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Job Search and Employment Quality in the Age of the Internet

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List of Abbreviations

ASA	Attraction-Selection-Attrition Framework	P-J Fit	Person-Job Fit
KSAs	Knowledge, Skills, Abilities	P-O Fit	Person-Organization Fit
PA	Principal-Agent	(I)	Interviewer
PAT	Principal-Agent Theory	(P)	Participant
P-E Fit	Person-Environment Fit		

1 Abstract

A 'good' match between employer and employee is of ever-increasing importance because it determines outcomes such as satisfaction, productivity or intention to leave. For that reason, a high employment match quality is of great relevance for the organization as well as the individual. In the light of imperfect information, various literature streams focus on how organizations can reduce the risk of non-optimal hiring choices. Yet, little academic attention has been devoted to the job seekers' perspective on attaining an informed job choice that ideally leads to a high employment match quality. Bridging this gap is of severe importance in the advent of the internet, as such promises to be a useful job search tool and source of information. By extending the Principal-Agent Theory with emphasis on the job seeker, this thesis pioneers in exploring how the internet contributes to the acquisition of potentially complete and accurate information that enables the job seeker to find the 'right' job and organization. Qualitative interviews with nine recently employed Graduates set ground for analyzing which information sources and content are used and considered helpful for identifying a high-quality match. The empirical investigation reveals that the internet has changed the job seeker's job search as it allows for new behaviors, increases the number of available formal sources (i.e. the scope of information) and decreases the effort with which relevant information can be detected. While the internet supplies useful information about organizational characteristics, job-specific information remains limited, so that the quality of the match may be improved but continues to be an 'experience good'. From this it can be drawn that organizations should make more and more accurate information easily accessible online and consider within their recruitment approach that job search has changed.

Keywords: Job Search, Incomplete Information, Perceptions of Fit, Employer-Employee Match, Employment Quality, Internet as Information Source

2 Introduction

2.1 Topic, Importance and Relevance

Most individuals engage in job search at some points in their lives, for instance when transitioning from education to work life or when changing jobs during active work life for various reasons such as job loss or pursuing better career opportunities (Kanfer, Kantrowitz, & Wanberg, 2001). The individual job seeker searches for vacancies on the labor market where organizations offer these job positions (The Economic Times, n.d.). Matching jobs with job seekers involves mutual decision-making processes, meaning that both, the individual job seeker and the recruiting organization, are engaged in making either a job or a hiring choice with regard to one another (Wanous, 1977). Specifically, the job seeker searches for a ‘good’ match with regard to his¹ needs and preferences, whereas the recruiting organization seeks for a ‘good’ match with respect to the required performance criteria (Caldwell & O’Reilly, 1990). However, the labor market characteristics hamper the respective searches and subsequent decision-making processes. That is because the market features imperfect information such that neither party has complete or certain information about the other (Jovanovic, 1979; McCall, 1970). Therefore, both gather information about the counterpart in order to make an informed hiring or job choice which translates ideally into a high employer-employee match quality (Barron & Bishop, 1985; McCall, 1970).

Most research exploring labor market dynamics resulting in job matches have taken an organizational perspective (e.g. Casella & Hanaki, 2008; Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005; Swider, Zimmerman, & Barrick, 2015; Wanous, 1980). By utilizing the Principal-Agent-Theory (PAT), previous research has investigated how organizations are able to limit the risk of making non-optimal hiring choices in consequence of screening, signaling or self-selection approaches (e.g. Cohen & Pfeffer, 1986; Delfgaauw & Dur, 2007; Moe, 1984). Conversely, there is little research that has explored how job seekers search actively for information in the light of imperfect information concerning jobs and organizations (Jansen, Jansen, & Spink, 2005). Likewise, researchers within the field of recruiting have been recently concerned with how organizations can make best use of the internet in their search for appropriate candidates (e.g. Cappelli, 2001; A. D. Smith & Rupp, 2004), while little attention has been devoted to how job

¹ for simplification, singular non-specific individuals or job seekers are referenced by masculine pronouns

seekers utilize the internet as a job search tool and source of information (Jansen et al., 2005). Investigating only the organizational perspective is a serious omission given three reasons: Firstly, especially in labor markets coping with labor shortages, organizations compete for qualified employees (Chapman et al., 2005; Lievens, Decaestecker, Coetsier, & Geirnaert, 2001) such that their recruitment efforts are likely to be driven by the goal of attracting applicants rather than by finding the 'right' candidate (Wanous, 1977, 1980). In consequence, they are assumed to reveal overly positive rather than accurate information regarding a vacant job or the organization itself (ibid.). Secondly, especially in well-functioning economies, job seekers are suggested to be concerned with finding the 'right' job at the 'right' organization rather than with finding a job per se (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999). Lastly, job mismatches hold disadvantages for the individual and the organization regardless of who perceives the mismatch because possible outcomes such as job dissatisfaction or low job performance are negative for both (Wanous, 1980). Therefore, in order to complement previous research, it is necessary to assume the job seeker perspective which allows for exploring how job seekers search for jobs and encounter imperfect information. Given the omnipresent use of the internet, one must pay particular attention to the information itself that the job seeker gathers online and how this information ultimately contributes to the success in finding the 'right' job at the 'right' organization, meaning a match of high quality (Wanous, 1977).

The motivation of the present study is to explore the job seeker's active information search behavior throughout the job search and thus, to extend the PAT. Thereby, the study enhances existing job search literature by particularly placing emphasis on the information which the job seeker gathers during his job search in the advent of the internet. Furthermore, this paper enriches existent fit literature by exploring how the job seeker's search for and acquisition of information available online affects the accuracy of pre-hire fit perceptions which are said to be important regarding the eventual match quality (Saks & Ashforth, 2002).

2.2 Problem Statement and Research Questions

Following the conceptualization of the job representing an 'experience good' (Jovanovic, 1979), a job seeker cannot know with certainty the quality of any employment before actually experiencing the job. On the basis of fit theory, an employer-employee match is of high quality if the individual perceives a person-job (P-J) as well as a person-organization (P-O) fit when being employed (Cable & Judge, 1996; Kristof, 1996; Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Prior to the employment, the individual engages in job search which comprises the identification of labor market alternatives and due to the

situation of imperfect information also the acquisition of information about these alternatives (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994). As the job seeker is assumed to be driven by the goal of finding not only employment but also a match of high quality, the job seeker relies on the gathered information specific to a job and organization (1) when assessing the potential quality, meaning when forming pre-hire perceptions of fit and (2) when making a job choice (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Furthermore, fit research has argued that the job seeker's pre-hire perceptions of fit will likely deviate from later on post-hire perceptions of fit if the information acquired has not been complete and/or accurate (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Against the backdrop of the internet being widely acknowledged as an influential tool for job search and source of information (e.g. Krueger, 2000; Kuhn & Skuterud, 2000; Van Rooy, Alonso, & Fairchild, 2003), the present paper explores whether the internet enables the job seeker to acquire complete and/or accurate information in order to minimize the risk of such deviation and hence, to increase the certainty that the match will be of high quality when experiencing it. However, in order to accredit the acquisition of potentially complete and/or accurate information to the availability and use of the internet, one needs to first contrast the job search of today with the job search of that time when the internet has not yet been used commercially. This argumentation leads to the following two research questions:

RQ1: How did the internet change the job seeker's job search?

RQ2: Did the use of the internet increase the employer-employee match quality?

2.3 Delimitation and Methodology

This paper focuses primarily on those job search activities which involve the acquisition of information prior to the attendance of job interviews. Such scope of investigation allows for paying particular attention to the acquisition of information before being able to obtain them through personal interactions with recruiters during job interviews. In consequence, this research is delimited such that it neither examines all behaviors and nor underlying cognitions in-depth throughout the entire job search process that lead ultimately to the final job choice. This being said, the paper does not elaborate, for instance on cognitive processes involved in the formation of fit perceptions which may trigger the job seeker to apply for certain positions.

The empirical part of the research utilizes a sample that comprises individuals who have recently graduated and just entered the labor market. Individuals of this cohort are found to heavily but

naturally incorporate technology and the internet as such in their everyday lives (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). Constraining the sample composition in such a way appears necessary because this study aims at investigating how the internet as search tool and source of information is used and how the potential use facilitates the formation of fit perceptions pre-hire being congruent with experienced fit perceptions later on. Hence, the examination requires individuals who are at least inclined to use the internet in their job search. This posits that job seekers who are affine in online information search are of interest in this study. Conclusively, the empirical examination is delimited to the chosen sample and thereby to the sample's generic demographical characteristics which constrains the applicability of the paper's findings to subgroups with similar characteristics.

In order to contribute to existing literature and thus probe the identified gaps in research, the empirical analysis demands sophisticated understanding of relevant theories, conceptualizations and findings from past research. Subsequently, the empirical investigation is built upon this theoretical groundwork and is dedicated to answering the proposed research questions. The research design involves a qualitative strategy wherein insights are derived from descriptions and explanations, concerning the job search and later on perceived quality of employment, that are given by the individuals within the sample. On that account, the data foundation is built upon primary collected data from semi-structured phone interviews which is complemented by secondary data touching upon pre-internet job search. A deductive analysis approach is pursued in order to explore both research questions.

2.4 Thesis Outline

The next chapter (Chapter 3) presents the literature review which comprises five main building blocks that altogether lay the theoretical foundation for this research project. The first two sections synthesize literature concerned with two major labor market theories, namely the concept of fit and job match quality (Chapter 3.1), as well as the Principal-Agent Theory (Chapter 3.2). The latter serves as a reference point for why PAT literature needs to be enriched by following an individual perspective. Subsequently, the concept of job search (Chapter 3.3) highlights such individual viewpoint and provides the theoretical ground to assess the first research question. The concept of fit as such and in consolidation with the context of job search (Chapter 3.4), provides the guiding principle for examining the second research question. Finally, the conception of the internet as information source establishes the theoretical groundwork for empirically examining its effects and relevance in the context of job search and match quality (Chapter 3.5).

The literature review is followed by the research methodology (Chapter 4). First, the empirical contribution is demonstrated by means of a detailed overview of the research design, quality assessment, data collection and procedure. Second, the research methodology concludes with a step-by-step outline of the analytical process and a subsequent presentation of the results.

Within the discussion in Chapter 5, the answers to the research questions are eventually presented, being followed by implications for research and practice. The final chapter (Chapter 6) concludes the present paper and acknowledges existent limitations. This lays a foundation for suggestions that future research should take into consideration.

The described outline of the thesis is visualized on the subsequent page (Figure 1).

