that she was even more frustrated

when some of the same information was also discussed a couple of times after being employed.

The second biggest group of identified downsides related to different timetables of the recruitment process. Also these comments were mostly derived from the theme of information and communications. They were such as being given too little time for doing the video interview and being given too short notice for the recruitment days. Moreover, one applicant felt that the process was too inflexible related to the dates of the recruitment days.

Thirdly, three sales interviewees reportedly encountered technical problems related to the video interview. For two of them, these problems were so serious that one needed to borrow friend's device and another one needed to make the videos with other program. However, all of them seemed to take these difficulties rather neutrally compared to the relative severity of the situation. This assumption bases on the neutral tone in which they told about the described incidents as well as the fact that, however, they did not brought them up anymore when assessing fairness. The applicant using a substitute program even said that she would have understood if the process would have ended for her because of it.

Additionally, one sales applicant said that the image given of the social work environment was better than the reality. According to her, unmet expectations leaded in disappointment. The truthfulness of the image given of the employer, the image given of the job and the pictured work community were all covered in the interviews as one theme.

Also other various drawbacks were discussed in the interviews. One applicant mentioned that she would have wanted to write a job contract earlier in order to have black on white about having the job for the summer. However, it did not seem to have that strong negative influence on her experience as she just mentioned having wondered about it but added that in the end the process seemed to work as such, too. Also, one sales interviewee gave feedback about finding the group work too boring and easy. In addition, when being asked about other experiences that participating in the recruitment process reminded of, one applicant said that the closest experience was giving a presentation at school or other very stressful situations like that. This comparison gives reason to estimate that also the process included too many negatively stressful situations for her.

To summarise, the most harmful aspects in the sales interviewees' experiences seemed to be unclear job description, big extent of repetition in the information, short notices to deadlines, technical problems with the video interview, unmet expectations of the work

atmosphere and that the process included so many situations that required presentation skills.

<u>Restaurant</u>

Oppositely to sales, the restaurant interviewees seemed to view only one aspect related to general information and communications particularly negative in their experiences. It was the lack of contact information both to the recruiters in the recruitment process as well as to their own department after the recruitment process. However, stronger negative emotions were demonstrated related to these drawbacks. The only negative element mentioned concerning the timetables was getting too little time for the video interview.

Compared to sales, a bigger share of the interviewed restaurant applicants' negative perceptions related to the tasks of the recruitment process. One restaurant applicant told several times that he disliked the video interview to a great extent. He also believed that it could scare some applicants away. However, the applicant mentioned that if the video interview format could not be modified into a more pleasant one, it should be kept as such rather than removed completely. On the other hand, video interview was also the most liked selection method for the other restaurant interviewees. Also, some applicants referred negatively to the sales task because they felt that the questions of it were too specific in order to be fair and appropriate.

Talking about fairness, the restaurant interviewees had a few negative things to say about the theme whereas sales had none. The two major concerns were related to, firstly, the perceived careless choice of the recruitment day – it was organised on a day when one of the biggest applicant groups was generally prevented from participating. Secondly, not informing the applicants about company-specific restrictions for working within departments was another main cause of dissatisfaction. Neither dilemma can be opened in more detail due to ensuring the confidentiality of the interviewees. However, both of these applicants described strong negative emotions related to these incidents.

Also experiencing mistakes in the recruitment process were reported to cause major dissatisfaction. One restaurant applicant got a faulty message about rejection after having been offered the job and having accepted it. One of the applicants also perceived that she was told a different pay than the one actually given. The covered sales applicants instead did not mention any mistakes.

One applicant also evaluated that the images given of the employer, the job and the work environment in the recruitment process were better than the reality where the expecta-

tions were gone under. She perceived the biggest reasons to lie in communication and the social atmosphere at work. Moreover, the applicant felt that there was over positivity in presenting the company on the recruitment day. The applicant in question demonstrated disappointment. Also one sales applicant described similar ideas but they were milder.

However, by far the biggest cause of dissatisfaction was after all in preparing the applicants for starting in the job – or in the lack of it. These major negative notions included not receiving work shifts until a week before the job commenced nor getting any messages or information between been offered the job on the phone and receiving the shifts in one week's notice. To conclude, all the hired restaurant applicants told that the information related to starting in the job was vague and two of them assessed that their employer image deteriorated at this stage because of it. Moreover, one applicant also wished for a possibility to write the job contract earlier than on the first day. This category seems to be the biggest difference between the negative experiences of the departments: except for a wish to write the contract earlier, sales did not report any problems related to the beginning of the job. It is also worth noticing that the research was not targeted to reach beyond the point where the jobs are accepted which means that the interviewer did not guide the applicants to discuss this topic in any way.

To conclude, the most serious negative aspects for the restaurant interviewees seemed to be missing contact information; too specific questions in the sales task; careless choice of the recruitment day; not informing about company-specific rules concerning the departments; mistakes; unmet expectations of the workplace, the job and the work atmosphere; and poor guiding to starting in the job. The last one, insufficient guidance to the new job – even though present only in the restaurant's experiences – emerged as the most harmful factor out of all the identified aspects of both departments.

5.1.3 Applicants' development suggestions

<u>Sales</u>
Similarly than the negative aspects mentioned by the sales interviewees, also the big majority of their development suggestions concerned information and communications. The interviewees wished for better job descriptions as well as explaining the jobs in more detail on the recruitment day and in the interview. Also, providing a phone number in addition to a mere e-mail address was wished for. Moreover, reducing the amount of repetition by dividing the presentation shares better between different presenters of the recruitment day was suggested. In addition, giving more customised recruitment information and communications, and informing about both rejection and hiring decisions as fast as possible were hoped for.

Also the sales applicants' second biggest source of dissatisfaction is echoed in the suggestions. One applicant demanded for more flexibility and longer notice to the recruitment days. In addition to these two categories, one of the applicants suggested increasing applicant-recruiter interaction for ensuring better information flow and giving another type of assessment opportunity for both. This could be implemented for example by making the managers join the applicants' tables in the end of the recruitment day. Lastly, one sales applicant suggested developing the group work into a more interesting and challenging task as now she found it too boring and easy.

To sum up, the interviewed sales applicants' development ideas consisted of better job descriptions, better contact information, reducing repetition of the information, fastening informing about job decisions, giving longer notices and more flexibility to timetables, increasing applicant-recruiter interaction, and modifying the group work.

Restaurant

Unlike for sales, the restaurant interviewees' development suggestions ranged between many different themes. Only a small portion of them focused on information and communications, or timetables. The restaurant applicants asked for better contact information and that the steps of the recruitment process would be as close to each other as possible. Moreover, one applicant estimated that weekends or afternoons could suit the applicants better for recruitment events.

Conversely than for sales, the restaurant representatives gave also recommendations for improving fairness. These had been all also perceived as downsides earlier: informing about possible limitations related to the ability to work within departments, making sure that the important information shared is correct, and checking the dates when choosing the time for recruitment events.

Also recruitment tools generated a few suggestions unlike with sales. Firstly, one restaurant applicant proposed putting fewer verbal questions to the Internet application form and removing the need to write all the jobs again when they are already on the CV. One applicant also believed that the format of the video interview should be developed – however, the applicant mentioned that if the video interview format could not be modified into a more pleasant one, it should be kept as such rather than removed completely. Similarly than in sales, it was also suggested that applicant-recruiter interaction could be increased for giving another type of assessment opportunity for both.

Perhaps not surprisingly, most of the chosen restaurant applicants' development proposals concerned improving starting in the job and guidance to it. Clearer information related to it; assigning and clearly communicating the manager in charge for each new employee, and writing the job contract earlier were tools suggested for it. It was also summed up that, altogether, the end of the recruitment process should be improved.

All in all, restaurant interviewees' development suggestions consisted of giving better contact information, fastening the recruitment process, remembering the fairness of all applicant groups and personal situations, being more careful, simplifying the Internet application, modifying the video interview, increasing applicant-recruiter interaction, and – most importantly – improving the end of the recruitment process. When looking at both departments, information and communications, and improving the beginning in the job generated most suggestions.

5.2 Results of the deductive analysis

Presentation of the employer

The first interview theme was presentation of the employer. The interviewees were guided to it by being asked to describe how they perceived the employer before the recruitment process and after it and assess what things could have shaped it. The majority said that participating in the recruitment process improved their employer image. Many told that they had perceived the employer fair, caring and flexible during the recruitment process. Moreover, particularly two applicants were inspired by the career stories heard on the recruitment day.

However, two applicants had opposite experiences. For these two restaurant applicants, the employer image improved during the recruitment process but was eventually turned down in the end of the recruitment process. The change was told to be derived from the vagueness of starting in the job, difficulties with trying to contact the employer and the received faulty information.

Recruiter behaviour

The second theme was recruiter behaviour. The interviewees were asked about the image the recruiters gave of themselves. However, many talked about recruiter behaviour also in the other parts of the interview. First of all, all these applicants mentioned that everyone met within the process was nice. Above half of them also told about experiences of being treated individually at some point – which in all cases appeared to have a positive effect. Five candidates reported needing help or adjustment during the recruitment process. Three of them continued by telling that they were treated with the needed flexibility

whereas two would have wished for more flexibility related to the recruitment event dates and times. Also, all the applicants who mentioned getting feedback were delighted by it and one who was not given it articulated wishing for more feedback. On the other hand, some applicants were also afraid of getting negative feedback in front of others and were relieved about not being given it.

Only one of the interviewed applicants mentioned the professionalism of recruiters separately, in a negative sense. The applicant had got an unprepared image of a group leader moderating the sales task. Another thing questioned was seeing a visibly sick person wearing a chef's uniform and participating in organising the recruitment day. Otherwise the level of professionalism was regarded only by one praising comment. It is likely to mean that there were no further problems related to it as professional behaviour is what one most probably expects to see when being invited into a work-related respectable situation like that. That means that only breaches to it are likely to be reported.

Possibilities for the candidate to evaluate their fit to the organisation
The third theme was possibilities for the candidate to evaluate their fit to the organization. It was mostly investigated by asking about applicants' perceptions of their suitability to the job both before attending the recruitment process and in the end of the process, as well as asking them to reason possible changes. By elaborating these described causal relations, all the interviewees seemed to have gained at least some new insights to their suitability. Moreover, all the interviewees mentioned that the work atmosphere seemed attractive during recruitment, meaning that they were able to assess it to some extent. Also, all the applicants demonstrated in a way or another having learnt something new about the company as a workplace during the recruitment process.