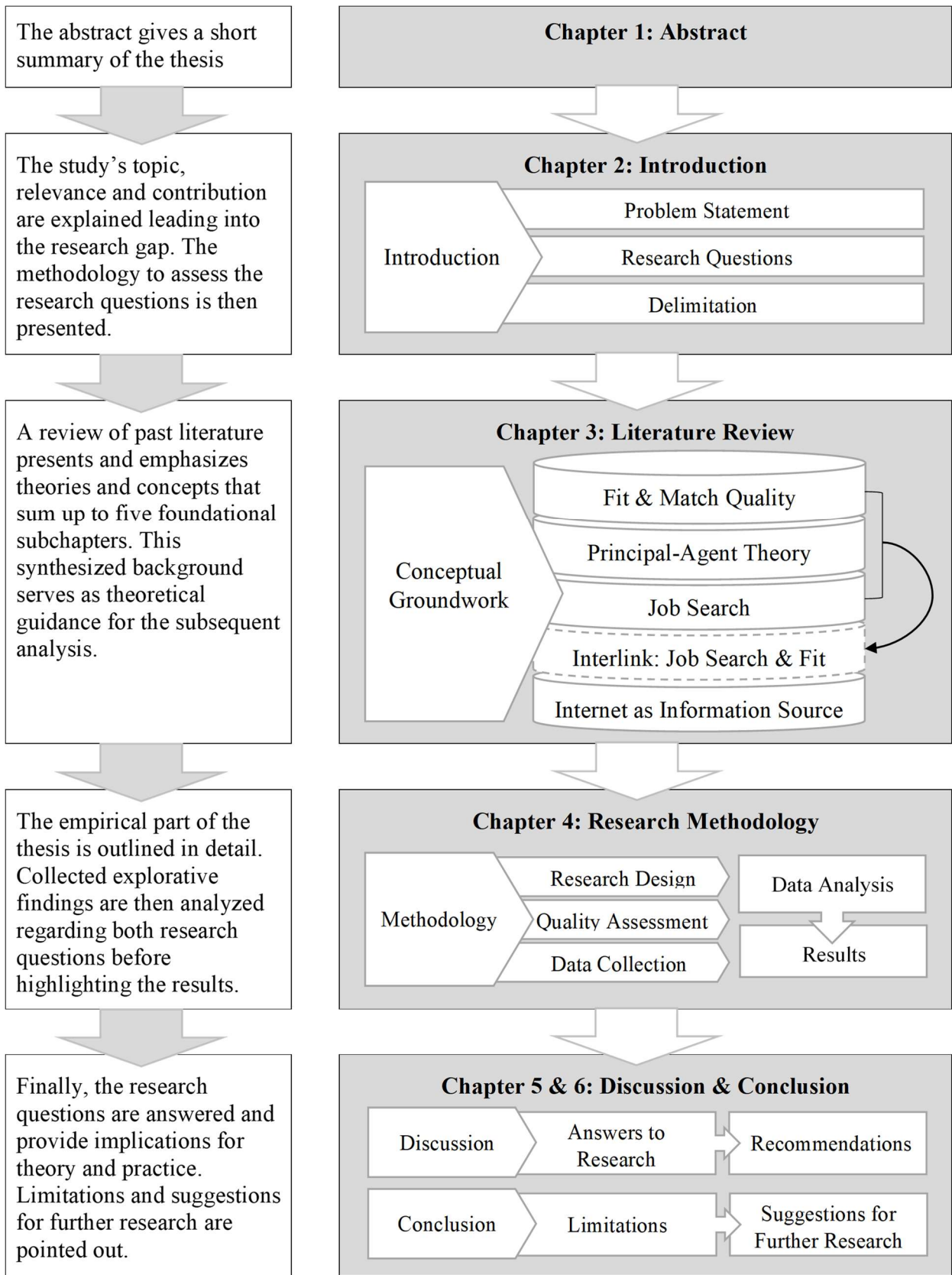


Figure 1: Thesis Outline

3 Literature Review

3.1 Concept of Fit and Job Match Quality

3.1.1 Person-Environment Fit

Researchers within the field of interactional psychology emphasize both, the individual and the environment, and explore their combined influence on the individual's attitudes and behavior in the given environment (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). When following the interactionist perspective, researchers agree that the quality of a match between a person and an environment depends on and differs among people (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Person-environment (P-E) fit theory draws on that interactionist perspective (ibid.). The theory premises that the quality of a job match is high if a P-E fit is existent. In an organizational context, the P-E fit is defined as "(...) the compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched" (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, p. 281). Hence, the core assumption of P-E fit theory is that neither environment nor person individually, but rather that their degree of compatibility or fit determines match quality and further affects attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Edwards et al., 1998).

Complementary and Supplementary P-E fit

To begin with, P-E fit theory necessitates that the corresponding characteristics of the environment and the individual are taken into account when evaluating their compatibility or fit (Edwards et al., 1998). Depending on the context, a high-quality match or a 'good fit', meaning that the relevant characteristics are compatible, can occur in two different instances, namely in case of a *complementary* or a *supplementary fit* (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Starting with the complementary fit, a match is of high quality when relevant characteristics of the person and the environment offset one another in such a way that both can function effectively (ibid.). Regarding the supplementary fit, a good fit exists when relevant characteristics of the person and the environment are similar to one another (ibid.). For either instance, studies have made use of various dimensions, such as values, preferences, personality traits, goals, attitudes, skills and needs, in order to operationalize relevant characteristics of the person and the environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Objective and Subjective P-E fit

P-E fit can be measured by means of an indirect or a direct approach which results in the distinction between 'objective' or 'actual' fit and 'subjective' or 'perceived' fit, respectively (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). With regard to the objective or actual P-E fit, studies assess the relevant person and environment characteristics separately and then compare them empirically to identify a fit (Kristof, 1996). Adding to this, Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) argue that subjective fit is also the result of an indirect assessment. Specifically, they contend that the subjective fit still involves a separate assessment and explicit comparison of person and environment characteristics, yet the source for determining the characteristics is the single person. Thus, they are particular about differentiating between subjective and perceived fit. Nevertheless, they recognize that most scholars in the fit domain use the terminology of subjective and perceived fit interchangeably. This being said, perceived fit, and often also subjective fit, refers to a direct assessment. Here, the person interprets and judges his compatibility or fit with a certain environment (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof, 1996). In other words, the person does not report on his and the environment's characteristics separately but rather on his holistic interpretation of the characteristics in the light of fit (Judge & Cable, 1997).

Ideally, the perceived or subjective P-E fit equals the objective P-E fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). However, two aspects affect the accuracy of the person's perceived P-E fit and hence determine the degree of variation from the objective fit. The first aspect is the person's 'contact to reality', which is the extent to which the person encounters and interprets the environment in realistic terms (Edwards et al., 1998). The second aspect is the level of accuracy of the person's self-assessment, which is the extent to what the person's perceptions of his own characteristics corresponds with the objectively existing characteristics of that person (ibid.). Large parts of fit literature suggest that the objective and the individual's perceived P-E fit should be related with one another because they argue that both measures appraise the same construct, in particular P-E fit (Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof, 1996). This presumed relationship is justified theoretically as well as empirically. The former refers to, for instance Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework and Chatman's (1989) interactionist model of person-organization fit alike. Such theoretical frameworks propose that by virtue of naturally occurring attraction, selection and socialization processes the individual's characteristics are objectively similar to the environment's characteristics (i.e. which are comprised by a group of people) and therefore, they posit that the individual also

perceives such similarity or fit. The latter refers to empirical findings which indicate that, for instance, objective person-organization (P-O) fit is related to subjective or perceived P-O fit because the individual's perceived fit has been found to mediate the relationship between objective fit and attitudinal outcome variables, such as organizational attraction (Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997). This has led scholars to conjecture that the perception of P-E fit which is expressed by the individual reflects his holistic judgement or interpretation of the perceived person and environment (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006).

Despite that many researchers argue for a relationship between objective and perceived fit measures, still others highlight that in a pre-hire context the individual's perception of fit is likely to deviate significantly from the objective fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The explanation reads as follows: In a pre-hire context, the individual forms fit perceptions regarding a specific environment, here an organization, which he has not experienced yet. Thus, in order for the perceived fit to be congruent with the objective fit, the person must have complete and accurate information about the environment which he would need to incorporate in the formation of his perceived fit (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey, & Edwards, 2000). Yet, the labor market is characterized by imperfect information (Jovanovic, 1979; McCall, 1970) in such a manner that organizations seek to limit the availability of objective information that could be interpreted negatively (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011; Wanous, 1980). Moreover, the individual has only limited information processing capacity (March & Simon, 1958) and therefore may not be able to incorporate all relevant information in the evaluation and formation of fit. Edwards et al. (2006) go even further in their argumentation. Specifically, they have re-examined the relationships between the indirectly and directly assessed P-E fit measures and conclude that these relationships are only of modest nature, if they are existent at all. In consequence of such finding, they infer that the perception of P-E fit, stated by the individual, is likely to be amenable to influences of various cognitions and methodological aspects involved in the various studies, such that the perceived P-E fit may likely not only combine the individual's perception of person and environment but also incorporate meaning beyond that.

Judge and Cable (1997) have criticized previous research for focusing on objective fit only, and thereby neglecting the individual's perception of fit. This can be seen as a limitation in fit research, especially in the case where objective and perceived fit may deviate greatly. Generally speaking and grounded in interactional psychology, P-E fit is believed to exert any kind of influence on the

individual only if the individual perceives this fit with the environment (Caplan, 1987; Endler & Magnusson, 1976). Hence, interactionists agree on fit being a psychological variable which matters only when perceived by the person (Edwards et al., 2006). To sum up, particularly in a pre-hire context, it is necessary to include the individual's perception of fit in the analysis when exploring an individual's decision-making process and the resulting attitudinal or behavioral outcomes.

3.1.2 Person-Job Fit and Person-Organization Fit

Two types of P-E fit are explored repeatedly in fit research, namely person-job (P-J) fit and person-organization (P-O) fit (e.g. Cable & Judge, 1996; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). It is important to consider these types separately because research suggests that they result from different antecedents (Cable & Judge, 1996) and are empirically proven to predict attitudes and behaviors in a unique manner (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof-Brown, 2000). Hence, these findings indicate that P-J and P-O fit are distinct, yet related concepts.

Person-Job Fit

P-J fit addresses the compatibility between a person's characteristics and the job's characteristics (Kristof, 1996). P-J fit is mostly conceptualized as a complementary fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Thus, a high-quality match between a person and a job refers to a situation where the person's abilities meet the requirements of the job and the job fulfills the person's needs (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). It follows that two dominant P-J fit operationalizations can be found in research: The first is the *demands-abilities fit* which assesses the match between the employee's knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) and the requirements specific to the job (i.e. demands) (Chatman, 1989). The demands-abilities fit addresses performance criteria (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), which is why it is typically utilized by researchers who investigate processes such as applicant attraction or personnel selection from an organization's viewpoint (Kristof-Brown, 2000; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). One way to assess the complementary fit between the person and the task requirements specific to the job is by means of the profile-comparison process which utilizes Q-methodology (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). One could say, that this method of measuring P-J fit corresponds best with an indirect assessment and thus results in an objective fit measure, because in this specific case, scholars are interested in the individual characteristics (i.e. KSAs) and evaluate these in terms of fit with the job requirements that are 'objectively' needed in order to perform well in the specific job (ibid.).

Regarding the second operationalization of P-J fit, namely *needs-supplies fit*, this form of P-J fit displays the extent to which the job provides - or supplies - the employee with certain rewards in return for performing the job that fulfill the employee's needs which are primarily psychological desires, preferences, values or goals (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Edwards et al., 2006). Rewards can comprise training, pay or benefits (Cable & DeRue, 2002) but also interesting and challenging work, growth opportunities, recognition from peers or overall positive working conditions (Jurgensen, 1978; Powell, 1984). Operationalizing P-J fit as needs-supplies fit appears useful for studies that explore cognitive processes resulting in organizational choice or attitudinal outcomes, from the individual's perspective. This suggestion is supported by several studies which have incorporated needs-supplies fit in theories of well-being or satisfaction (e.g. Caplan, 1987; Harrison, 1978; Porter, 1961, 1962). Additionally, needs-supplies fit is argued to be important when taking an individual's viewpoint because the search for and acceptance of jobs is extrinsically motivated by the anticipation of rewards in return for performing the job (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

Person-Organization Fit

P-O fit highlights the compatibility between the individual's and the organization's characteristics (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Research in the P-O fit domain has viewed compatibility mainly in terms of similarity, thus supplementary fit (*ibid.*). The focus on similarity originates from theories of interpersonal attraction positing that the degree of similarity between individuals determines their attraction to one another (Byrne, 1971; Moreland, 1985). Likewise, in an organizational context, Schneider's (1987) ASA framework posits that the similarity of an individual outside an organization with the people inside ascertains the outside individual's attraction to that organization.

There are different dimensions used for operationalizing P-O fit. Some studies assess supplementary P-O fit in terms of goal- or personality-congruence (e.g. Ryan & Kristof-Brown, 2003; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). However, there are arguments against using personality traits to determine congruence or fit (Chatman, 1989). In particular, assessing people and organizations equally based on personality traits anthropomorphizes organizations and neglects organizations and people being two different phenomena (*ibid.*). In addition, literature concerned with interpersonal interaction theory points out that similarity in personality traits among employees, specifically in the context of supervisor-subordinate relationships, does not always yield in more positive attitudinal or behavioral outcomes when compared with dissimilarity in personality traits (Glomb &

Welsh, 2005). Despite, most scholars in the fit domain agree to assess P-O fit in respect of value congruence (e.g. Cable & DeRue, 2002; Chatman, 1989, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). Consistent with Chatman's (1989) model of person-organization fit, P-O fit is then defined as "(...) the congruence between the norms and values of organizations and the values of persons" (p.339). The individual's values comprise enduring beliefs that determine the person's preference for specific behaviors or a final state (Chatman, 1989, 1991). Organization's values constitute a value system that reasons the appropriate behaviors of the organizational members and further justifies the functioning of and activities within the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1978). The reason for viewing values as superior to personality traits in determining P-O fit is threefold. Firstly, values are fundamental to and characteristic for both, the organization and the individual, because they significantly affect the individual's attitudes and behaviors inside the organization (Chatman, 1989, 1991). Secondly, values are relatively stable, thus enduring (ibid.). Lastly, values of individuals and organizations can be directly compared with one another (Chatman, 1989). That is because organizational values result from and thus represent shared values of the majority of organizational members (Chatman, 1991). The system of shared values is essential in organizational culture (O'Reilly et al., 1991). One can also find the link between P-O fit and organizational culture in the respective literature, as the organization's culture is said to decide about how well an individual fits into an organization (O'Reilly et al., 1991; Rousseau, 1991). As aforementioned, organizations traditionally assess performance criteria of potential job candidates and thus implicitly utilize the concept of P-J fit in their personnel selections. Yet, especially when organizations are able to make a hiring choice among several qualified candidates, they likely make use of non-job-related criteria. Thus, they may incorporate the level of congruence between the individual's values and the organization's values in their decision-making (Chatman, 1991). Nevertheless, a study examining P-O and P-J fit perceptions of organizational representatives who have been conducting job interviews shows that the perceived P-J fit, in particularly demands-abilities fit, determines hiring recommendations more strongly than perceived P-O fit does (Kristof-Brown, 2000).

3.1.3 Employment Outcomes of Fit

Several researchers have investigated the differences between P-O fit and P-J fit in predicting outcomes (e.g. Cable & DeRue, 2002; Cable & Judge, 1996). This being said, it has been proven

that an employee's perceived P-O fit with the organization relates most strongly to organizational outcome variables (Cable & DeRue, 2002). Notably, the employee's perceived P-O fit predicts his organizational identification, perceived organizational support as well as citizenship behavior² in form of extra-role activities (ibid.). Additionally, empirical findings show that P-O fit predicts job satisfaction and organizational commitment better than P-J fit when operationalized as demands-abilities fit (Cable & Judge, 1996). However, others provide contrary evidence, in which perceived P-J fit, in terms of needs-supplies fit, strongly influences attitudinal outcomes, namely job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The latter insight stands to reason, because one would expect that employees base their level of job satisfaction on the fit between the rewards, they receive in return for performing the job, and their personal needs, rather than on the fit between their values and those of the organization (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz Jr, 1995).

On the downside, low levels of P-J fit have been associated negatively with behavioral outcomes such as job performance (Wanous, 1980). One step further, the P-J fit is negatively related with an individual's intention to leave an organization (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Similarly, the ASA framework proposes that those employees who perceive a mismatch between their values and the values of the organization, constituted by the remaining employees, will leave the organization as a consequence thereof (Schneider, 1987). This has been supported, as individuals' perceived P-O fit with an organization has been found to be related with their intentions to leave the organization (e.g. Cable & DeRue, 2002).

Conclusively, a 'good' fit or high employment match quality should be ensured if both, a P-J as well as a P-O fit are present. The discussed relationships between the different types of fit and the various attitudinal and behavioral outcomes demonstrate that a good fit is desirable for the organization as well as for the individual employee. Conversely, a low match quality adversely affects both, the individual and the organization (Cable & Judge, 1996; Wanous, 1980). It has to be considered that before organizational entry, none can be certain about the accuracy of their fit perceptions with regard to a potential match with the respective other. Jovanovic (1979) highlights

² Definition: "(...) prosocial acts that are not directly specified by an individual's job description and that primarily benefit the organization as opposed to the individual (e.g. volunteering to help peers)." (p.876)

this circumstance by classifying a job as an ‘experience good’. This implies that the true match quality can only be known by the organization and the individual when the job has been experienced, meaning in a post-hire context. However, in a pre-hire context, the organization and the individual rely on available information in order to form beliefs and perceptions about the compatibility between them (Wanous, 1977).

Traditionally, organizational behavior literature has been mostly concerned with the organization’s perspective, and thus in a pre-hire context with how the organization can ensure to select and ultimately hire the ‘right’ candidate (e.g. Lievens, Van Dam, & Anderson, 2002; Newell, 2005). On that note, the following section discusses the Principal-Agent Theory which attends to the obstacles the principal, typically the organization, faces not only in a pre-hire but also in a post-hire context. This is continued with the theory’s solution approaches that aim to reduce arising problems.

3.2 Principal-Agent Theory

3.2.1 General Theory

In the 1970s, the foundational works of Ross (1973) and Mitnick (1973) have theorized the phenomenon of principal-agent (PA) relationships (Fayezi, O’Loughlin, & Zutshi, 2012; Mitnick, 2011; Perrow, 1986). The *Principal-Agent Theory (PAT)*, or simply *Agency Theory*, has been examined and applied in various literature streams ranging from political science, sociology, to organizational behavior or human resource research (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973; Shapiro, 1987). This is caused by the fact of its general applicability, since the PAT is used to explain and analyze the behaviors and actions of two parties which are in a contractual relationship with one another in a context of information asymmetry, uncertainty and/or risk (Arrow, 1985; Dawson, Watson, & Boudreau, 2010; Husted, 2007; Pavlou, Liang, & Xue, 2007). The mentioned contract, which is in the process of being formed or already existent, is used rather metaphorically. This means that it is not necessarily present explicitly via a formal document, but instead may exist implicitly as a social relationship (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; R. Rees, 1985). Either way, the contract specifies what the two parties are supposed to do in order to create a supposedly optimal outcome for both (Arrow, 1985; Perrow, 1986). It follows that the PAT is employable to a pre-contractual context as well as to a post-contractual context.

The following describes the relationship between *principal* and *agent* in terms of why and how the relationship comes into existence and how it is characterized. The principal seeks to realize certain

interests which he is not capable of achieving with his current resources. Therefore, the principal needs to rely on another party, which is the agent (Braun & Guston, 2003). The PA relationship comes into existence when the agent is engaged by the principal to further the principal's interest, and thus to perform on the principal's behalf. In return for his performance, the agent receives resources or benefits, such as decision-making authority or (non-) monetary rewards (Braun & Guston, 2003; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Various relationships between two parties can be characterized in such a manner, for instance between employer and employee, buyer and supplier, or lawyer and client, which is, again, why the PAT is applicable in a wide array of research fields (Eisenhardt, 1989; Harris & Raviv, 1978).

The remaining paragraphs discussing the PAT refer to the employer-employee relationship as this paper is concerned with job search and employment quality, representing a pre- and post-contractual employer-employee context, respectively. Labor economics and organizational literature typically represent the principal by the organization and the agent by the employee(s) (Cyert & March, 1963; H. A. Simon, 2002; Williamson, 1964). In a pre-contractual context, the principal (i.e. organization) seeks out for job candidates who bring along the necessary skills and abilities to act in the organization's interest (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987; Wanous, 1977). The agent (i.e. job seeker) might provide the sought skillset and is looking for an employer that satisfies his own interests and needs (Perrow, 1986; Wanous, 1980). In the post-contractual relationship, the principal delegates tasks to the agent and in consequence relies on the agent to perform the tasks in his interest (Eisenhardt, 1989).

3.2.2 Basic Assumptions of the PAT

The PAT is based on several assumptions that lay the foundation for why problems, so called agency problems, arise in PA relationships.

Firstly, the principal and agent are equally defined as being self-interested entities with incongruent goals (Eisenhardt, 1989). Especially, since both are assumed to be utility maximizers with diverging goals, there is a good reason to believe that one party does not necessarily act in the best interest of the other (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976). This is supported by the behavioral assumption that human-beings act in a way that can be described as "self-interest seeking with guile" (Williamson, 1975, p. 6). In consequence, they are expected to behave opportunistically by following their individual preferences in order to advance their own interests (Noreen, 1988).

The second assumption is the circumstance of asymmetric information. Most research claims information asymmetry as favoring the agent because he would possess more information than the principal (Waterman & Meier, 1998). More precisely, the agent is better informed about his own skills, abilities, performances and goals than the principal is (Pavlou et al., 2007). Due to the fact, that such information imbalance is intrinsically hidden, they are unobservable for the principal (Steinle, Schiele, & Ernst, 2014). The lack of transparency to the disfavor of the principal leads to two conditions: For one, he faces uncertainty and risk as he is not fully informed about the agent's characteristics, actions or goals neither in a pre-contractual nor post-contractual context (Eisenhardt, 1989). For the other, combined with the first assumption that principal and agent have diverging goals, the asymmetric information favoring the agent facilitates his opportunistic behavior (Steinle et al., 2014).

3.2.3 Agency Problems

Based on the aforementioned assumptions, the three arising agency problems are *Adverse Selection*, *Moral Hazard* and *Hold Up* (Eisenhardt, 1989; Pavlou et al., 2007). The former occurs ex ante contractual relationships, whilst the latter appear ex post (Pavlou et al., 2007).

Beginning with Adverse Selection, also termed as 'hidden information' (Arrow, 1985), Pavlou, Liang and Xue (2007) provide a short and clear definition which highlights the ex-ante role in PA relationships and can be applied to various socio-economic contexts:

“Hidden Information [Adverse Selection] refers to the pre-contractual misrepresentation of the seller [agent]’s true attributes (seller [agent] quality uncertainty), and offering false information on products [skills and abilities] (product [skills and ability] quality uncertainty).” (Pavlou et al., 2007, p. 1)

Shifting the focus towards the employer-employee relationship, Adverse Selection has become a predominant theme in literature that generally focuses on labor market and employment (e.g. Greenwald, 1986; Levine, 1991; Spence, 1973). Having in mind the assumption of asymmetric information, the principal cannot completely verify information or intangible attributes about the agent, such as person characteristics, skills, and abilities before employment (Eisenhardt, 1989). This is consistent with Jovanovic's (1979) conceptualization of the job being an 'experience good'. In the context prior an established contractual relationship, Adverse Selection may arise when the organization has to make a hiring choice and cannot distinguish high quality agents from low

quality agents (Pavlou et al., 2007). That is because, the agents are assumed to exploit this situation by either hiding or overstating certain information about their characteristics. The agents are motivated to behave opportunistically in order to increase their probability of being selected and thus hired by the principal (Dadbeh & Mogharebi, 2013; Fayezi et al., 2012).

The agency problem *Moral Hazard* appears after a contractual relationship has been formed. Moral hazard, also termed as ‘hidden action’ (Arrow, 1985), occurs when “(...) the agent can take an action unobserved by the principal (...)” (Laffont & Martimort, 2002, p. 12), which is largely due to the complex or intangible nature of the task (Fayezi et al., 2012). In other words, the agent’s action is difficult to observe for the principal, which allows the agent to not pursue the agreed-upon effort (Eisenhardt, 1989; Fayezi et al., 2012). The theory asserts that the agent is inclined to act opportunistically, which facilitates post-contractual shirking, or even contract default harming the employer or organization (Fayezi et al., 2012; Pavlou et al., 2007).