Also the perceptions of fairness reveal information about the applicants' possibilities to evaluate fit. When also the applicant succeeds in assessing fit realistically, they are more likely to notice if they after all would not be suitable for the job or the workplace or vice versa. This way the chances are higher for that the applicant comes to the same conclusion with the recruiters and if denied, understands the reasons behind it. Here half of the interviewed applicants that were rejected told, by their own initiative, about attributing the denial to factors related to their suitability and even believing that it was the right choice. Moreover, none of the rejected applicants developed a more negative employer image. However, one of the rejected applicants attributed the cause to unfairness and was in the impression that she was not selected because of her worse Swedish skills. In reality, this was not the real cause of rejection nor affected it but anyhow, it is the perception that is harmful to the experience, not the truth.

Quality of information and communications

The fourth interview theme was the quality of information and communications. It was found suitable to also stand as a question as such. However, information and communications were brought up in several other contexts as well. Starting from the positive, one third of the heard video-interviewed applicants mentioned the video interview's question videos in a positive sense. Moreover, approximately half of these applicants mentioned that the process was fast or well-timed regarding the stages and the communications.

Moving to the negative aspects, three applicants said that there was too short notice to recruitment days and two that there was too little time for doing the video interview. Also, two applicants wished that the different stages and/or communications would be closer to each other. Both of them were actually applicants whose recruitment process did not go along the regular, scheduled path which increased both the overall length and the waiting time between steps and communications. In addition, a couple of applicants would have wanted to write the job contract earlier and a few missed lacking contact information. Lastly, one applicant was annoyed by repetition of the same information on the recruitment day, and, moreover, later in the induction.

Also some department-related issues emerged along the interviews. Two sales applicants did not sufficiently understand the job description or would have wished for more information about it. In the restaurant, all the interviewed hired applicants complained about getting too vague information and scarce communications about starting in the job. In addition, one restaurant applicant was unhappy with being given wrong information, meaning accidental rejection message and different pay on the phone. Regarding the pay, it seems likely that it might have been a misunderstanding as well. The restaurant pay is affected by two different collective agreements and for this reason, it may be a complicated topic to explain and understand by phone. However, being in this belief is equally destructive regardless of whether it was truly a mistake from the employer's side.

Perceptions of fairness or unfairness

Fifth researched theme was perceptions of fairness or unfairness. Both of them were asked for in the interviews. Most of the interviewed applicants found assessment multi-sided and seemed to rate it advantageous for improving fairness. Moreover, one candidate in both departments reportedly perceived the recruitment process exceptionally or surprisingly fair. In addition, half of these applicants, especially in the restaurant, seemed to think that the video interview improved assessment.

There were a few differences between the departments. Most of the sales interviewees estimated that the whole recruitment process appeared fair. Out of the rest two, one felt that re-decided seats may have made the groups more uneven and another one thought that she was rejected because she had the weakest Swedish skills in the applicant group. Despite the former applicant's doubts about the logic behind the named seats, the seat arrangements were based on nothing but chance and thus practically could not be unfair. Similarly, as already said earlier, the absence of Swedish skills did not affect the decision. However, perceiving unfairness of any kind is unfavourable to the recruitment experience no matter if there is a real reason to it or not.

Moving to the restaurant interviewees, half of the video-interviewed applicants – even though most were supportive to the idea of the video interview – were worried about the role of technical aspects in the video interview. Other perceptions of unfairness varied a lot. Careless selection of the recruitment date and not informing about rules related to working within departments were the ones that appeared to carry the most negative feelings based on the applicants' descriptions. However, it was also evaluated that different assessors may have affected the results and that video interview as a concept could decrease fairness by being more favourable to people that are used to making videos, for example in the form of a video blog. Also, a few candidates assessed that the group work may leave more quiet applicants in the shadow of the more social ones and thus not measure the actual skills – however, the task's purpose in fact was to measure the teamwork skills and not the job knowledge.

Coherence of cues and elements with the theme
The sixth discussed theme was the coherence of cues and senses with the theme. The interviewees were encouraged to think whether there was something special or positively or negatively distinctive compared to the other experience. After that, they were also asked to think of all five senses. One aspect stand out: most of these candidates mentioned involving taste in a positive context. Taste was engaged in the form of candy, coffee and hot chocolate.

Otherwise there were no coherent perceptions about any detail or sense stimuli. Two interviewees brought up uncomfortable chairs in the meeting room where the recruitment day presentation was held. Single applicants mentioned feeling cold in the meeting room, being noisy in the market hall while completing the selling task, and burning tongue with coffee. The absence of more coherent perceptions is likely to indicate that there was, after all, nothing remarkably disturbing in cues and sense stimuli of the recruitment process. On

one hand, everything seemed to fit; on the other hand, nothing but the taste was apparently properly leveraged either.

Perceived authenticity

The seventh theme was perceived authenticity, meaning the truthfulness of expectations born during the recruitment process compared to the reality. It was shed light on by asking about the perceptions of the employer, the work place, and the job both before attending the recruitment process and in the end of it. The interviewees were also encouraged to give possible reasons for described changes in attitudes.

Altogether, almost all interviewed applicants thought that the recruitment process fitted to the company and the employer and was corresponding to the reality. The one disagreeing restaurant employee felt that she was better taken care of in the course of the recruitment process than at work. According to her, the reality was more commonplace than the image given and communications were worse at work than in the recruitment process.

Similarly, almost all these candidates thought that the recruitment process gave a realistic preview on the work place. The ones having different ideas both mentioned the same reasons: the social atmosphere was not as great as the image given for some colleagues were less sociable than expected, and the applicant was not taken in as openly as imagined. These perceptions were presented by one applicant in both departments.

Also the truthfulness of the job preview seemed to divide departments. In sales, two applicants did not fully understand the nature of the job and were unsure about the job description. However, the rest of the sales interviewees – who appeared to have better knowledge in the first place – told that the image given in the recruitment process was or seemed realistic. In the restaurant, two applicants were in the opinion that the recruitment process focused too much on selling and the store other than their department. Moreover, one applicant – who had previous experience from the employer and the job – felt that it left out some aspects of the job. These aspects referred, firstly, to the way the recruiters gave the impression that being in dishes was the worst job in the restaurant. Secondly, the applicant felt that some negative and positive features were left out. These were common overtime in certain tasks, and not highlighting enough the perceived advantage that you seldom need to work alone.

Other interaction types

The other interaction types of the recruitment process constituted the eight theme. It refers to interaction other than assessment-focused applicant–recruiter interaction. This can be

for example interaction between applicants. Most of the interviewed applicants seemed to think that the presence of other applicants made the results and/or the job preview more realistic. In addition, above half of them appeared to feel that the presence of other applicants made the experience more fun or pleasant. Furthermore, a few applicants mentioned that being together with other applicants eases starting in a new job and that way makes the job more attractive.

Also interaction with the personnel who did not attend in the recruitment process seemed to count positively in the applicant experience. Even just seeing the other personnel interacting with each other in a positive spirit influenced positively the interviewed applicants' images of the workplace. In addition, two applicants proactively wished that there would be more applicant–recruiter interaction on the recruitment day. It was suggested that this could give another type of contact for both information flow and two-way assessment.

Extent of memorability

Extent of memorability was the ninth theme. It illustrates different components' value for the holistic experience as one of the key elements making something a special experience is memorability. It was demonstrated throughout the interviews as all generated data was based on the applicants' memories. In addition, in the beginning of the interviews, the applicants were asked to tell everything they remember of the recruitment process which helped in analysing the memorability. However, many things were also recalled later on.

All interviewees remembered all the other tasks expect the group task – that the majority had completely forgotten about. Furthermore, only one mentioned filling the basic information sheet on the recruitment day and few referred to the details of the Internet application. It can be assumed that the group task was not as engaging, fun or different as the other parts of the recruitment process. Same goes to the basic information sheet which probably was not perceived as its own entity at all.

Level of uniqueness

The tenth interview theme was the level of uniqueness, meaning the specialness of the experience compared to other similar as well as its specialness compared to everyday life. This theme is likely to reveal deeper information about the strongest positive experience elements than any other theme. The interviewees were asked to evaluate the specialness of their experience. However, the extent of uniqueness was equally illustrated also spontaneously throughout the interview. All in all, half of these applicants proactively said that the recruitment process was different from others.

Several different factors were mentioned related to what made the experience special. Half of the interviewees seemed to think that feeling appreciated during recruitment was special. Several applicants also mentioned truly enjoying themselves on the recruitment day and equally many said that the warmth of people and the company was special. A couple of applicants also said that the happiness from the employer's side was special. Same number evaluated that the new methods used in the process made it more of an experience. Other factors mentioned were more of single notions: length and the quality of implementation were brought up. Lastly, one applicant said that the process was not special at all but just a recruitment process among others.

<u>Overall experience</u>
Finally, the eleventh interview theme and the last one examined by this analysis is the overall experience. This theme illustrates the value of the experience as a whole and whether it was perceived as a special experience. The applicants were encouraged to describe their experience as well as its relation to expectations in different phases of the interview. For all interviewees, participating in the recruitment process exceeded their expectations for it. This was equally true no matter whether there were no many or no specific expectations or whether the expectations were high and realistic.

Moreover, over half of the interviewees said that they could call participating in the recruitment process an *experience* or a special experience. The rest of the applicants said that it was either a rather remarkable experience or a positive experience – or both – but still not something they would call a special experience. Lastly, one applicant said that it was not a special experience of any kind for her.

The interviewees were also asked to compare the experience to other experiences in their life and tell what attending the recruitment process reminded of most. This question helps to understand the experiences of applicants by comparing to it to something else, perhaps more relatable, in life. It also helps to perceive the most predominant elements of the experience. The biggest portion of the consulted applicants said that it reminded of applying to schools or – for one – to a camp. These seemed to be perceived more important and/or more fun than applying to jobs in general. The second biggest group of applicants were reminded of other recruitment experiences. Moreover, one applicant was reminded of "other big accomplishments in life" while another compared it to a pleasant orientation event. Finally, the last interviewee felt that other stressful situations, such as giving presentations, were the closest.