Hold-Up comes into existence when ex ante investments, for instance costs induced by recruitment or training, have to be made even though ex post outcomes are hard to specify. Unless contracts are perfect, this unknown specificity makes the investor (or investing organization) vulnerable to the ex post exploitation by agents (Ellingsen & Johannesson, 1999). In other words, the principal does not know ex ante how the agent will behave when being employed (Dietl, 1993). The agent’s intention is also referred to as ‘hidden intention’, because he might have goals and interests diverging from the principal’s goals, yet they are not known by the principal (Saam, 2007). But due to irreversible investments (‘sunk costs’) or potentially exclusive skills of the agent, the principal is dependent on the agent and cannot easily resign from the contract (ibid.).

3.2.4 Possible Solution Approaches

This paper is concerned with the individual’s perspective such that it explores on the one side, how the job seeker searches for employment and on the other side, how the information which the individual acquires during search affects the employment quality when the relationship is experienced. With an emphasis on the pre-hire acquisition of information, special interest lies on the ex-ante agency problem Adverse Selection. In order to effectively limit this kind of opportunistic behavior, the PAT suggests several pre-hire solution approaches (Steinle et al., 2014). Each approach causes ‘agency costs’ because the principal or agent needs to sacrifice resources such as time, expenses, and/or effort in order to decrease information asymmetry and thus the

possibility of opportunistic behavior (Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Spence, 1973). Accordingly, one differentiates between principal-initiated agency costs, namely *Screening*³ or *Self-Selection*⁴, and agent-initiated agency costs, referred to as *Signaling* (Pavlou et al., 2007). Being concerned with the individual's perspective, Signaling is further discussed.

The solution approach Signaling originates from signaling theory, which addresses problems of information asymmetry between two parties (Connelly et al., 2011; Morris, 1987).

“In signaling, the party with the information advantage, (...) conveys meaningful information about itself to the other party.” (Dawson et al., 2010, p. 147)

By the publication of devices, superior or ‘true’ quality is communicated to the opposite (Akerlof, 1970; Morris, 1987). In other words, Signaling resolves the distortion of pre-contractual information because it transforms non-verifiable attributes into verifiable measures, for instance in terms of diplomas, certifications and the alike that demonstrate high or advanced skills and abilities (Connelly et al., 2011; Steinle et al., 2014).

As aforementioned, solution approaches induce costs: direct monetary costs or indirect costs (Spence, 1973). With regard to Signaling, direct costs are monetary expenses such as university tuition or certification fees. Indirect costs are mainly linked with time and effort that the individual dedicates to present the qualities as well as to show interest (Spence, 1973, 2002). Based on this, the theoretical assumption is made that the individual initiates signals only if their benefits exceed their costs (Bird & Smith, 2005). However, Connelly et al. (2011) raise the objection, that the individual most likely communicates only positive information, while keeping negative information private. In addition, Kirmani and Rao (2000) claim that those individuals possessing high-quality attributes are more eager to share information opposed to those having low-quality attributes. This is reasoned in the costs of Signaling which should not outweigh the benefits of doing so (Bird & Smith, 2005). Therefore, the information reliability and quality of signals is subject to manipulation by the

³ Definition: “The identification of (..) qualities we call *screening*, and devices that sort our *commodities* (individuals) according to their qualities we call *screening devices* (...)” (Stiglitz, 1975, p. 283)

⁴ Definition: “Individuals are often screened by means of their choice from a menu of options offered by employers; such a device is referred to as a self-selection mechanism and causes an individual to reveal information about himself by his choice behavior.” (Levinthal, 1988, p. 43 f.)

individual (Spence, 1973). Having said this, whether the information is positive, negative or useful, also depends on the receiver's, hence the organization's evaluation of the signals (Connelly et al., 2011).

3.2.5 Critics and Extension: Job Seeker Perspective

In the context of the employer-employee relationship, the majority of organizational behavior or information economics literature emphasizes the organization's (i.e. the principal's) perspective and disadvantaged position (e.g. Akerlof, 1970; Arrow, 1985; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Wilson, 1980). However, the PA relationship and the risk of opportunistic behavior is more of a bilateral nature (Perrow, 1986). Additionally, employment comprises mutual decision-making processes, wherein the organization makes a hiring choice and the job seeker makes a job choice (Wanous, 1977). In a pre-contractual context, only few scholars recognize that asymmetric information can also exist to the disfavor of the job seeker (e.g. Perrow, 1986; Shapiro, 2005; Steinle et al., 2014) and point out that the job seeker, too, searches actively for information in order to lower the risk associated with the situation of uncertainty (Granovetter, 1974; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Logically, the organization has an information advantage regarding the job's or its own attributes. Various theories, such as expectancy theory, self-image theory or P-E fit theory outline that the job and/or organization attributes or characteristics matter to the job seeker such that they influence his decision-making process and thereby his ultimate job choice (Wanous, 1977). Kirmani and Rao (2000) add to the discussion that organizations are also able to actively send signals that may affect the job seeker's job choice. Accordingly, Celani and Singh (2011) set signaling in the context of applicant attraction:

“Signaling theory (...) is commonly used to explain how applicant attraction to a recruiting organization may, in part, can be influenced by information, or signals, about an organization's characteristics revealed during recruitment activities.” (Celani & Singh, 2011, p. 223)

In tight labor markets, especially those that match individuals with jobs requiring rare KSAs, organizations compete for qualified job candidates to fill their vacant job positions and thus are forced to place importance on their recruitment activities (Barber, 1998; Munk, 1998). In this context, organizations are shown to be primarily motivated by attracting new employees (Cable et al., 2000; Dineen & Soltis, 2011) and are found to communicate overly positive, rather than more realistic information about the job and organization (Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993; Wanous, 1977). Perrow (1986) points out that the employer might even misrepresent himself – be it

intentionally or unintentionally - to a potential applicant, in terms of employer characteristics and thus leaves the job seeker in a disadvantaged position. Nevertheless, during job search and before being hired, the job seeker has no other option than to rely on available information about the jobs and organizations. Conclusively, a shortcoming of the PAT is entailed by emphasizing the organization's viewpoint and thereby neglecting the job seeker's perspective of asymmetric information in the labor market (Chatman, 1991).

Assuming that the job seeker has applied for and accepted a job position based on distorted beliefs resulting from inaccurate information, he may experience lower job match quality after organizational entry compared to the match quality he has anticipated before entry (Cable & Judge, 1996). Thus, not only the organization can be impaired by the Adverse Selection, but also the individual can suffer from a non-optimal job choice. This is why the PAT should be extended by the job seeker's perspective, wherein the job seeker is disadvantaged by asymmetric information regarding organization and job attributes and the organization may behave opportunistically in order to achieve the goal of applicant attraction. Specifically, the job seeker not only signals his own qualities, but also actively tries to reduce the information asymmetry by pursuing research about jobs and organizations (Figure 2). The job seeker's perspective is well represented in literature on job search and job search behavior (Boswell, Zimmerman, & Swider, 2012), which is reviewed in the next section.

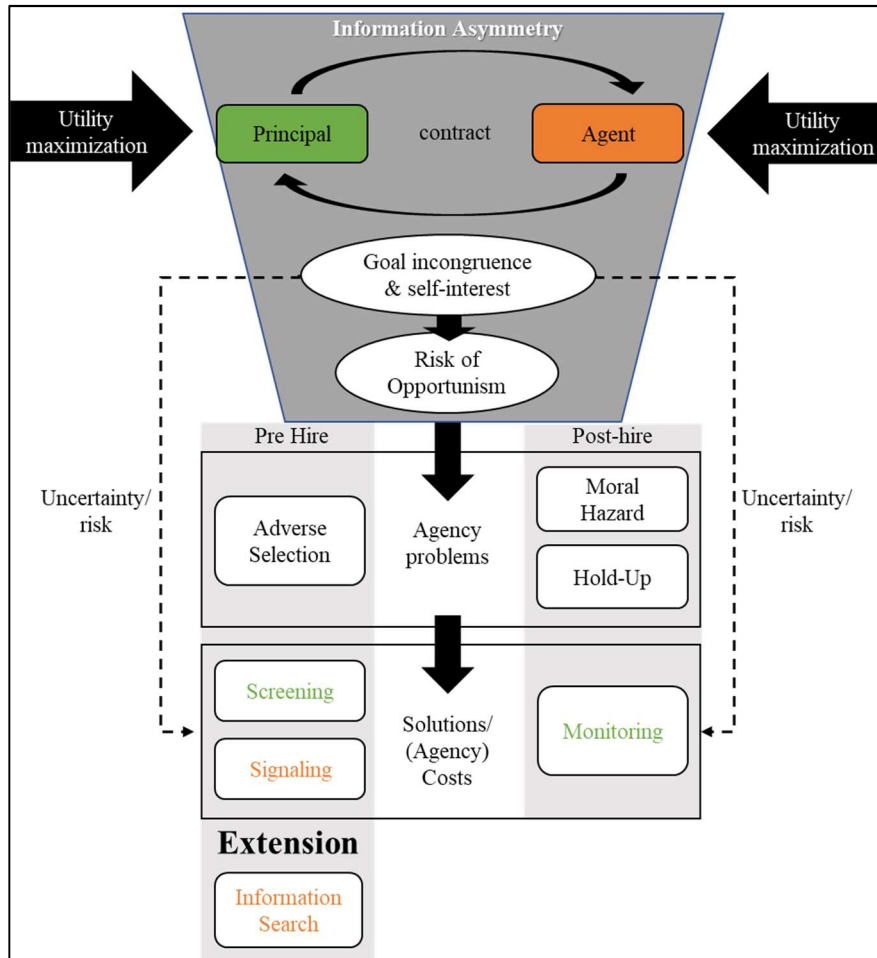


Figure 2: Graphical Depiction of the PAT with Extension

3.3 Job Search

3.3.1 Conceptualization of Job Search

Following the job seeker perspective permits a focus on job seekers' behaviors and allows for examining relationships between job search antecedents, job search behavior and employment outcomes (Kanfer et al., 2001). Job search comprises specific behaviors that enable the job seeker to identify labor market alternatives, to gather information about these in order to generate employment opportunities, and to actively pursue some of these opportunities further (Barber et al., 1994).

Based on self-regulation theory, job search is conceptualized as a motivated and self-regulated process wherein the job search behavior is activated through the identification of and commitment to pursuing an employment goal (Kanfer et al., 2001). Self-regulated processes are conceptualized as "(...) processes, internal and/or transactional, that enable an individual to guide his/her goal-directed activities over time and across changing circumstances" (Károlyi, 1993, p. 25).

Accordingly, Kanfer et al. (2001) describe job search behaviors or activities as being purposive, volitional, self-managed and dynamic, as well as being directed by the goal of finding a job. Thus, it is the job seeker who performs self-regulation activities which include goal setting, planning, monitoring and progress evaluation in respect of the goal achievement (Turban, Stevens, & Lee, 2009; Van Hooft, Wanberg, & van Hoye, 2012). The motivated and self-regulated nature of job search is reasoned in the employment goal being a “distal goal”. A goal is referred to as distal if its pursuit requires activities that are low on intrinsic motivation and that are high on extrinsic motivation: The former refers to activities that are typically not considered as fun or pleasurable, whereas the latter relates to the outcome that is considered as important and valued. A process involving such activities, and which can stretch over a relatively long period of time, needs self-regulation in order to ensure that the goal can be achieved eventually (Van Hooft et al., 2012).

Boswell et al. (2012) point out that job search behavior is context-specific. They differentiate between three types of job seekers: *New Entrants* who look for their first jobs, *Job Losers* who have lost their previous jobs and search for new ones and lastly, *Job Switchers* who engage in job search behavior while being employed. It follows that the different types of job seekers may vary in their job search goal which they pursue. This being said, most job search research focuses on the objective of finding a job (e.g. Blau, 1994; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1999). Yet, others state different possible reasons that may activate job search behavior, such as being informed of alternative job opportunities and seeking for and obtaining leverage against the current employer, for instance with regard to the current level of salary (Boswell, Boudreau, & Dunford, 2004; Hoye & Saks, 2008). Moreover, job search behavior is empirically shown to vary with different job search goals (Saks, 2005), which supports that job search behavior is specific to the context in which the job search takes place. This paper focuses on job search behavior that is directed by the goal of finding a job. That is because especially when considering recent graduates, it stands to reason that finding a job is or has been the main goal driving job search behavior (Saks & Ashforth, 2002).

3.3.2 Antecedents of Job Search Behavior

Job search literature often explores how individual differences impact job seekers’ search for and pursuit of jobs and also their job search success, for instance when considering the employment status at a certain point of time (Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Turban et al., 2009; Wanberg et al., 1999). This being said, attention has been given to psychological variables such as *personality traits*,

expectancies and *self-evaluations* as well as to situational antecedents such as *motives* and *social variables* (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Wanberg et al., 1999).

Personality traits: Results from a meta-analysis suggest that a job seeker's personality traits relate to not only job search behavior per se, but also to job search success, hence to the achievement of the job search goal (Kanfer et al., 2001). Specifically, the findings show that extraversion followed by conscientiousness affect job search behavior most strongly (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg, Watt, & Rumsey, 1996). Both personality traits play an essential role in self-regulatory processes because they impact the effectiveness of the self-regulatory activities and hence the overall process (Turban et al., 2009). Extraversion refers to the extent to which an individual is optimistic, energetic, and assertive, among others (ibid.). On the other side, conscientiousness has been associated with the degree to which an individual strives for achievement, is self-disciplined and reliable (ibid.). Additionally, extraversion relates positively to positive emotions which appear to matter more than the performance of self-regulation activities in later stages of the job search process, namely when job search success depends on second interviews or job offers received (ibid.).

Expectancies and Self-evaluation: Expectancies, such as optimism and locus of control, are thought to predict job search behavior because of their effect on coping mechanisms, either problem- or emotion-focused, that may be needed during the job search process (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg, 1997). Starting with optimism, the relationship with job search behavior has not been found to be significant in Kanfer's (2001) meta-analysis. Continuing with locus of control, Wanberg (1997) states that job seekers who perceive to be in control over finding a job are likely to be engaged more in job search behavior. Contrary, Saks and Ashforth (1999) find that job seekers with low perceived control were more probable to search more intensely and actively, a result that has been hard to interpret. Shifting towards the self-evaluation variables, research has paid particular attention to self-esteem and job search self-efficacy (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1999). Starting with self-esteem, despite several researchers arguing for a relationship between self-esteem and job search behavior (Ellis & Taylor, 1983), this relationship, has not or only been moderately confirmed by other studies (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1999). Yet, the job seeker's self-esteem is likely to influence job search behaviors that require social skills, for instance asking friends for help (Ellis & Taylor, 1983). On the other hand, self-efficacy refers to the job seeker's confidence in performing certain tasks which are important in the process of job search (Bandura, 1997). Hence, it describes the extent to which the job seeker believes that he is able to achieve his job search goal

(Saks & Ashforth, 1999). General self-efficacy or job search self-efficacy has been reported several times to relate positively to job search behavior as well as to the likelihood of finding a job (e.g. Eden & Aviram, 1993; Ellis & Taylor, 1983; Kanfer & Hulin, 1985; Saks & Ashforth, 1999). This comes as no surprise because job search self-efficacy also plays a central role in self-regulatory processes (Bandura, 1991).

Motives: Typically explored motive variables comprise perceived employment commitment and financial need (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 1999; Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010). Employment commitment refers to the extent to which employed work is important for and central to an individual (Feather & Bond, 1983). Even though the motive variables were shown to only relate weakly to job search behavior, the association has been positive (Kanfer et al., 2001). Notably, perceived financial need was found to relate negatively to the success of job search (Kanfer et al., 2001). Van Hooft et al. (2012) speculate that the potential reason for the negative relationship may be a lower job search process quality. They argue that due to likely time pressure in finding a job, the job seeker may not perform the self-regulatory activities with a high quality.

Social variables: Literature has suggested that the job seeker's perceived social support relates to his job search behavior because it may help him to cope with negative events in the course of the job search (Kanfer et al., 2001). Besides the emotional support, social contacts may be useful in providing information, advice, help or feedback regarding specific job search activities, thus provide instrumental social support (Van Hooft et al., 2012). Yet, the relationship between social support and job search behavior has been proven to be only small to mid-size (Kanfer et al., 2001).

Among all explored antecedents, a substantial relationship with job search behavior has been meta-analytically confirmed only for the personality traits extraversion and conscientiousness, followed by a more moderate relationship for the self-evaluation variables (Kanfer et al., 2001).

3.3.3 Dimensions of Job Search Behavior

Job Search Effort and Intensity

Job search literature has repeatedly assessed job search behavior as either *job search effort* or *job search intensity* (Boswell et al., 2012). *Job search effort* reflects how persistent and engaged the job seeker has been looking for a job (Kanfer et al., 2001). Operationalized as such, researchers usually ask study participants to estimate their total amount of effort that they have dedicated to their job

search, for instance in overall number of hours spent (Blau, 1993; Fort, Jacquet, & Leroy, 2011; Wanberg et al., 2010). Hence, job search effort represents a subjectively perceived dimension in terms of ‘how hard one tries’ (Manroop & Richardson, 2016). On the other side, *job search intensity* relates usually to an aggregate number of times or hours within a specific period of time with which the job seeker performs different job search behaviors or activities such as preparing application materials or visiting the state employment agency (Barber et al., 1994; Fort et al., 2011; Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005; Wanberg et al., 1999). Hence, job search intensity reflects the frequency or the scope with which the job seeker engages in different job search behaviors (Kanfer et al., 2001). In practical terms, this dimension has been measured for instance, by counting the number of job information sources used or aggregating the weekly hours spent on job search (Barber et al., 1994). Mostly however, those researchers, attempting to measure job search behavior by means of intensity, have simply provided the study respondents with a list of various job search activities where the respondents indicated how frequently they have engaged in each activity in a specific time (Saks, 2005). Both, job search effort and job search intensity, operationalize job search behavior in terms of a single-dimension measure (ibid.). Additionally, both dimensions are used to describe job search behavior in terms of quantity (Kanfer et al., 2001; Van Hooft et al., 2012).

Preparatory and Active Job Search Behavior

One-dimensional job search measures do not allow for grouping job search behaviors, which means that one cannot categorize specific activities according to their different belonging with respect to behavioral stages (Saks, 2005). Yet, the notion of job search being a process points towards its dynamic and changing nature, and thus towards the existence of distinguishable behavioral job search stages. In a longitudinal study, Barber et al. (1994) have investigated job search behavior over time with reference to three models of change, in particular the sequential model, the learning model of changes and lastly, the emotional model. The findings, involving students approaching their graduations, provide quantitative evidence for shifts in job search behavior over time and suggest that the pattern of these shifts parallels mostly the characteristics of the sequential model. The model posits that changes in activities occur within a logical sequence of phases. Besides the logically changing job search activities, scholars have also stated that activities may change as a result of learning experiences wherein the job seeker masters in how to search effectively (Barber et al., 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 2000).

The sequential model assumes that at first, job search activities are characterized by a broad search which results in the development of a set of potential job alternatives. Subsequently, job search activities are devoted to the jobs within the set of alternatives and are said to only broaden again if no job in the set has been deemed acceptable (Barber et al., 1994). It follows that the different stages in the job search process relate to particular job search activities. Accordingly, Blau (1994) differentiates and has tested two distinct but related phases of job search behavior, namely the preparatory job search phase and the active job search phase. These two phases allow for distinguishing among various job search activities that belong either to preparatory or to active job search behaviors (Saks, 2005).

During the preparatory phase, the job seeker acquires information through various information sources and identifies job vacancies (Blau, 1994). As recognized by Barber et al., (1994), this broad job search behavior can be referred to as ‘extensive search’ (A. Rees, 1966). The measure of preparatory job search behavior reflects the job search intensity regarding only those activities which are involved in the preparatory phase such as planning activities (e.g. reading an article about how to find a job) and broad information search activities (e.g. screening newspaper advertisements in order to identify job leads) (Blau, 1994). Continuing with the active job search phase, the job seeker actively performs job search behaviors that are directed towards achieving the employment goal and ultimately makes a job choice (ibid.). Hence, active job search behaviors relate to activities such as applying for jobs, contacting a potential employer via telephone or attending job interviews (ibid.). During the active job search phase, the job seeker makes various decisions such as whether or not to apply for a specific job opening, to select-out of an ongoing recruitment process or to accept a specific job offer (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Blau’s (1994) measure of active job search behavior reflects the job search intensity with respect to only those activities which belong to the active job search phase. That is because in his study, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they performed several active job search behaviors.

Although Blau’s (1994) second job search intensity measure (i.e. active job search behavior) does not involve information search activities, others highlight that this phase involves what Rees (1966) has called ‘intensive search’ for information (Barber et al., 1994). Here, the job seeker searches for additional and more detailed information about the jobs and/or organizations that he has identified previously (ibid.). The job seeker’s intensive search for more detailed information is a consequence of the aforementioned labor market characteristics, namely imperfect information resulting in

uncertainty with respect to the choice outcome (i.e. the post-hire match quality) (Jovanovic, 1979; A. Rees, 1966). Scholars concerned with decision-making processes generally agree upon, and have also empirically tested, that individuals attempt to minimize uncertainty especially when making complex decisions (Svenson, 2003). Further, it is argued that usually individuals do not possess information about a job and/or organization initially that they can evaluate sufficiently enough to differentiate among several job alternatives and therefore are assumed to conduct an intensive information search among alternatives (Barber, 1998; Svenson, 2003).

The circumstance that the job seeker acquires more information specific to a certain job and/or organization can also be found implicitly in job choice theories (Barber, 1998). One example is the objective factors approach to making a job choice. This theory or approach posits that the individual weighs advantages and disadvantages of a job by evaluating different job attributes (e.g. salary, growth opportunities, etc.) regarding their importance and attractiveness, and subsequently assesses the overall desirability of the job (Behling, Labovitz, & Gainer, 1968). As the name implies, it is assumed that the job seeker evaluates those job attributes which are objectively measurable (Barber, 1998). Yet, in order to assess the job's desirability in such a manner the job seeker needs to learn about the job attributes through the acquisition of some kind of information (ibid.). Another example that implies information gathering is the subjective factors approach which relates to fit theory (ibid.). Various models, such as Schneider's (1987) ASA model or Wanous' (1980) matching model, incorporate the subjective factors approach because they are based on the proposition that the job seeker searches for a job with which he perceives a fit (Behling et al., 1968). Once again, it can be argued that in order for the individual to form perceptions of fit, he needs to possess some kind of information specific to the job and/or the organization. To sum up, measures of preparatory and active job search behavior reflect the frequency or scope of job search behavior (i.e. quantity) performed in the respective job search phase (Saks, 2005). However, the briefly outlined theories concerned with job choice point to the content of information itself which the job seeker acquires and possesses consequently and which he bases his job choice on (Barber, 1998). This leads to the following passage.