These results suggest that most of the sample applicants perceived the recruitment process as an opportunity to achieve something important where success depends on them themselves. This way it also seemed to be perceived as a process that was invested in by both the organisers and participants. Moreover, the interviewee referring to an orientation event appeared to perceive the process enjoyable and relaxed. On the other hand, the applicants referring to other recruitment experiences seemed to view it as a rather regular recruitment process after all. Lastly, the applicant that compared the experience to stressful presentation situations appears to say that also this experience was stressful and included too much presentation.

5.3   Results of the task analysis

Here everything mentioned related to the selection methods is combined to see how they were perceived and evaluated by the interviewees. Most of these comments were generated by the theme of perceived suitability and quality of selection methods. Majority of these perceptions have already been mentioned in the deductive theme analysis as they have related to other interview themes as well. On the other hand, the inductive analysis has covered only those aspects of them that were perceived strongly positive or negative.

Starting from the video interview, most of the heard applicants appear to have taken it positively. Almost all these applicants thought that it was useful and, given this, most seemed to think that it also improved fairness. Almost half of the applicants also described the video interview fun. A few candidates also thought that it differentiated the recruitment process from other corresponding and that way it seemed to make it more of an experience.

However, three applicants mentioned having technical problems with it and two applicants, other than these, were worried about the fairness of the technical aspects of the video interview. Only one of the applicants was against the video interview itself – or more precisely, the format of it. However, also this applicant believed that if the format could not be developed, having a video interview as it was is anyway better than not having it at all. Interestingly, all doubts concerning the suitability and the fairness of it seemed to come from the restaurant interviewees even though all the applicants that actually encountered technical difficulties were from sales.

Also the selling task seemed to slightly divide the departments. The ones that were the most excited about it were all applying to sales. However, out of both departments the majority liked it and found it suitable for testing. Anyhow, half of the restaurant interview-

ees believed that there was room for improvement in the implementation of it: its questions were found too specific in order to measure the relevant skills.

Most of the interviewees appeared to neutrally like the group work and find it suitable. A few anyhow also assessed that it may leave more quiet applicants in the shadow of the more social ones and thus not measure the actual skills – however, the task's purpose in fact was to measure the teamwork skills and not the job knowledge. Another major aspect was that the majority of the interviewees had completely forgotten the group work. This indicates that it probably was not the highlight of the day or in the score of the experiences. In fact, one sales applicant gave most of her feedback related to this task: she found it too easy and boring and elaborated that it did not meet the same level of quality and excitement than the rest of the recruitment day.

All the interviewees reported positive perceptions related to the individual interview. Everyone appeared to be satisfied with the treatment in the interview and with their interviewers. Most of them also proactively mentioned that the interview situation was nice and relaxed. In addition, half of the applicants described feeling like they had made a more personal connection with the interviewer and that it had evoked positive emotions. Only one candidate told about having wanted to change something. She would have wanted to ask more questions than she felt that the situation allowed: especially related to the job description that she was unsure about.

Regarding the recruitment day in total, all the interviewed applicants that proactively mentioned something related to it seemed to think that the event was nice and well organized. Half of the applicants brought up either feeling appreciated and cared during the day and/or having a good time. Only one applicant found the event too long. In addition, two applicants suggested that recruiters could interact more with applicants, for example by coming to sit to their tables for a while, in order to get another kind of connection for both.

5.4   Conclusions of the results

The strongest positive element identified in the research was feeling appreciated in the recruitment process. It was highlighted especially by the restaurant applicants. Other most influential positive aspects consisted of perceiving the work atmosphere appealing, refreshments, the video interview, and the presence of other applicants. Also the selling task, fairness, and having fun on the recruitment day seemed to count particularly for the sales applicants. Presenting career prospects appeared to affect positively, too.

The strongest identified negative element in turn was the poor guidance to starting in the job. Even though it seemed to concern only restaurant applicants, the issue's seriousness ranked it as the least successful aspect – two applicants even told that their employer image deteriorated as a result. What makes this result particularly interesting is that this stage was actually originally excluded from the research scope and comments related it were not triggered in any way. However, as these perceptions were anyway reported and appeared to play such a crucial role in these interviewees' total experiences, these findings are included in the results and will be considered the development process, too.

The other most negative perceptions varied depending on the department: for sales, almost all seemed to relate information and communications – unclear job description, repetition and short notices – whereas the restaurant's other notions appeared to chatter more. Encountering mistakes emerged to play the second biggest role for them but also for example missing contact information, unfairness, too specific questions in the selling task, and unmet expectations seemed to affect. Also technical problems with the video interview were mentioned by both departments and, to specify, unmet expectations were brought up also by a sales applicant. Moreover, one candidate seemed to feel that the whole process was too stressful.

When examining the research themes, six of them appeared successful in the interviewees' experiences while the rest four performed more weakly. The most successful themes were recruiter behavior, uniqueness, memorability, interaction, possibilities to evaluate fit, and the coherence of cues. The weakest elements on the other hand were information and communications, fairness and unfairness, employer presentation, and authenticity. However, it can be specified that the employer presentation seemed to perform excellently until the two restaurant hires were so disappointed in the end of the process that their employer image deteriorated due to it. This is perceived so serious that it was enough to bring the theme from successful to unsuccessful. Similarly fairness and authenticity are such sensitive elements that relatively less negativity was needed to decline them in the combined results.

Moving to the used selection methods and their perceived successfulness; the video interview, the selling task and the individual interview were seen mainly positively. More downsides were related to the two former than to the individual interview but, on the other hand, the interviewees were also more excited about it. The group work instead included more negative than positive. There were not that many drawbacks related to it but, however, since it was completely forgotten by the majority of the interviewees, it is unsuccess-

ful as an *experience element*. An experience is something that the experiencer will re-member.

Table 2. The conclusions of the research results

+ Recruiter behaviour	− Employer presentation
Evaluation possibilities	Information & comm.
Coherence of cues	Fairness/unfairness
Interaction	Authenticity
Memorability	
Uniqueness	
	The end of the rec. process
	Mistakes
Video interview	Group task
Selling task	
Individual interview	

Most of the identified positive and negative aspects were also connected to one or more research themes. For this reason, the conclusions of the research results are illustrated in table 2 mostly through them. However, two significant negative aspects could not be un-ambiguously concluded by any of them so they were presented also separately in the second fragment of the table. Lastly, the chart's third fragment sums up the most and least successful selection methods.

6 Developing the recruitment process

In the development stage of this case study, the research results are firstly turned into development areas and enforcement needs to which preliminary development suggestions are targeted. These preliminary recommendations are introduced in the first subchapter. The next development step is organising a focus group for the case company's human resources professionals in order to revise development suggestions and further add ideas. The findings of this development method are described in the second subchapter. Finally, with the help of its results, the development suggestions are improved and finalised into the recommended new practice. The end result of this case study, the recommended new practice, is presented in the last subchapter.

6.1 Preliminary development suggestions

The findings of the research stage are first reorganised into the form of a recruitment process to ease approaching them from the professional perspective. Moreover, instead of repeating all the positive aspects, rather just surprising results as well as results related to the new aspects of the recruitment process are included in the development stage. This decision is made in order to prevent stating the obvious which would draw attention from the findings with real value. On the contrary, all negative results are taken into this stage and scrutinised as development areas. The applicants' development suggestions are in most cases regarded mainly as further indications of parts with room for improvement. The preliminary development suggestions aim at turning the development areas from negative to positive as well as accommodating the less settled or surprising positive aspects more permanently in the process.

The ideas are presented in three categories. The first one is "Keep" relating to the most meaningful positive results concerning aspects that should be preserved and empowered in the recruitment process. The second one is "Fix" that goes through all the identified development areas and the suggested solutions for them. Its findings are presented in the chronological order of the recruitment process for easier application. The third and last category is "Consider developing outside the recruitment process". It concerns the identified shortages that do not technically result from the recruitment process but are anyhow closely related and affect the success of it. It addresses these issues with recommendations of the direction to be taken for diminishing them.

6.1.1 Keep

The summer recruitment process had never been as versatile as this year. The versatility was mentioned positively by a few candidates and negatively by none. In addition, for example video interview and group assessment were positively regarded by several applicants and not least because of the increased diversity of assessment. Keeping this variety is warmly recommended, meaning including both written and video assessment; both individual and group assessment; and both pre- and on-the-day assessment.

Only one interviewee had seen the recruiters in the undergraduate recruitment fair that they participated in. However, she gave excellent feedback and told that it motivated her to apply to a big extent. Especially the openness and warmth of the fair personnel had made an impact. This is why I recommend using similar kind of job fairs also in the future.

The video interview was a completely new ingredient in the recruitment process. It appeared to be welcomed by most of the interviewees despite the concept being novel to most. Video interviews were estimated to improve truthfulness and fairness of assessment as more applicants can show more about themselves and screening does not rely only on written assessment. Also, some applicants found it fun. Moreover, several candidates spontaneously mentioned the question videos of the video interview. They were told to be personal, relaxed and characteristic to the company as well as to make replying more comfortable. So, video interviews should be continued and the style of the question videos should be preserved.

Also the selling task was new in the recruitment process. It was also taken very positively by the majority of the interviewees. Especially many sales applicants appeared to be excited about the task and view it as an opportunity to demonstrate one's skills and competence. On the other hand, some restaurant applicants found room for improvement within their corresponding task. So even though the implementation of the restaurant applicants' assignment seems to require some adjustment – discussed more in the following sub-chapter – sticking to the selling task as concept appears recommendable.

As already mentioned, group assessment overall was mostly perceived to improve assessment and fairness. Moreover, it seemed to make the recruitment experience more fun for many applicants. Also, it was perceived to help starting in the job because of the new contacts. Organising group assessment days and including also group assessment tasks seems thereby advantageous.

Furthermore, career stories and other ways of demonstrating career prospects, such as involving trainees and telling about possibilities to advance in a customised way, were found inspirational and improved some applicants' experiences. Demonstrating career prospects with real life examples should be continued also in the future.

Most of the interviewees also mentioned involving taste in a positive context. Offering candy, coffee and hot chocolate does not require a lot but seems to improve the experience to a great extent. Offering them or something else easy to eat, for example pastry, is advised to be done also in the future. Otherwise there were no worth mentioning results related to senses. This suggests that there is nothing so disturbing that actions should be taken for removing negative cues. However, that also means that there is a plenty of unutilised room for developing positive sense stimuli to engage the applicants more deeply.