Formal and Informal Job Search Behavior

Despite operationalizing job search behavior in terms of quantity, researchers point out, that there is a need to also consider the type or content and the quality of the specific job search activities (Kanfer et al., 2001; Van Hooft et al., 2012; Wanberg et al., 2010). In this context, research

proposes that the quality of each job search activity impacts the effectiveness or success of the job search process (Van Hooft et al., 2012). Here, effectiveness or success refers not only to the likelihood of finding a job but also to the quality of the eventual employment match. Conclusively, when exploring the quality of job search behaviors or activities, it appears useful to consider the information sources used and the content of the information obtained. That is because these information sources can be seen as the job seeker's screening tools as the therein obtained information is used by the job seeker in his decision-making (Bretz Jr & Judge, 1994; Swider et al., 2015). In this context, job search literature has differentiated job search behavior in terms of formal or informal job search methods which result respectively from the use of formal or informal job information sources (e.g. Eppel, Mahringer, & Weber, 2014). Scholars point out that only few studies have investigated the use of specific job search methods, which would provide an enhanced understanding of how specific search methods contribute to job search success (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). In previous years when the internet has not yet been used commercially⁵, scholars differentiate formal from informal job information sources when the sources rely on an organization or agency to initiate contact between the hiring organization and the individual job seeker (A. Rees & Schultz, 1970). Based on this argumentation and the notion that "(...) internet intermediaries, like job boards, (...) bring together job seekers and job vacancies" (Marchal, Mellet, & Rieucau, 2007, p. 1092), it can be argued that job information sources in the internet belong generally to the category of formal sources. Formal information sources include, for instance, newspaper advertisements, private employment agencies, state employment offices, school or university placement offices and professional journals (R. E. Allen & Keaveny, 1980; Sicilian, 1995). Furthermore, corporate reports, organization webpages, recruitment brochures or other publications can also be categorized to formal job information sources (Swider et al., 2015). The information available is usually controlled by the recruiting organization (Bretz Jr & Judge, 1994). The information itself may be concerned with how the organization pays or rewards its employees or to which degree values are emphasized in every day organizational procedures (ibid.). On the other hand, informal job information sources comprise friends, family or other acquaintances (Granovetter, 1974; Sicilian, 1995) but also unsolicited applications or walk-ins because these methods, too, do not rely on an organization or agency to initiate contact between the

⁵ Introduction of world wide web by Tim Berners-Lee in the 1990s (Berners-Lee et al., 1994)

hiring organization and the job seeker (Rosenfeld, 1975). Early research has suggested that a large proportion of employer-employee matches result from job seekers using informal methods (Reid, 1972; Rosenfeld, 1975). Although such research has not been restricted to certain vocations, they have notably been conducted before the advent of the internet. Informal job search methods involve activities such as contacting friends or other people for the purpose of identifying vacant job positions, gathering information, getting assistance with regard to finding a job, or asking for other contacts that might be able to help (R. E. Allen & Keaveny, 1980; Swaroff, Barclay, & Bass, 1985). These activities are also referred to as networking (Wanberg et al., 2000).

3.3.4 Job Search Success and Employment Outcomes

Studies differ in their assessment of job search outcomes and hence in their interpretation of job search success. The most commonly used employment outcome is the individual's employment status at a specific point of time (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Wanberg et al., 1999). Yet, others determine job search success in terms of job search duration, also referred to as employment speed (Wanberg et al., 2005). Additionally, the quality of post-hire employment can be used as an indicator for job search success (Van Hooft et al., 2012; Wanberg et al., 1999). Employment quality can be referred to, for instance, job satisfaction or the quality of the job match, hence the P-J and P-O fit (Leana & Feldman, 1991, 1995). All outcomes stated thus far, namely employment status or speed as well as employment quality, refer to final outcomes of the job search process. Yet, in order to interpret job search success throughout the ongoing job search process, scholars utilize more proximal outcomes (Van Hooft et al., 2012). For instance, the number of interviews with distinct employers or the number of received job offers (Saks & Ashforth, 2000).

Several studies have explored the relationship between job search behavior and job search outcomes and conclude that the more the job seeker engages in job search behavior, the more likely he is able to find a job (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 1999). In a similar vein, the number of job search sources used throughout the process has been positively associated to the likelihood of finding a job (Eppel et al., 2014). No matter if job search behavior is operationalized as job search intensity or job search effort, both dimensions are meta-analytically found to relate positively to employment status and negatively to job search duration (Kanfer et al., 2001). Nevertheless, others find no or only a moderate relationship between job search intensity and the probability of obtaining a job (Caldwell & Burger, 1998; Leana & Feldman, 1991; Wanberg et al., 1999). Likewise, several times job search effort has been shown to not relate significantly to job search success (Brown, Cober,

Kane, Levy, & Shalhoop, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1999, 2002). From this, one can speculate that operationalizing job search behavior in terms of search intensity or effort may not be sufficient enough to explore what influences the effectiveness and success of the job search process (Van Hooft et al., 2012).

Focusing on job search methods used, these may therefore be more suitable for understanding the relationship between specific job search behaviors and the success of job search. That is because such emphasis on specific methods allows for a consideration of content and quality regarding each job search activity (Kanfer et al., 2001; Van Hooft et al., 2012). This is implicitly supported by several studies exploring the effect of various types and content of information obtained during job search on the success of job search. For instance, Holzer (1987b, 1988) shows that job seekers using informal job search methods receive more job offers and are more likely to accept one of these offers compared to job seekers searching by means of formal information sources. Furthermore, individuals who have made use of informal job search methods during their job searches, in particular job seekers who have been referred by organizational insiders, are less likely to quit their jobs and perform better than non-referred employees (Wanberg et al., 2000). That is because informal job search methods are believed to enable the job seeker to acquire additional and more accurate information about a specific job and organization than formal job search methods do (Griffeth, Hom, Fink, & Cohen, 1997; Quaglieri, 1982). Moreover, research suggests that information acquired from informal sources is probably deemed as more prominent and trustworthy by the job seeker because the source itself is trusted (Fisher, Ilgen, & Hoyer, 1979; Popovich & Wanous, 1982). Consequentially, more complete and accurate information is argued to allow the job seeker for developing more realistic perceptions and expectations with respect to job-related and organizational attributes before organizational entry (Wanous, 1977, 1980). Due to proposed self-selection mechanisms, realistic perceptions and expectations are likely to lead to greater levels of fit perceptions by the individual after organizational entry, meaning when the organization has offered the job position and the job seeker has accepted the offer (Bretz Jr & Judge, 1998; Cable & Judge, 1996). With respect to formal job search methods which usually result in the acquisition of organization-controlled information, realistic job previews literature often assumes that organizations withhold more accurate or realistic information about the job and/or the organization until later stages of the recruiting process (Boswell, Roehling, Lepine, & Moynihan, 2003; Phillips, 1998). This is explained by the fact that an organization aims to be as attractive as possible so that the job seeker applies for the job position (Cable et al., 2000). To sum up, informal job search

methods, compared to formal ones, are said to enable the job seeker to acquire higher quality information, meaning more detailed and accurate information about a certain job (Griffeth et al., 1997; Quaglieri, 1982). Following the logic, job seekers obtaining a job through informal job search methods should then benefit from greater employment match quality in terms of post-hire perceptions of fit with the organization and the job.

3.4 Job Search and Perceptions of Fit

3.4.1 Extensive Information Search and Early Fit Perceptions

Barber (1998) states that although most recruitment research focuses on specific recruitment efforts and the effect of recruitment information on job seekers' perceptions, the job seeker may also be influenced by information revealed in non-recruitment related organizational activities. Thus, even before the job search process has been initiated by the identification of the job search goal, the job seeker may possess perceptions about various organizations as a consequence of, for instance, product experiences or advertisement exposures (Cable et al., 2000).

The following paragraphs shift the focus towards the acquisition of information throughout the process of job search. During the preparatory job search phase, the job seeker is said to identify jobs and subsequently develop the initial set of job alternatives based on a limited amount of information (Barber et al., 1994; Blau, 1994). The majority of research concerned with the job seeker's perspective has focused on how the individual searches for these job vacancies, in terms of methods used, rather than on the information itself that he gathers or possesses about the jobs and/or organizations (Wanous, 1977). This can be seen as a shortcoming because the job seeker evolves perceptions of fit regarding jobs and organizations based on available information - no matter how limited (e.g. Cable et al., 2000; Lievens et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). This is supported in findings showing that job seekers develop and change perceptions regarding job alternatives quickly even though they have had no or only little initial information about them (Russo, Medvec, & Meloy, 1996; D. Simon, Krawczyk, & Holyoak, 2004).

Findings from organizational attraction research can be used to expand the understanding of how information influences the job seeker in his decision to include a vacant job position in his set of job alternatives and to consider it further. This being said, within the preparatory job search phase, the job seeker is likely to come across job descriptions provided by various organizations. Even though such information may be limited in content, research has found that quantity and specificity of

information alone plays a role in influencing the job seeker's level of attraction. Particularly, job seekers are shown to perceive job offers described in job advertisements with more job- as well as organization-related information as more attractive (D. G. Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007) and as more credible (D. G. Allen, Scotter, & Otondo, 2004) than jobs portrayed in advertisements with less information. Moreover, it is indicated that the amount of specific information in a job advertisement relates positively to an individual's interest in the promoted job position (Roberson, Collins, & Oreg, 2005), or to the probability of responding to the ads (Gatewood et al., 1993). Besides the quantity and level of specificity of information, the actual content of information about both, the organization and the job position, matters in attracting job seekers (Rynes & Cable, 2003). Especially job attributes such as pay level or compensation in terms of benefits and personal growth opportunities are suggested to set the threshold that needs to be fulfilled in order for the job seeker to consider the vacant job position as an alternative in the first place (Chapman et al., 2005; Osborn, 1990). On the other hand, these job attributes appear to matter less later on when evaluating the job positions contained in the set of alternatives (Chapman et al., 2005). Besides, the job seeker bases his decision to include the job in the set of alternatives also on his knowledge of the organization, hence on the organization's image or reputation. That is especially the case when he has not enough information about relevant job and/or organizational attributes (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). Regarding job and organizational characteristics, Chapman et al.'s (2005) meta-analytical study shows that the job seeker's perceptions of the type of work, the organization's image and the work environment have the biggest influence on his level of attraction and also on his intention to pursue the job. Whether or not a job seeker evaluates a job at a certain organization favorably depends on the extent to which the information content matches those job and organizational attributes the job seeker is looking for and thus deems relevant (Barber, 1998; Chapman et al., 2005).

Shifting the focus towards the holistic interpretation and evaluation of available information, the job seeker evolves perceptions of fit regarding jobs and/or organizations (Cable et al., 2000; Lievens et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). To begin with, in order to be able to develop P-O fit perceptions regarding particular organizations, the individual needs to possess work values (Judge & Cable, 1997). The job seeker's work values are reflected in his preference for certain organizational cultures (ibid.). Though work values, such as people orientation or autonomy, are said to be enduring they may change over time, for instance with organizational socialization (Chatman, 1991) or work experiences (Mortimer & Lorence, 1979). Research has also suggested other factors that may influence an individual's work values such as his country of origin (Hofstede, 1980),

education and career choice (Kohn & Schooler, 1978) or personality traits (Judge & Cable, 1997). In the context of job search, fit literature asserts that individuals interpret job and organizational characteristics in light of their own needs and values in order to determine their perceptions of fit, namely needs-supply P-J fit and P-O fit (Chapman et al., 2005). The results of Saks and Ashforth's (2002) quantitative study involving Graduates support the existent relationship between job search behavior and the job seeker's perceptions of P-J as well as P-O fit. Interestingly, they find that job search behavior is more strongly related to perceived P-J fit compared to P-O fit, suggesting that, at least when considering Graduates, job seekers may consider perceptions regarding their compatibility with certain jobs more than perceptions depicting the compatibility with the organizations throughout their job search.

Overall, P-J and P-O fit perceptions are thought to affect the job seeker's level of attraction (e.g. Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy, 2012). On the one side, Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) have found meta-analytic support for a strong positive correlation between perceived P-J fit and the level of organizational attraction. Their results further indicate that this relationship is generalizable across various contexts. On the other side, P-O fit has been argued to predict organizational attraction. According to Schneider's (1987) ASA framework, individuals are expected to be attracted to those organizations with which they perceive to have similar values, thus with which they perceive a P-O fit. Moreover, among all factors that Chapman et al. (2005) have taken into account (e.g. job and organizational characteristics, recruiter characteristics etc.), the meta-analytical results show that fit perceptions formed during the job search process predict organizational attraction most strongly. Yet, their findings do not allow for further interpretation with regard to a distinct influence of the different types of fit on the job seeker's level of organizational attraction. This leads to Kristof-Brown et al.'s (2005) critic that most studies in the fit domain focus on only one type of fit. This is limiting, because the job seeker comes across both, job- and organization-related information during his job search so that his level of organizational attraction is likely to be influenced by multiple types of fit (*ibid.*). From this, it can be concluded that although the several types of fit, namely P-J and P-O fit, should be considered separately, it is important to include them simultaneously when exploring the decision-making process that results in the formation of the set of job alternatives (*ibid.*).

Research following the perspective of critical contact theory claims that job seekers often lack sufficient information about specific job attributes so that the information gathered during their job

search does not allow them to compare different vacant jobs in a meaningful manner (Behling et al., 1968). Instead, the theory suggests that job seekers use organizational representatives as formal job information sources and interpret their perceptions of these as signals for job and organizational characteristics (Chapman et al., 2005). While job seekers often only encounter organizational representatives when participating in job interviews, thus during the active job search phase, it can be argued that organizational representatives can still play a role in the preparatory job search phase, for instance when the job seeker attends recruitment events. Nevertheless, meta-analytic findings do not support a relationship between the behavior or demographics of an organizational representative and the job seeker's level of job and organization attraction (ibid.). Having said this, it can be assumed that, while the job seeker may use the representative's behavior as a signal to infer organizational attributes to some extent, he does not seem to rely on them solely as a source of information. However, the job seeker can also obtain more complete and personal information about the organization and potentially the job from an organizational representative throughout the conversation (Breaugh, 2008).

To sum up, the quantity, level of specificity and content of information about specific job positions that is available to and acquired by the job seeker during the preparatory job search phase appear to influence the composition of his set of job alternatives and his level of organizational attraction.

3.4.2 Intensive Information Search and Perceptions of Fit

After having developed the set of alternative jobs, the job seeker is expected to gather more and also more detailed information about each job alternative as it enables him to proceed with those job positions which he considers desirable (Barber et al., 1994; Boswell et al., 2012). The search for additional and more complete information is necessary due to the fact that job markets have informational gaps in terms of incomplete as well as uncertain information about job and organization attributes (Spence, 2002). Alike, Collins and Stevens (2002) point out that before a job seeker applies for a job, he usually does not know many job attributes. Therefore, the job seeker screens information sources for such information that is needed (Ng & Burke, 2006). Consistent with signaling theory, the job seeker uses information available about rather salient organizational characteristics as signals to make inferences about job and organization attributes, which he has no complete information about (D. G. Allen et al., 2007; Cable et al., 2000). Specifically, he may make use of formal job information sources such as business publications, corporate reports, and

organization websites and acquires information in order to infer organizational characteristics (Braddy, Meade, & Kroustalis, 2006; Dineen, Ash, & Noe, 2002; Lievens et al., 2001).

As a result of the intensive search, the individual is expected to interpret and evaluate available information about specific jobs and organizations in an explicit and/or holistic manner in order to make a job choice (Barber, 1998). The former manner, the explicit evaluation of information, relates to the aforementioned objective factor approach (*ibid.*). In this context, the job seeker evaluates information about measurable attributes or characteristics that are specific to the vacant job (e.g. job description, pay, benefits) or reflective of the organizations (e.g. company size, location), and bases his job choice on this evaluation (Behling et al., 1968). The latter, in particular the holistic interpretation of information about job and organizational attributes, relates to the subjective factor approach wherein the job seeker is expected to develop perceptions of fit which in turn influence his final job choice (Barber, 1998). In this context, the job seeker relies often on formed beliefs about for instance organizational values, rather than on objectively measurable and known attributes, in order to form or evolve perceptions of fit. This is supported in Cable et al.'s (2000) study, wherein an individual's beliefs about an organization's culture which comprises values that are determined by the information the individual has acquired. However, these beliefs have not always been proven to reflect the objective reality accurately (*ibid.*). Notably, at a time when online information had not been commercially available, Wanous (1980) points out that it has been harder for job seekers to acquire information about prospective organizations, than vice versa.

With additional information acquired in intensive search, the job seeker is suggested to become aware of new attributes of the job alternatives or to change the importance of relevant attributes, which may result in new or changing fit perceptions (Dineen & Soltis, 2011; Svenson, 2003; Swider et al., 2015). This is reasoned in the fact that, when the job seeker moves from a broad to an intensive search, focusing only on the jobs within the set of alternatives, he is likely to be able to review relevant attributes more thoroughly and selectively (Svenson, 2003). If the job seeker does not perceive a fit between, for instance the organization's values and his own values (i.e. no perceived P-O fit), he is assumed to be no longer attracted to that organization. For instance, the job seeker is likely discouraged to pursue a position further when he comes across information about unfavorable cultural attributes (Johnston, 1992).

Conclusively, available information plays a role in the job seeker's final job choice besides affecting the job seeker's level of attraction to an organization. This is supported in several theories

of organizational choice stating that the job choice is determined by expectations towards and beliefs about a job and/or organization which are based on acquired information (Barber, 1998; Wanous, 1977). In addition, the several types of perceived fit as a result of the job seeker's holistic interpretation of available information matter throughout the job search process as they influence the job seeker's level of attraction, the decision to pursue a certain position as well as the decision to accept a position given the organization has offered it (Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Kristof, 1996).

In order to comply the call for more emphasis on the content and the quality of information itself in job search research (Wanous, 1977), the following section concerns the internet as source of information and the information that is made available there. It is essential to understand the characteristics and features of the internet and with that information online in order to explore whether it enables job seekers to acquire complete and/or accurate information. Such understanding is necessary because this paper explores whether information retrieved from the internet is sufficiently complete and accurate (i.e. high quality information) in order to minimize the risk of deviations between the job seeker's pre-hire and post-hire fit perceptions. If this was the case, it can be assumed that the internet has potential to improve the employer-employee match quality (i.e. Research Question 2).

3.5 Internet and Online Information

3.5.1 Internet as a Job Search Tool and Job Information Source

With the emergence of the internet, research has acknowledged that it is playing an important role in people's lives and jobs (e.g. Jansen et al., 2005; Stevenson, 2009). The internet is defined as a networked marketplace and -space that stores and disseminates information (Coiera, 2000; Savolainen & Kari, 2004a). Hence, it does not create new information itself, but enables information exchange (Kulviwat, Guo, & Engchanil, 2004).

Motivations for Internet usage

Generally speaking, research expects the individual to use or browse the internet in a goal-directed manner, meaning that the individual is aware of his motivations or needs that he seeks to fulfill by using the internet (Go, You, Jung, & Shim, 2016). In this regard, research has shown that individuals use the internet massively in order to gather information in all kinds of situations concerned with, for instance real estates, automobiles, travels, or potential employers (Flanagin &

Metzger, 2000; Ratchford, Talukdar, & Lee, 2001). Likewise, Flanagin and Metzger (2001) demonstrate that within their study, information search has been the strongest motive for internet usage. The internet is said to change information search processes on different dimensions such as “(...) [the] amount of total search, the number and types of sources consulted, and the distribution and weighting of information gathered from these sources (...)” (Kulviwat et al., 2004, p. 246). Others argue that internet usage is also driven by other motivations besides information seeking, for instance passing time, entertainment or simply for relaxation (Ferguson & Perse, 2000). It should be noted, that studies often examine why and how individuals use the internet in general rather than why and how they use different types of websites specifically (Go et al., 2016). This can falsify conclusions regarding which motivations drive predominantly the individual’s online behavior because a recent study has empirically shown that the use of different types of websites is driven by distinct motivations such as entertainment, information seeking or utility (ibid.). Nevertheless, as the present paper is concerned with an individual’s job search involving extensive and intensive information search (Barber et al., 1994), it can be plausibly assumed that the individual’s use of the internet in the context of job search is predominantly motivated by the need for job-related information.

People seem to rely heavily on information that they find online (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Jansen et al., 2005). Parker and Plank (2000) emphasize the internet’s importance as information source by claiming that “(...) those who lag behind in today’s internet environment face a Darwinian future as information “have-nots” (...)” (p.44). Although it has been found that the internet is used more often for seeking information compared to other media, there are no significant findings of whether the internet is abandoning traditional information sources (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000, 2001; Parker & Plank, 2000). Ratchford et al. (2001) interposes that individuals use those sources that cost-effectively deliver the information they need. Thus, choosing the internet over other information sources depends on the perceived benefits and costs of such alternatives (Ratchford et al., 2001).

Relevance of the Internet in the Job Search Context

Fountain (2005) has recognized the relevance of the web in the labor market by stating that the “(.) internet is a new social space through which job information can flow” (p. 1236). Scholars acknowledge that individuals use the internet as a job search tool and job information source (e.g. Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Go et al., 2016). A survey from the Pew Research Center reveals that as of 2015, 79 percent of American job seekers have used the internet in their most recent job search (Figure 3, A. Smith, 2015). Within this survey, it stands out that the usage of the internet dominates

especially the use of other formal job information sources such as employment agencies, newspaper advertisements and recruiting events which are only used by approximately 30 percent of the respondents. The dominance of the internet in job search applies not only to usage but also to perceived usefulness of the source. That is because one-third of the respondents state that online sources have been the most important ones in their job search, while only about five

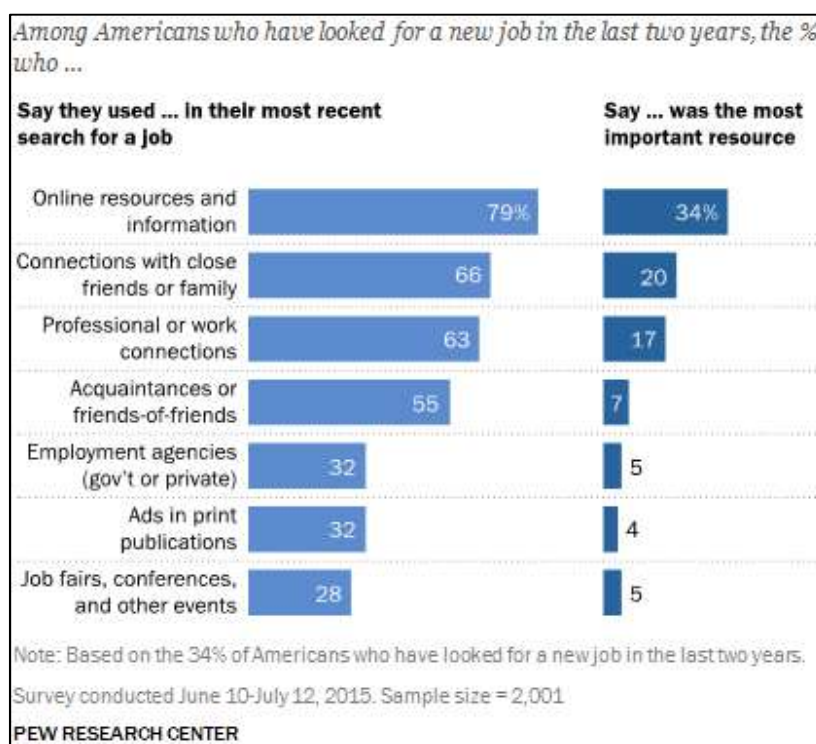


Figure 3: Pew Research Center Survey (Source: A Smith, 2015)

percent of the respondents consider the traditional sources as most important. Notably, in a previous survey that considered individuals who have started their jobs in mid-2002, only 22 percent of the respondents stated to have found their jobs through the internet (Stevenson, 2009). This indicates that the ratio of job seekers using the internet as a job search tool and job information source has been significantly lower in previous years which points towards the dramatic growth in the use of the internet in job search in recent years. This being said, especially college Graduates are shown to believe that online job search is the most helpful job search strategy (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011).