Also lunch coupons offered in the end of the recruitment day were proactively mentioned by many candidates. They were perceived to show that the employer appreciated its applicants. In the applicants' stories, they also eased making friends with the other applicants as they were able to enjoy a lunch together after the event. Offering them is thus evaluated to be worth continuing.

There were a couple of applicants among the interviewed that had participated in the company's recruitment process also in the previous years. Both of them remembered the written test in a negative sense and were happy that it was not used anymore but had been changed to something more hands on, interactive and fun. The test was an individual exam on paper that included questions related to product information, mathematics and English skills and so on. It was perceived dull, weird, unsuitable and school-like by these applicants. These comments make also me convinced that these kind of exam-like assignments, especially when implemented on paper and individually, do not measure the right skills nor give the wished kind of image of the job or the employer. That is, leaving those out appears to have been the right decision – and they should also stay in the past.

6.1.2 Fix

<u>Job advert and application</u>
One applicant suggested that the job advert and Internet application should be made more personal as now they do not reach the same style and quality than the other recruitment process. The other applicants did not mention anything about the details of it. This is likely to indicate that also other applicants did not view them differentiating from other similar or otherwise particular. I agree with the applicant suggesting this change. One the main function of a job advert is being able to differentiate and it cannot be nothing

but beneficial for the application form as well. It would make the whole process more holistic as an experience. The same applicant also proposed putting fewer verbal questions to the application form and removing the need to write all the jobs over again when they are already on the CV attached. However, both of these do have a purpose in recruitment shortlisting so I doubt removing them, at least completely, is a good idea.

In addition, two sales applicants were unsure about the job description throughout the recruitment process and this weakened the positivity of their experience not to mention could have been harmful to recruitment itself. At the moment the job descriptions for each job were opened with just a sentence or two on the job advertisement. However, this issue would be easy to fix. Even though there would not be much more space on the job advert, it could at least provide a link to more detailed job descriptions on the company website.

Video interview

There were a few doubts about the fairness of the technical aspects in the video interview and the same number of applicants actually experienced technical problems with it. In general, telling about the grounds of assessment improves the perceived fairness of selection and makes the applicant happier with it. That applies also to the video interview. When sending invitations to the video interview, also its role in the recruitment process should be explained by telling that it is not a tool for final decisions and no-one is turned down because of technical problems. For the same reason, contact information of the recruiters should be clearly provided already in the video interview stage. This could reduce applicants' insecurity related to the video interview and the technical aspects of it.

Also, a few applicants gave feedback about the short time given for completing the video interview. More time should be given for doing it as the time limit may leave otherwise good candidates out. In addition, flexibility overall was appreciated and wished for by the interviewees. It should be allowed whenever asked for and there just is another possible and convenient solution.

Inviting to the recruitment day

One applicant was disappointed by the choice of the recruitment day as it was a day when one of the biggest applicant groups for the job was generally prevented to attend. This lapse concerned also many other applicants which were likely to be unhappy as well even though they were not heard for this research. This leads in the recommendation to carefully check that the planned recruitment days don't overlap with common important days of the biggest applicant groups.

A few applicants were also dissatisfied by the short notice given to the recruitment dates. The invitation to it should thus be sent earlier, giving more time to notice it and make oneself free from possible other bookings. Moreover, as already mentioned in the previous category, more flexibility was wished for by the applicants. It should be allowed whenever asked for and when there just is another solution with reasonable efforts.

Some applicants were missing more and more clearly communicated contact information also in this stage. One applicant specifically asked for providing also a phone number as it would be easier and faster to solve possible problems by phone. E-mail address needs to be given first of all for confirming attendance. However, here also a phone number could be included with the instructions for the primary purposes of both channels.

Preparing to the recruitment day

One applicant was very annoyed by the amount of overlapping information both on the recruitment day itself and on it compared to induction. The repetitiveness of the information should be reduced from both perspectives or at least the content repeated in induction should be modified into different form to keep it more interesting. Moreover, also better division of the presentation shares between different presenters should be helpful.

Furthermore, one applicant told about getting an unprepared image of his applicant group's leader as he seemed unsure in leading the selling task. It should be ensured that the group leaders of the recruitment day are aware of their roles and know the assessment route and tasks well enough to guide others without hesitation.

In addition to the recruiters, also the other personnel met appeared to affect applicants' image of the workplace as well as the experience. The personnel should be made aware that they are by all means encouraged to greet applicants or chat with them – especially during the times they need to wait in the aisle for the next test.

Tasks of the recruitment day

Not all the restaurant interviewees were convinced by the appropriateness of the sales task. Moreover, half of them found its questions too specific for being purposeful. It is important to make sure that all the tasks measure fit to the job in question in the best possible way. The third task for the restaurant's recruitment process could be adjusted to focus more on customer service and less on selling for instance. If it is kept as such, the questions of it should be modified into less specific ones so that the test surely measures – and is perceived to measure – customer service and selling skills instead of the extent to which the candidate is familiar with the restaurant.

Moreover, the group task was forgotten by most of the interviewed applicants and one person gave feedback on its boringness compared to the other experience. It seems like this task truly was generally perceived duller and had less value in the experience. At the moment the assignment consists of problem-solving in an oral discussion with others in the group. The company values are also utilised in it. However, more fun and action could be added. For example, something more practical could be done within the group.

One applicant also wished for more time for applicant's questions in the individual interview. This would have been important for her specifically because she had found the job description too ambiguous. Adding more time to the individual interview for applicant's questions or explaining the jobs better in the presentation or increasing other applicant-recruiter interaction are suggested as alternative solutions for the problem.

Increasing applicant-recruiter interaction would serve other purposes as well. Two applicants separately wished for it and perceived that it could add another type of contact for two-way assessment and information flow. Moreover, they estimated that it would work well with the type of personnel met on the recruitment day, as the recruiters were enough nice and easy to approach. I agree and think that it is a great idea. It could be implemented for example by casually seating the managers to their groups' tables for the end of the recruitment event, as another one of the applicants suggested.

Information on the recruitment day
Some applicants reported perceptions of unfairness. Some of them were accurate descriptions of what really happened and which are tried to be fixed by these recommendations. However, in some cases the perception did not actually comply with the true course of events. In general, telling about the grounds of assessment improves the perceived fairness of recruitment and selection and makes the applicant more satisfied with it and the made decision. This is why I recommend telling about assessment and its basis briefly on the recruitment day. It could be done as simply as explaining the roles of the tasks and assessors in the beginning of the day. It would be likely to reduce groundless perceptions of unfairness and improve the applicant experience and the image of the employer.

Also, as said earlier, two sales applicants were not sure about the job description at any point of the recruitment process. Especially the terms sales and salesperson were found confusing as they were perceived to mean different things depending on the company. Vagueness related to this kind of central concepts directly harms recruitment as well as deteriorates the applicant experience. The relevant job descriptions should be presented

also on the recruitment day. The introduction should be started from the basics and be inclusive instead of assuming that something is apparent or already known.

Lastly, one applicant was disappointed by hearing the presenters of the recruitment day talk about working in the dishes with the assumption that it was everyone's least favourite job in the restaurant. For him, it was the best job. This leads in the conclusion that the recruiters should not assume anything about the applicants' preferences in their speeches. Moreover, making some aspect seem unnecessarily unattractive is particularly sad. It is not only likely to give wrong impression but also to affect the image of the job negatively – and the pride in the job later on.

<u>Beginning of the job</u>
Even though this stage – guidance towards the beginning of the job – was actually aimed to be excluded from the thesis, it anyway emerged in the theme interviews as the biggest drawback in the applicants' described experiences. Thus the decision for including it also in the development stage and suggestions is made.

Even though the experiences of unsuccessful guidance to the job concerned only restaurant applicants, their severity was still enough to make it appear as the biggest group of negative notions. Firstly, one applicant got accidental message about rejection and perceived being told a different pay than the actual one. All kinds of mistakes should be avoided as far as possible with carefulness. Secondly, it should be made sure that the shared important information is accurate by ensuring that also all the managers know the facts related to employment. As this incident may have been a misunderstanding as well, particular preciseness and articulateness is recommended especially when discussing this kind of important and sensitive topics by phone.

Secondly, the biggest single downside appeared to be the lack of guidance to the beginning of the job. All of the hired restaurant applicants had a word to say about it. According to their renditions of the events, after offering the job on the phone they did not get any messages or work shifts until one week before the beginning of the job. Even just agreeing on the job only by phone made some question the reliability, not to mention not hearing anything from the prospective employer during such a long time. They also felt that they were lacking contact information and could not reach anyone related to the issue. Two of the applicants were so annoyed that they told that during this time their employer image was worse than before attending the recruitment process – even though it had improved in the earlier parts of it. Moreover, it is not difficult to imagine that changing to an-

other job is a lot more likely when feeling this disappointed with the future employer and the contract has not been written yet.

To fix the above described situation, the following changes are suggested. Firstly, the chosen applicants should be sent a welcoming e-mail after agreeing on the job on the phone. The e-mail should include information about such important aspects as publishing shifts, the agreed starting day and contact information, for example. Secondly, the applicants should be delivered shifts on time, three weeks before the beginning of the job. Thirdly, another "Welcome to the job" letter could be sent 1-2 weeks before the first shift to discuss all the topical issues such as writing the job contract, taking the bank details with for it et cetera. Keeping in touch with the future employees is likely to ease beginning in the job and make them more happy and committed with the employer.

6.1.3 Consider developing outside the recruitment process

Two applicants made a wish about the possibility to write the job contract before the first day. I am not sure whether it is possible within the existing policies but if it is, giving this opportunity should be considered.

After being hired, one of the new summer employees found out the existence of a rule related to the possibilities to work within different departments. She was sad about finding out only after being hired but not being informed about the rule during the recruitment process. In cases like this, my recommendation is to inform the applicant in question – if necessary – in a friendly and explicatory way and also provide a solution to the problem or what could have been a problem. This might reduce negative feelings and unnecessary worry related to the topic.

Also, two applicants – one from each department – said that the work community was not as great as the image given in the recruitment process. This was reported to cause disappointment. The main reasons for it appeared to be having less sociable colleagues than imagined as well as not being welcomed to the department as well as hoped for. These issues could be addressed by investing more in welcoming the new employee. The manager and induction seem to have the biggest role in this so both the manager's work related to the new employee and the induction should be supported with more resources.

Moreover, one restaurant applicant said that communication was poorer at work than in the recruitment process. This considered especially the communication from managers to employees. It was also one of the reasons leading in gone under expectations and disap-

pointment. Vertical communication in the restaurant could be improved by training or by discussing its meaning and good practices to it with the human resources.

6.2 Refining the development suggestions

The HR focus group, first of all, found the results realistic and agreeable. They took the findings seriously and felt committed to correcting all the identified and confirmed downsides. Representatives of the human resources were especially sad by the negative results related to the end of the restaurant's recruitment process. Most of its negative aspects resulted from a mistake that had been noticed afterwards. It did not come to them as a surprise but its severity was worse than imagined. The human resources also agreed with most of the ideas related to development. However, they also gave their contribution in the form of a few changes and by advancing given ideas further.

Starting from the "Keep" category, the human resources agreed with all of my conclusions about the aspects that appeared positive in the results and were worth continuing also in the future. They were especially interested in the assessment of the new elements, the video interview and the selling task. This way they were able to get feedback on them quickly as well as evidence to back up decisions related to their use also later on.

The human resources also agreed mostly with the development suggestions related to the job advert and application. They seemed open to differentiating the job advert but, however, less convinced about the application form. As I had imagined, they were neither excited about reducing the amount of written questions on the job application platform. It does not have overly many of them at the moment either and they are important for shortlisting. Moreover, changing the application portal is not up to the case place of business as all its Finnish recruitment applications come through the same tool. The human resources were also convinced of the need to communicate the job descriptions more clearly. They are already on the website but too briefly. More detailed versions of them should be added to the website and then it would be easy to provide a link to them on the job ad. The HR seemed to be more in for this idea than for including the descriptions on the advert where there truly is too little space for all the jobs one can apply through summer recruitment.

The focus group agreed on the importance of presenting grounds for assessment during the critical stages of the recruitment process: similarly related to the video interview than on the recruitment day concerning its assessment. Also the human resources' email address should be provided already in the video interview invitation. Used video interviewing tool, Recruitby.net, shows its e-mail address as the sender so that the sender's real e-mail address does not show at all if it has not been separately added to the invitation letter.

The problem appears to be that the program does not indicate that it is going to do this replacement. One uses the tool with one's e-mail address as the user name so it is easy to mistakenly expect that this address would be shown as the sender, too. Basically the need to manually add an e-mail address – against the template Recruitby.net gives as an example – cannot be noticed in any other way but from a received e-mail. This seems to be why more contact information was not provided in the video interview invitations. Moreover, not all applicants were satisfied by the time given for completing the video interview. This year the time was from three to five days. The human resources evaluated that giving more than five days should be targeted from now on.

The human resources had also notified the mistake related to the choice of the restaurant's recruitment day. Luckily, however, they were able to organise individual interviews for all the applicants that this incident left out at first. All of them seemed satisfied in the end. Anyway, important lesson was learnt and the team assured that the dates would be checked more carefully hereafter.

It was also agreed that a longer notice should be targeted to be given for the recruitment days. This year the notice was clearly shorter than a week in all the cases. Providing contact information was also perceived necessary by the group. Firstly, e-mail address needs to be given for replying about attending. However, providing also a phone number for quicker resolving of possible difficulties could also be considered. Some applicants were also wishing for more flexibility. Anyway, satisfactory solutions were found for the majority of the applicants asking for some kind of special arrangement and flexibility is already aimed at to be provided always when possible. Reducing the need for flexibility with longer notices and by giving more variety in the first place is likely to be more effective.

Both identified drawbacks related to preparations of the recruitment days could be fixed by better planning and rehearsal. Same information about values and the business' origins had been presented once in the recruitment process and twice during induction. It was estimated that the repetition could be reduced by presenting this information briefly on the recruitment day and more inclusively in basic job induction – but not anymore after that. The repetition in the recruitment day's presentation in turn could be decreased by better division of presentation shares and rehearsing the day more thoroughly beforehand. The same applied to improving the perceived professionalism of the recruiters. Especially the assessment route and tasks should be practiced by going all of them through in practice. The human resource professionals also elaborated that the same should be done with the recruiters' introductions in order to prevent signalling any unplanned messages. Especially

newer managers should be asked – casually and in a good spirit – about their planned speeches to check that their stories go in line with the values and the employer brand.

Moreover, the human resources representatives made one particularly valuable insight related to development of the tasks of the recruitment day. I was in the impression that active selling task did not sufficiently relate to the restaurant's work. However, they told that active selling in the restaurant – mostly meaning selling add-ons based on the customer type – truly is one of the searched key skills. I did not know this as I have very rarely witnessed the existing personnel selling add-ons. It was concluded that in addition to recruiting new employees with potential to this and training them, also the existing employees should be reminded of the importance of active selling. Otherwise neither the new ones will take the learnings into practice. However, it was agreed that the selling task could anyway be modified by shaping it more into the direction of selling according to the customer type and reducing the effect of existing knowledge in the product range. They suggested use of reaction options so that the focus would switch from decisions on the products to demonstrating serving the customer in the best possible way according to the made choice. Anyhow, the human resources emphasised that before making any changes, the first thing would be to consult the restaurant manager and ask him to articulate once more what exactly are his expectations and wishes for the summer hires' qualities.

I also suggested bringing more spirit and action to the group task which main function is to measure team work abilities. It was confirmed that cooperation skills could be measured also in a more functional assignment where teamwork would not be triggered only in a discussion but in more holistic form of interaction. That way the task could also have a more positive effect on the experience.

Moreover, it was clarified that individual interviews could not be longer than the current 10 minutes but, instead, the job descriptions would be presented a lot more inclusively on the recruitment day for reducing the demand in another way. Recruiter-applicant interaction could be increased in additional ways, too. One of them could be encouraging recruiters to chat with the applicants and by making the group leaders to sit at their groups' tables for the more informal end of the recruitment day. Also both of these ideas were welcomed by the focus group. Furthermore, it should be messaged to the personnel in a wider context, too, that talking with applicants also in general is seen nothing but positive.

The human resources also had a solution to the dilemma of whether to give or not to give feedback – which I did not address in my preliminary suggestions. They said that positive strengthening could be the right approach: praising candidates only for whatever was

good in their performance in the tasks. This way the applicant would leave the situation in a positive mind set and feel more recognised as well as perceive the process more individual and fair. Moreover, on the other hand, no-one would get their feelings hurt.

As already said earlier, the human resources agreed that the grounds of assessment should be presented also on the recruitment day. Different assessors' and tasks roles should be explained so that less room would be given to speculation and groundless perceptions of unfairness. Lastly, the team was neither delighted when noticing restaurant managers' habit to assume that no-one wants to work in dishes. They similarly found that kind of assumptions as something that should be got rid of. Addressing the restaurant managers about the notion should be enough as it appears to be something that one is guilty of simply due to not recognising own prejudices and patterns of thinking and talking.

The focus group also agreed on the need of carefulness related to communicating, especially when discussing over phone – which appears to be a channel inherently more sensitive to misunderstandings. In general, after the selection of the applicants, managers take lead for the end of the recruitment process and guidance to the beginning of the job. Human recourses took the failures in this area seriously and want to scrutinise and renew it especially in the restaurant. First of all, the severity of the situation will be explained to the restaurant managers and the steering group – with the help of this case study – in order to get everyone on the same page. The restaurant manager would be involved in the planning stage with the HR and together they would create a precise action plan covering the deadlines and people in charge related to each duty and task of it. Same procedures could also be applied to sales for optimising its functioning as well.

The human resources agreed with my ideas about the communication related to the guidance to the job. They added that also the employee's future manager should be named already on the first welcome letter. They also said that the job contracts could be written one or two weeks before starting in the job if the new employee wanted to. The basic job induction – a couple of hours training that typically takes place on the new employee's first working day – is at time being organised on Monday afternoons. When sending the second email a couple of weeks before the job commences, the applicants could be offered an opportunity to already join the induction on either the following Monday or the next one. All general things related to working – including writing the contact – are covered in the basic job induction. Several new employees can participate at once and regardless of the department. It was suggested that the occasion could, from now on, include also fitting the work uniforms and ordering the clothes for the first day. Applicant who joins the induction before the beginning of shifts could get straight to the job specific training on the first ac-

tual working day. As everyone goes through the same orientation sooner or later when starting, the things presented there would not be repeated anymore in later induction.

Also other things technically outside the recruitment process but closely related were briefly discussed. Firstly, the HR team was sorry about a candidate's hurt feelings related the company specific policies that she had not been told about. However, they perceived that it could not be smoothly told in the recruitment process without knowing that someone concerned by it was present. Also, the HR was sad to notice that one out of five applicants for both departments had been disappointed to the work community because of higher expectations evoked by the recruitment process. They confirmed the importance of the manager's role, induction and the team spirit for ensuring a great work atmosphere for everyone. Also the need to improve communication in the restaurant was recognised.

Lastly, the human resources noticed that many applicants appear to have been very nervous on the recruitment day. It should be highlighted in the assessment instructions as well as in the presented grounds for assessment that performing skills as such are not making anyone a successful or unsuccessful candidate. They also wanted to consider possibilities to reduce the extent of performing elements in the recruitment tasks.

6.3 Recommended new practice for the summer recruitment process

The final development suggestions merge both the applicants' and the practitioners' perspectives and originate from the combined knowledge from the fields of recruitment and selection and experience management. They are given in the form of the recommended new practice for the case company's summer recruitment process. They seek to turn negative aspects to positive and settle surprising or otherwise less regularised positive aspects more permanently into the process. Even though the guidance to the new job and induction were mostly excluded from the researched area, a remarkably share of the results anyway concerned them and indicated that there was need for corrective actions. That is why they are also included in the development suggestions. Altogether, the recommended new practice is presented step by step below and the needed changes are illustrated in bullet points in picture 9 (p. 84). The suggested changes have been marked with turquoise for demonstrating what should be done differently and when.