Stevenson (2009) points out that the internet has probably not only lowered the costs of information acquisition in the extensive and intensive search but also broadened the scope of information that

can be gathered altogether. Van Rooy et al. (2003) even claim that “job seekers who do not use technological advances are extremely limiting their search and are at a competitive disadvantage, relative to their peers, when searching for a job” (p.173). In contrast, others also make aware of the fact that information accessible online can sometimes be misleading or inaccurate given the unique characteristics of the internet (Go et al., 2016; Metzger, Flanagin, & Zwarun, 2003). The following paragraphs discuss the internet’s unique characteristics affecting online information in order to better understand the potential consequences for job search and employment outcomes.

3.5.2 Characterization of the Internet and Online Information

The internet and with that online information contrasts strongly with its offline counterparts (e.g. information retrievable via newspapers or magazines, television and radio) in two respects: Firstly, the internet is described as facilitating the free flow of information, which means that information is not centrally controlled and cannot fully undergo a governmental or corporate filter (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Consequentially, the information available online can vary greatly in its quality in terms of accuracy because anyone can publish information online which can sometimes be intentionally or unintentionally misleading (ibid.). Secondly, the internet offers unique features such as graphic form, interactivity, timeliness and quantity of information, which has a major impact on the individuals’ search for and use of the information (Kulviwat et al., 2004). Due to these unique characteristics and features affecting positively and/or negatively the quality of information, it appears, that the use of the internet and with that the search for and use of online information relates to not only benefits but also costs (ibid.).

Benefits of Internet Usage when Seeking Information

Past research has associated several benefits arising with the internet’s unique features compared to traditional information sources, of which the following seem to predominate: *larger information quantity, geographical independence, no/low monetary costs, timeliness of information, experience, and interactivity.*

Larger information quantity: The internet gathers all kinds of information, offering information seekers a large number of options, sources and types of data to choose from (Ratchford et al., 2001). On the one hand, it can provide more information than other information sources due to its unrestricted characteristic of being a digital medium (Kulviwat et al., 2004). On the other hand, the relative easiness combined with the lack of central verification instances with which individuals as

well as institutions can publish information online compared to traditional information sources, contributes to the great amount of information in the internet (Go et al., 2016).

Geographical independence: Information in the internet is a collection of data generated from anywhere, accessible to anyone in the world (Ratchford et al., 2001). Thus, it erases geographical boundaries and avoids misusing time to physically travel somewhere in order to get information, (ibid.). Instead, individuals seeking information can browse online and search an various website types (Kulviwat et al., 2004).

No/low monetary costs: Online information can be cheaply and indefinitely copied, as well as transported and accessed through the internet (Coiera, 2000). While purchasing a physical information source such as a magazine or a book might become costly, the monetary expenditure for accessing information online is relatively low (e.g. fixed costs for an internet flat rate) (Dineen, Ling, Ash, & DelVecchio, 2007; Kroft & Pope, 2014).

Timeliness of information: “The availability of the output information at a time suitable for its use (...)” (Bailey & Pearson, 1983, p. 548) enables information seekers to get data in real-time, constantly, and anywhere (Bauer, Grether, & Leach, 2002).

Experience: The presentation of information online ranges widely in formats from plain text to animated content to live videos (Eighmey & McCord, 1998). This provides greater flexibility in the way information can be found and consumed, which ultimately creates an experience rather than a simple search for information (Ratchford et al., 2001).

Interactivity: Another advantage of the internet is that information can be personalized, meaning, it “(...) allows for the amassing, analysis, and control of large quantities of specialized data (...)” (Kulviwat et al., 2004). In particular, search engines and filters help to directly screen or narrow down the entire information pool for desired content, which ultimately saves time opposed to searching manually and attempts to reduce the problems of irrelevant information (Bakos, 1997; Bradlow & Schmittlein, 2000).

For the reasons above, individuals seeking information are incentivized to search information online rather than offline (Kulviwat et al., 2004). Especially, the ease of use and the effectiveness of search due to the interactivity make the internet an attractive information source (ibid.). Altogether, these characteristics have joint effects on how information can be disseminated and acquired in the labor

market. To begin with, the internet reduces information search costs not only for hiring organizations, by for instance cutting down on recruiting time and expenses and reaching a larger number of and potentially more qualified job candidates. But it also reduces search costs for individuals, related to for instance how they learn about job opportunities, what and how much information they can gather about the specific jobs and organizations, and how they get into initial contact with the hiring organizations (Feldman & Klaas, 2002; Stevenson, 2009). This being said, job seekers can access much more and detailed labor market information through the internet compared to when relying solely on other information sources (Autor, 2001; Lindsay, 2005; McKeown & Lindorff, 2011). Specifically, job seekers can collect a great variety of information, for instance about an organization's culture on the organizational website, an organization's financial stability through financial reports published online, and the job's characteristics on different career-related websites and portals (Fountain, 2005). Moreover, online search engines enable users to simultaneously search several firms for the same position, which in turn widens the individuals' consideration sets (Van Rooy et al., 2003). Besides, with the help of keyword search and filters, sought job information can be found more easily and quickly (Kroft & Pope, 2014). Due to the interactive nature of the web, online job posts and applications can be uploaded and edited quickly, which makes information more up-to-date (Brenčič & Norris, 2009). Due to the geographical independence even people in remote areas can learn about job openings and thus are not disadvantaged anymore (Mang, 2012). Searching and applying for jobs as well as communicating with potential employers can be done anytime from anywhere (Stevenson, 2009). Especially in comparison with print counterparts, pursuing job search online does not lead to expenses (except for fee-based subscriptions), it is less time-consuming to find ads that fit the applicant's profile, and one can immediately upload application documents at no costs (Mang, 2012). Overall, most scholars emphasize the fast access to information about any labor-related topic, the ease of use, and the relative anonymity, for instance when searching for new or sharing information about current employers (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011; Parker & Plank, 2000).

Costs of Internet Usage when Seeking Information

Despite the benefits, the internet also comes along with pitfalls, that are not or to a lesser extent apparent in other information sources. Mainly *quality* concerns, *information overload*, and *data security or privacy issues* have been thematized as costs of using the web for information search (Breugh, 2008; Flanagan & Metzger, 2000; Ratchford et al., 2001).

Quality: Since information can flow freely through the internet, the potential of finding unhelpful, error-prone, or even counterfeit content has increased (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Greater amounts of information are published anonymously as well as poor-quality online content are generated and spread, because anyone can easily share content (Coiera, 2000; Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). In addition, the fact that information in the internet is usually not governed and checked centrally facilitates unintentionally misleading information, or even intentional fraud (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Thus, it has become difficult to distinguish relevant and credible information from increasing clutter in the internet (Savolainen & Kari, 2004a).

Information overload: The internet creates a space for unlimited information exchange, which forces individuals to spend time and effort in order to find what is sought (Coiera, 2000). Not only the exponential growth, but also the problems of poorly organized information make online search cumbersome (Coiera, 2000; Savolainen & Kari, 2004a). Specifically, people need to put in effort, in terms of cognitive (mental or psychological) costs, to process, organize and evaluate the amount of information (Klein & Ford, 2003).

Data security or privacy issues: In comparison to the offline information sources, through the internet one can provide and also save information about the users of the internet. Cookies and other forms of business intelligence and analytics store information about, for instance, what an individual has sought, information which can then be used for market intelligence and profiling purposes (Chen, Chiang, & Storey, 2012). Such tracking of online activities raises issues of privacy concerns and traceability, because information seekers may unintentionally reveal private information about themselves (Kulviwat et al., 2004). Another concern is data security and identity theft, because there is no absolute protection against hackers that aim at the stored personal data (Zeidner, 2007).

Taking these costs altogether, using the internet for gathering information can be stressful because time and effort have to be applied in order to deal with the amount, quality, and uncertainty. The costs also apply to the context of job search. A survey by Feldman and Klaas (2002) has identified major issues that job seekers might face when using the internet (Appendix A for a detailed overview). Specifically, the easiness to use and search is jeopardized by ineffective or malfunctional platforms and information systems (e.g. poor links, broken websites, wrong filters) or by difficulties in uploading CVs that are required to conform with organizations' specifications (ibid.). Not only are organizations dealing with information overload in terms of a flood of online

applications, but also are individuals, in terms of coping with abundant information gathered during the job search (D. G. Allen et al., 2007; Dineen et al., 2007). Therefore, job seekers have to devote time and effort to find promising jobs or relevant information about potential employers (Fountain, 2005). Additionally, some individuals have mentioned privacy and security concerns about the submission or upload of personal information (Feldman & Klaas, 2002). Others have stated that they missed an information advantage about job opportunities they would have when less knowledge would be accessible and shared about these opportunities online (Fountain, 2005). In other words, the internet provides information to everyone, which renders exclusiveness impossible, meaning more people now find vacancies, which ultimately increases competition about any specific open position (ibid.). Lastly, due to greater variety of job options and the ease of search, both the job seeker and the employer may become choosier before making a choice (Krueger, 2000).

Ultimately, job seekers are facing a trade-off between quality and quantity of information when using the internet as job search tool and source of information (Fountain, 2005).

3.5.3 Examples for Online Innovations in the Labor Market

Four main advancements in the job search context are associated with the internet compared to offline information sources. The following discusses these, namely (online) job boards, organizational websites, career-oriented social networks, and others.

Job boards

Online job boards or job portals (e.g. *Indeed.com* and *Stepstone*) are searchable vacancy databases that aggregate and feature job listings from organizations that seek new employees (Autor, 2001). On the one hand, organizations use these job boards to increase their recruitment reach (Braddy et al., 2006). On the other hand, job seekers benefit from job listings on job boards as these contain thousands of vacancies at different organizations, for which the job seekers can filter according to interests and qualifications, desired industry or location, and so on in order to find suitable jobs (indeed.com, 2017; Mang, 2012). In consequence, compared to a broad search by means of search engines, time used for seeking jobs is more efficient due to these filter mechanisms (Van Rooy et al., 2003).

Statistics from 2017 illustrate the great relevance of job boards in the labor market by showing that 42.9 percent of job seekers have been looking for employment on job boards, while more than half of all job applications worldwide have been received through them (Ingwersen, 2017; Jobvite, 2017). The most visited job board globally is Indeed.com with approximately 140 million visits (Desormes, 2015). The primary goal of online job boards is to advertise jobs at no cost to the user (Kroft & Pope, 2014), which also implies that the quantity of information is mostly restricted to the posting and job description itself and does not involve much further information about job and organizational characteristics (Braddy et al., 2006). However, by now, some of the job boards also display other career-related information than simply job postings, such as ‘career enhancement sites’ that individuals can use, for instance to improve their CVs (Van Rooy et al., 2003). Notwithstanding, the excessive amount of job listings and sometimes poor linkages between job board and organizational websites can hamper an efficient job search (Brenčič, 2014; Feldman & Klaas, 2002).

Organizational websites

Many organizations preferably use their websites for both, recruiting prospective employees and sharing information about themselves (e.g. D. G. Allen et al., 2007; Braddy et al., 2006; Cappelli, 2001). For one, career tabs post current vacancies, permit online job applications, include contact forms, and enable direct interaction with the potential employer (Autor, 2001; Boswell et al., 2012; Fountain, 2005). Moreover, interested job seekers can upload their CVs and create job alerts that notify them, as soon as a position opens up which matches their selected criteria. This not only helps recruiting organizations to increase the pool of appropriate candidates, but also saves individuals time to search for appealing jobs (Mang, 2012; McKeown & Lindorff, 2011). For the other, as opposed to other media such as newspapers or television used for communication purposes, organizational websites present the organizations with a useful tool to spread a seemingly unlimited amount of information about open jobs and/or the organization itself (D. G. Allen et al., 2007). In the terminology of Signaling Theory organizations use their websites to send signals by means of information (ibid.). Job seekers can gather the information