Together these 27 corrective and reinforcing key steps constitute the practice that is believed to improve the applicant experience in the case summer recruitment process and advance it into its most successful form. With a little adjustment the guidelines can be applied to other recruitment processes, too. All in all, the recommendations are hoped to

be used in the future summer recruitments and to guide decisions related to other recruitment as well.

1. Ask the managers to articulate what exactly they wish for the new employees in terms of skills, knowledge, abilities and qualities. Tell about the importance of recruitment and the effects of ending it unsuccessfully to everyone involved in the recruitment process with the help of this case study's results.

2. Make a personal and characteristic job advert with a link to detailed job descriptions on the company website.

3. Discuss the possibilities to modify the job application form into a bit more unique one.

4. Take part in undergraduate recruitment fair(s). Be first of all genuine and helpful.

5. Use video interviews with personal, fun and relaxed question videos.

6. Send the video interview invitations with at least 5 days' notice. Tell in the invitation that it is the first selection stage of the recruitment process. Provide also the human resources' e-mail address and advise the applicants to first contact Recruitby.net's technical support (the e-mail address is automatically given in the invitation) but with problems beyond its power, not to hesitate to get in touch.

7. Organise versatile group assessment recruitment days.

8. Check the planned dates of the recruitment events to make sure that they do not overlap with anything else common and important.

9. Invite the chosen applicants to the recruitment days with at least a week of notice. Provide the e-mail address again and inform that it is the channel for confirming participation. Provide also a phone number but tell that it is primarily for informing about sudden changes close to the recruitment day.

10. Divide the recruitment day presentation shares precisely. Rehearse the whole event beforehand with all the managers and go through the assessment route and its tasks in practice.

11. Explain the job descriptions in detail on the recruitment day. Start from the very basics. Do not let your own (negative) attitudes affect the way you present the jobs.

12. Ensure that there are no disturbing sense stimuli. Use for example videos and sound tracks in the presentation as well as real products in the selling task – to engage also other senses than sight.

13. Share career stories and make employees with different stories visible on the day.

14. Explain the grounds for assessment briefly on the recruitment day.

15. Continue with similar kind of selling task for sales but shape the restaurant's task by building it on choosing the best option based on the given customer type and serving the customer accordingly.

16. Develop a functional group work that is more physical and practical – instead of a discussion-based one.

17. Keep individual interviews with relaxed, familiar and friendly atmosphere.

18. Give positive feedback right away on whatever the applicant succeeds in.

19. Encourage the managers to chat with the applicants especially when they are required to wait for something. Tell the managers to join their applicant groups' tables for the end of the day and be there for questions and a more personal connection.

20. Offer candy or other easy refreshments and encourage applicants to use the coffee machine freely.

21. Give lunch coupons in the end of the day. In addition, something else could also be given as a more lasting memory, for example a visual brochure or a thank you card.

22. Send a welcoming e-mail to the chosen applicants after agreeing on the job on the phone. Include information about publishing shifts, the agreed starting day and contact information. Tell who is the employee's own supervisor and give his/her contact information.

23. Develop an action plan with the recruiting departments' managers related to the guidance to the job. Define deadlines and people responsible for each action. Make sure that it is followed through. The action plan is drafted in the following steps.

24. Deliver work shifts on time.

25. Send another "Welcome to the job" letter a couple of weeks before the beginning of the job. Tell about the possibility to write the job contract and attend the basic job induction already before starting. Remind of taking the needed bank and tax details with, et cetera. Tell that the time used in the induction will be added to the first pay.

26. Modify the basic job induction so that the general company information is presented in greater detail and with a bit different approach than on the recruitment day. Include working clothes fitting by organising a clothes track from which sizes can be tried on and ordered by marking them on the list provided. The clothes will be delivered to the starting employees on their first day.

27. Make sure that later induction will not go through the same general company information anymore – still it can and should be referred to whenever relevant.

Specify goals & emphasise importance

Undergraduate job fair

Job advertisement

+Detailed job descriptions +Personality

Video interview

+Contact information +Min. 5 days notice +Explain role

Recruitment day invitations   +Phone number +Min. 1 week notice

Rehearsal of the recruitment day +More thorough approach

Recruitment day

+Grounds for assess. +Detailed job descriptions

+Revise selling task +Make the group work functional

 +Recruiter/applicant interaction +Feedback

Communicate exceptional waiting times to the applicants

Job offer/ Rejection

+Supplement job offer calls with e-mails

Create an action plan with managers for keeping in touch with the new employees

!
Care-fulness

Picture 9. The suggested changes to the summer recruitment process

7   Discussion

This chapter makes conclusions on the case study and assesses the methods used in it. Moreover, it evaluates its usefulness both for the commissioning party and for recruitment and selection in a wider context. It also specifies the limitations of the research and development process and the need for future research. Additionally, it evaluates the reliability and validity as well as the generalisability and transferability of the case study. In the end of the chapter, also the thesis as a project and a learning experience are discussed.

7.1   Conclusions of the case study

This case study examined how to develop the applicant experience in the case recruitment process. The research and develop aims were creating a framework for research by combining experience management to recruitment and selection in theory, analysing the current state of the applicant experience, and generating grounded development suggestions for enhancing it. All of these aims were met. First the determinants of a successful applicant experience were identified by combining experience management to recruitment and selection. These identified elements constituted a theme framework that guided research and development. With the help of it, the current state of the recruitment experience was examined by interviewing 10 this year's summer recruitment applicants. Finally, development suggestions were created jointly with the company's human resources to overcome the shortages identified in the research.

The strongest positive element identified in the research was feeling appreciated in the recruitment process. The second biggest single theme was finding the work atmosphere appealing. Both of these results correspond to Markkanen (2005, 98-101) and Brown and Swain's (2009, 36-38) notions about the importance of recruiter behaviour for the overall applicant experience. Also Boswell & al. (2003, 32-34) estimated that the recruiter behaviour is particularly crucial to the applicant experience and affects especially the assessment of the organisation.

Other particularly effective positive aspects were refreshments, the video interview, the sales task, and the presence of the other applicants. All these are familiar from Tarssanen & Kylänen's (2004, 9-16) experience elements where they appeared as multi-sensory perception, contrast, individuality and interaction. In fact, everything that was positively special to applicants due to its novelty can be connected to the elements contrast and individuality. The selling task and the video interview appeared to score high particularly for their difference.

Also having fun on the recruitment day and fairness seemed to count particularly for the sales interviewees. Having fun may represent multiple applicant experience factors of the theory, depending on the more exact cause of it. For many, it may stem for example from novelty or interaction with others, described above – or from the combination of details and sense stimuli suggested by Pine and Gilmore (2011, 73-90). Fairness instead was a theme as such, promoted by several authors such as Vaahtio (2005, 11-13), Ababneh & al. (2013, 125-126) and Dineen & al. (2004, 141-142). All in all, all the highlights of the researched applicant experiences appear to lead back to the identified determinants of an applicant experience's success in a way or another.

The strongest negative element in turn was the poor guidance to the job. Even though it concerned only restaurant interviewees, the issue's seriousness made it appear as the least successful aspect. When looking at the finding more closely, it can be noticed that almost all its negativity was in the end derived from poor information and communications. The same research theme was ranked also second lowest as almost all sales interviewees' negative notions related to unclear job description, repetition of information, and communicated short notices. For example Markkanen (2005, 98-101) and Saks and Uggerslev (2009, 360-363) recommended recruiters to pay attention to communications and recruitment information in particular. This advice seems to apply to the results. Furthermore, Brown and Swain (2009, 36-38) and Boswell & al. (2003, 32-34) recommended special carefulness with keeping in touch with the applicant during the recruitment process. The errors in the end of the recruitment process seem to originate also from poor management of this relationship – with unfavourable consequences.

As said, most of the sales interviewees' negative perceptions concerned information and communications. However, they emerged as a big cause also in the restaurant results. In addition to the poor guidance to the job, encountering mistakes appeared to play the second biggest role for the restaurant interviewees. Also missing contact information and unmet expectations performed poorly in the results. All these influences are closely related to information and communication, too. Moreover, technical problems with the video interview were also mentioned by both departments.

The most positive and negative themes as such were not surprising as they had all already been identified as the key determinants of an applicant experience's success in the theory. Instead, the extent of negativity attached to the poor job guidance emerged as the most shocking finding. It clearly fell behind the average quality and stood out from the other findings. Also, discussing it was actually not even targeted by the original definition

of the recruitment process stretching only till the job offer and acceptance. This appears to further highlight the findings' meaning and severity.

It can also be concluded that the restaurant's perceptions emerged more negative than sales'. However, it was not surprising for it had been already anticipated by the commissioner. For example, the results seem to be affected also by what happened after the particular experience itself. Without going into detail, I would assess that the sales employees generally seem happier in their jobs than the ones working in the restaurant.

Furthermore, the managers participating in the recruitment process or its planning were less experienced in their current positions in the restaurant than in sales. Most of the restaurant managers had quite recently taken over their current jobs and/or were new to the organisation. This could also be one of the reasons declining the quality of implementation and especially the end of the recruitment process that the managers were primarily in charge of. Similarly, different people were in charge for the summer recruitment of sales and of restaurant also in the human resources department. Also the trainee – referring to the author herself – took more part in organising the restaurant's recruitment than for sales. These differences may explain some of the heterogeneity of the results as well.

One reason may also lie in the applicant types themselves. Summer recruitment applicants for sales are typically older and more educated and have a longer work experience while restaurant applicants are generally younger and less experienced. The job of a sales person seems to be more attractive also judging by the applicant numbers. This may reflect the attractiveness of these two industries in general. Also, at least in this company, the restaurant is often perceived as a support function of sales which may be another reason declining the interest. Also in this summer recruitment process, there were more good candidates for sales than it was possible to take; whereas lots of more work was required even just for gathering a suitable pool of applicants for the restaurant. Lengthening the process, involving more so to say weaker applicants, and contacting more people about the jobs may all pose a bigger risk of mistakes.

Moving to the development stage, the development suggestions' first function was to aim at repairing the identified downsides. Hence the biggest suggested change regarded the end of the recruitment process which is aimed to be completely renewed. To correct also other specified negative aspects, for example job descriptions are suggested to be more inclusively explained, longer notices and more contact information to be provided and mistakes aimed to be avoided by better planning and communication. Also, relatively more

development suggestions initiated changes related to the restaurant as it had performed weaker in the research results.

Another purpose of the development suggestions was to make surprising and less standardised positive aspects settled as more permanent components of the recruitment process. In other words, it means that the less expected and less experienced elements that proved successful in the research were recommended to be included also in the future. For example good treatment, displaying the work environment positively, refreshments and new tasks were strengths that should be preserved also in the future.

All in all, each phase of the recruitment process received corrective or reinforcing development suggestions. The ideas were organised into the form of the recommended new practice. These developed guidelines consisted of 27 recognised key steps that are believed to improve the applicant experience in the summer recruitment process.

7.2   Research methods

The choice of the research method based on the research demand, describing individual experiences within a precise context, which lead to the use of a qualitative case study. The methodology involved firstly defining the research framework based on the most relevant existing literature and research. Secondly, thematic interviewing with the applicants was chosen as the method that would best enable them themselves define what mattered most in their experiences. The size of the sample of the research population was determined by starting to analyse the interview data right away after beginning the interviews – and observing reaching the saturation point.

All above-presented decisions were made based on the recommendations of the theory, and still now after the implementation, I view these choices mostly justified and successful. However, the interview sample was still too small – covering only 15.2 % of the applicants on the final stage. Also, despite covering all the identified applicant categories it on the other hand did not reflect the sizes of these groups realistically. The sample focused too heavily on the hired applicants over the not hired – 70 % and 30 % being the figures – even though in reality the majority of applicants on the final stage was not hired.

Next the data generated in the interviews was analysed with three different analyses to contribute to the diversity of the approaches and better reliability of the research. After that the results were addressed with development suggestions to revise poorly performing aspects and to preserve the less established but successful aspects. Also the company's

human resources shaped the recommendations in a focus group. The final development suggestions were then presented as the recruitment process' recommended new practice.

I would assess the used analysis and development methodology suitable and these stages well-implemented. Together the analyses involved all the applicants', the theory's and the practitioners' perspectives. This variety contributes to the reliability of the research which creates the basis for accurate development decisions, too. However, more time could have been provided to the focus group of the human resources. Two hours appeared a surprisingly short time for both getting familiar with the results and developing suggestions. Finally, I think that the recommended new practice gives a holistic and accurate insight to the needed changes while also being clear and convenient to take into use.

7.3   Usefulness of the case study

This case study is believed to improve the case company's summer recruitment. It appears to be taken very seriously in the human resources. Its findings are planned to be taken into further discussion within the other store as well. Most of its recommendations are expected to be taken into use already in the next year's summer recruitment process. The topic is important to the commissioning party as it is one of its recruitment priorities to treat applicants well and it also wishes to differentiate with its summer recruitment process. However, the recommendations are aimed to be applied to store's other recruitment at some point, too. In addition, the results are planned to be used also for example when arguing for the importance of recruitment and rehearsing managers to it. In fact, all the steps of the case study were presented thoroughly specifically so that they could be used also separately. That way they can provide extra value for the case company.

The recommendations of this case study have potential to give direction to the company's other stores' summer recruitment processes, too, as they all base on the same model. Some players have already expressed their interest in the research. In even wider context, also the industry of recruitment in general can benefit from the recommendations and the created methodology in particular. The identified most crucial determinants of an applicant experience's success are useful for examining any recruitment process in any company and developing these elements accordingly. Moreover, I believe that I have brought a new and unique approach to the field by combining experience management to recruitment and selection – for the first time, as far as I am aware. As studied in this thesis, there appears to be a growing demand for differentiating in recruitment. At the same time experiences are evaluated to become increasingly important to people. Counting these two together, my case study could be valuable not only today but also tomorrow.

Moreover, this case study could inspire also others to more innovative recruitment or to further research from the experience perspective.

7.4　Limitations and future research

This case study has many limitations. Most of them are set already by the preciseness of the case which is strictly the summer recruitment process of the case company. It means that other recruitment of the store is not covered. Neither are the other locations of business. Moreover, human resources planning and induction stages are not included in the study. Also the research methods posed one remarkable limitation: everything is based on the recall of the applicants so the cause and effect relationships remain unknown.

In order to understand the particular challenges of other recruitment processes of the case company and develop them accordingly, they should also be researched as their own entities. Same applies also to internal recruitment. In addition to research, the guidelines to the company's other recruitment processes and recruitment overall should also be updated from the experience's point of view.

Similarly, even though the operator's all Finnish summer recruitments base on the same model there should be also store-based differences. To define the right steps towards the ultimate version of any other store's summer recruitment process, also their weaknesses and strengths – and possible other distinctions – should be first specified with research. After that the development suggestions could be adjusted accordingly.

Moreover, human resource planning in the case company broadly lacks research. Expanding research to it would bring deeper understanding of recruitment and human resources of the store. In addition, even though this study did not cover induction, the summer employees' perceptions on induction were already researched in year 2014. However, the research lacked the experience approach and did not lead in similarly articulated development efforts. In addition, some findings of this case study already indicated some apparent drawbacks in this year's induction. This indicates that there is demand for further research and development on the case company's induction as well.

Lastly, the research was fully based on the individuals' recall of the recruitment process. It was a purposeful research choice made due to the aim to focus on what mattered the most in the end. However, at the same time it prevented trustworthy assessment of exact cause and effect relationships of events and reactions. To get more and more reliable insights to these relations, similar research should be implemented with another research strategy: by interviewing applicants directly after completing each stage.

7.5   Reliability and validity

The reliability of the case study had several limitations that are worth acknowledging. First of all, due to the nature of a qualitative research and the researcher's big role in it, everything is subjective to an extent. I suggested the approach to the case study based on my fields of study. I chose the research method based on my interpretation of the literature's recommendations. I selected the key criteria for the recruitment experience's success based on what appeared the most important to me in the theory. I designed the research themes based on the framework I had created. As I lead the discussion in all the interviews, I inevitably shaped them, too. Also when analysing the data in the end it was me who decided what things to include and what to leave out as well as what emerged strong or surprising. The development suggestions were based on these results and the work done in all the previous steps so neither they can be objective. Everywhere, someone else could have made a different choice and maybe get different results as a consequence. That is why for example letting also someone else interview with a different approach as well as making someone else analyse the data, too, would have enhanced reliability.

Moreover, it is not only my subjectivity that affects. The research and development stages involved altogether 12 other people as well – who all similarly view world from their subjective points of views. The results of this research showed that the interviewees brought up aspects that they experienced themselves but were unlikely to mention factors not personally encountered. Also the interview sample appears too small to properly tackle the subjectivity. It covered only 15.2 % of the applicants on the final stage. It also focused too heavily on the hired applicants over the not hired even though in reality the sizes of the groups were the opposite. If I would have selected other 10 applicants to the interviews, the results may have been different. Similarly, the development suggestions from the human resources department could have been different if the other half of them would have attended instead. It can be concluded that the applicant sample should have been bigger and correspond to the reality better. Also incorporating all four human resources specialists in the focus group would have improved reliability.

My role may have influenced in another way as well. I participated in organising the summer recruitment process as a HR trainee. I knew all the interviewees already from there and as nowadays I work in another department of the company, the majority of them were also my colleagues by the time of the interviews. Knowing me and the other people featured in the recruitment process may have influenced the given information. It is also possible that the interviewees would have been more interested in the way they appear in my eyes, too. Also, as all the interviewed rejected candidates were reached through common

friends, they may have had more favourable views on the company or me as a result. However, it is common for development projects that the researcher is someone from the inside and that also other people of the company are involved.

Many actions were taken for reducing the negative effects of subjectivity and improving reliability. Firstly, the development need was identified by the commissioner who also agreed on the study approach that I suggested. Secondly, many different research methods were studied and, in addition to the literature's recommendations, I also tried adapting them to my work before deciding on the most suitable one. Moreover, the framework of the key applicant experience's determinants was created based on the literature and research of two different fields and dozens of different authors. Only the most predominantly repeated and argued factors were selected.

In the research stage, applicants from all identified applicant groups were interviewed even though the sizes of different applicant categories were not represented successfully. I also believe that the choice of individuals was purely based on chance as I invited the first suitable people met. Also, I do all kinds of possible shifts on any day and at any time so that should not have affected either. Also the used interview type appeared to improve reliability. Theme interview allowed the most significant aspects emerge regardless of the interview themes or the theory. That way for example the period between the job offer and the beginning of the job ended up being included in the results and the development suggestions even though I had not initiated researching it. Moreover, the interviews were all recorded and transcribed to enhance analysing the data reliably.

When moving to the development stage, the interview material was analysed in three different methods for elaborating all the identified different approaches to it. The results of all these methods were similar and that way contributed to each other's reliability. The findings were also presented to the human resources who evaluated that they seemed realistic. Moreover, preparing the development suggestions did not base only on my interpretations but incorporated also the interviewed applicants and the human resources professionals. The former were asked for their suggestions in the interviews. Also these ideas were discussed with the human resources and the most potential ones continued within the process. The human resources representatives similarly refined and advanced my preliminary development ideas. Furthermore, they contributed also by creating own development suggestions. All parties' ideas seemed to emphasise similar needs and actions.

The validity of the case study was tried to be improved by many same tools than the reliability. Firstly the research aims where defined according to the wishes of the commission-

ing party. On the other hand, the industries that were selected to for the theory – and that way also for the research – based on my idea without any more credible and explanatory basis. However, this approach was somewhat verified by presenting the idea to the commissioning party that also found it potential. Developing the research framework based on existing understanding also helped to break down what exactly should be researched in order to examine the right things. Also the research methodology – *how* to research – was decided based on the literature's most relevant practices. In fact, many different methods were tried of which the ones perceived the most suitable were selected.

As the interest was in applicants' experiences it seemed logical to interview the applicants themselves. However, realistic representations of different types of applicants would have made the choice of the method and the participants more valid whereas now different groups where not reflected realistically. Moreover, since the case study seemed to base on a completely new idea, there were no clear answers about the suitable analysis. To overcome this problem and improve validity, the research data was analysed with all the identified relevant approaches: the deductive and the inductive analyses as well as from the perspectives of all the applicants', the theory's and the case company's human resources'. The validity could have been further improved by letting the interviewees' preview the interpretations of the data and make sure that I have understood it correctly.

In the development stage, a focus group was organised for the company's human resources. It had many important roles for the case study's validity. Firstly, there it could be checked whether the research seemed to measure the wanted things and the analyses focus on the wanted aspects. Secondly, the human resources were incorporated in the development process and could refine the direction of it based on the wishes of the case company. The commissioner was regularly updated on the plans for the case study also throughout the project which was perceived to contribute to validity, too. The development stage included also the applicant's suggestions so that also the last step would take into account the variety of perspectives as well as fill the original needs better.

7.6   Transferability and generalisability

As already presented in the chapter 7.3, the recommendations of this case study have the potential to give direction to development of other Finnish stores' summer recruitment processes, too, as they base on the same model. Moreover, they incorporate ideas that are important to the operator regardless of the country or the specific recruitment process and could be used as a reference in its recruitment worldwide, too. In even broader scale, any recruitment process in any company can be expected to benefit from following the recommendations with some adjustments. The identified determinants of an applicant

experience's success in turn are even less process or company specific. They provide a useful framework for examining any recruitment experiences and developing the recruitment process accordingly. Also, the research, the case company and the case process have been described in a detailed manner which enables conducting similar research elsewhere. This means that the research framework appears very transferable while the development recommendations seem somewhat transferable.

As discussed in chapter 7.3, also the industry of recruitment in general can benefit from this case study's recommendations by applying them to different recruitment processes and recruitment overall. Similarly the developed research framework, the determinants of a recruitment experience's success, can be utilised for analysing and developing all kinds of recruitment experiences and processes as well as recruitment and selection in general. This means that both the recommendations – on an idea level – as well as the research framework are also generalizable.

However, the research results are not transferable or generalizable and it has not been the purpose of the research by any means. Conversely, this case study aimed at describing the specific qualities of the applicant experiences in this particular recruitment process. In the best case, the results represent the research population successfully – but nothing else. They are not capable of describing any other recruitment experiences or processes or providing knowledge about the general nature of them.

7.7   The thesis as a process and a project

My goals for the thesis were developing a new interesting approach to the industry of recruitment as well as implementing a useful case study with concrete development suggestions and use for the commissioning party. I am interested in working in the industry one day so I view this thesis as a great opportunity to demonstrate my knowledge and skills. Moreover, I also aimed at creating a thesis that I could be proud of and would get a good grade for.

The timetable for thesis was followed quite precisely. The thesis topic was agreed on already in January 2015 but the plan was to start writing it in the summer. I started to write the theory in the beginning of June and embarked the research in the end of August. By 16th October the research stage had been completed and, moreover, the preliminary development suggestions were presented to the human resources. After that I had a month for writing down all these before presenting the thesis. My personal goal was to present the thesis in the first week of November – that I missed only by a couple of weeks by presenting it finally on 16th Nov. The schedule was planned this loose because it was known

that I would also work at the same time throughout the project. The preliminary schedule versus the actual progress can be viewed in more detail in appendix 2. The planned schedule lacks the parts after the thesis presentation as during the time I was not fully aware of them. Furthermore, in the actual schedule everything related to development is merged into one as I came to learn within the process that there were no similarly clear stages in it as there are for example in research.

The whole thesis was based on cooperation with people: the thesis advisor from the school, the commissioner from the case company, 10 interviewees and three HR business partners all had a role to play. Coordinating all this cooperation brought an additional dimension of challenge to the work and required flexibility from time to time. However, I think I managed coordinating the project relatively independently. I kept the commissioner updated on my progress after every month or two and needed help from the human resources only when there was something I did not have authorisation to do on my own. Another challenge in the thesis was its novelty. Despite my search and knowing clearly what I wanted to do, I could not find any research model that I would have been completely satisfied with and I was unsure how much I could modify them without compromising reliability. That is where I needed my thesis advisor most and where she was of a particular big help.

All in all, I am very happy with my research and thesis and I believe that the commissioning party is as well (please see the feedback form in the appendix 3). However, there were a few things that could have been implemented better. As already mentioned a few times, the work sample of the unselected candidates should have been bigger for representing the sizes of the different applicant categories, too. There should have been also altogether more interviewees for better reliability. Moreover, even though I am proud of the multiangle analysis and development process used in the case study, they have on the other hand lead into repetition and length in the thesis. However, I think that this is a compromise I needed to do. Thorough presentation of every finding and quality justifications for every step and suggestion were the first priority as they enable using each part also separately – which makes the thesis more valuable for the commissioning party. Moreover, it demonstrates that I know what I am doing.

One more improvement could have been defining the recruitment process extent till the first day in the job, instead of reaching only to the job offer and acceptance. The research pointed to this demand as a big share of the comments – despite not being purposively generated – concerned this area in particular. However, the ability to gather also these

notions is one of the main advantages of the theme interview and the emerged opportunity was leveraged by including also these perceptions into the development stage.

7.8   Own learning

My biggest learning was combining both of my fields of study – human resources management and experience management – for this research. It opened also my eyes for understanding their relationship and relevance to each other more deeply. My biggest source of pride is the framework for the determinants of an applicant experience's success that I developed as the first step of the research. I believe that it has the potential to prove useful in many other purposes, too. I also learnt a lot about the use of different research methods in practice. I tried many of them before finding the current one that finally felt right.

Moreover, even though this is not my first individual project, research or even thesis, it is definitely the most comprehensive of them all. It has also involved more other people and fallen on a longer period of time than anything before. As a result, I have also obtained new skills related to project management and leading a research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The theme interview example question list

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Colour codes:

Recruitment and selection interview themes
Experience management interview themes
Overall experience theme
The selection methods theme

Haastattelukysymykset
<u>Demografiset kysymykset</u>

- Haettu työtehtävä
- Ikä
- Aiempi työnhaku-kokemus
- Aiempi työkokemus
- Koulutustausta

1. Kerro mahdollisimman tarkasti, mitä muistat rekrytointiprosessista?

2. Kerro mahdollisimman tarkasti kohtaamisistasi rekrytoijien kanssa?

- Entä muun henkilökunnan kanssa?

3. Mitä mieltä olet rekrytointiprosessin aikana saadun tiedon ja kommunikaation

- laadusta ja hyödyllisyydestä?
- aikataulusta?

4. Mitä mieltä olet kunkin rekrytointimenetelmän sopivuudesta? Mitä reaktioita ne herättivät itse tilanteessa?

5. Mitä muiden hakijoiden mukana olo valintapäivässä toi kokemukseesi?

6. Mitä erityistä huomioit tai muistat rekrytointiprosessin ajalta? Voi olla joko ristiriidassa muuhun kokemukseen tai muuten negatiivisesti tai positiivisesti silmiinpistävää.

- Näkö
- Kuulo
- Tunto
- Maku
- Haju

7. Mitkä asiat rekrytointiprosessin oikeudenmukaisuudessa epäilyttivät/

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mietityttävät eniten?

- Mikä tuntui oikeudenmukaiselta?

8. Mitä tunteita rekrytointiprosessi herätti? Kuvaile mahdollisimman tarkasti alusta loppuun.

9. Mitä odotit IKEAn rekrytointiprosessilta etukäteen?

- Miten kokemuksesi vastasi odotuksia?

10. Miltä osin rekrytointiprosessi sopi mielestäsi IKEA Oy:hyn?

- Entä haettuun työtehtävään?
- Entä työpaikkaan/ -yhteisöön?

11. Minkälainen kuva sinulla oli IKEAsta työnantajana ennen työpaikan hakua?

- Entä rekrytointiprosessin päätyttyä?
- Minkä asioiden uskot muuttaneen arviotasi?

12. Mitä arvelit omasta sopivuudestasi IKEAan ennen työpaikan hakua?

- Entä tietoa valinnasta odottaessasi?
- Minkä asioiden uskot muuttaneen aviotasi?

13. Voisitko sanoa, että rekrytointiprosessi oli sinulle elämys? Entä erityinen kokemus?

- Mikä olisi voinut tehdä rekrytointiprosessista sinulle (isomman/positiivisemman) elämyksen?

14. Mitkä muut kokemukset elämässäsi ovat olleet lähimpänä rekrytointiprosessiin osallistumista?

15. Jos olisit mukana ensi vuoden kesärekryn suunnitteluraadissa hakijoiden edustajana, mitä parannusehdotuksia antaisit?

Appendix 2. The planned thesis schedule versus the actual one

Planned thesis schedule

Phase	Time
Theory base	June - Aug 2015
Research planning	2nd half of Aug 2015
Research	1nd half of Sep 2015
Research results	2nd half of Sep 2015
Development	1st half of Oct 2015
Development suggestions	2nd half of Oct 2015
Bringing together & Fine-tuning	2nd half of Oct 2015
Thesis presentation	In the beg. of Nov

Actual thesis progress

Phase	Time
Theory base	June-Aug 2015
Research planning	2nd half of Aug 2015
Research	end of Aug - beg. of Oct 2015
Research results	1nd half of Oct 2015
Development	Oct 2015
Bringing together & Fine-tuning	1st half of Nov 2015
Thesis presentation	16th Nov 2015
Fixing	2nd half of Nov 2015
Final submission	27th Nov 2015

Appendix 3. Feedback from the commissioning party

Degree Programme in Experience and Wellness Management
Haaga Campus

Thesis author/s	Inka Rantanen

Thesis title	Improving the applicant experience in the summer recruitment process of a case company

Commissioning company or organisation

Commissioning party's contact person
and contact information

Thesis advisor at HAAGA-HELIA Advisor's e-mail address	Meri Vehkaperä
	meri.vehkapera@haaga-helia.fi

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1. Have you made use of the thesis results in some way? If yes, how?

Yes, we are using the findings to further develop the total recruitment process and to train managers.

2. How do you plan to make use of the thesis results in your future operations?

We will use the results to support process development and follow up. Also broader knowledge about participant´s experience in recruitment process gives us valuable insights to our customer´s perspective.

3. Please estimate how useful the thesis is for you:

Not useful at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ Very useful

Place an x in the relevant box

4. Please estimate how useful the thesis is for your field of business (e.g. it generated an innovation, operating practice, product or new information):

Not useful at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ Very useful

Place an x in the relevant box

5. Please give free feedback about the thesis process:

The process has gone forward smoothly. Inka has worked in proactive way informing me about the timeline and has taken time to report the findings in a way that it was easy to get deeper understanding about the topic and the development needs in our processes.

6. Other feedback to the student or HAAGA-HELIA: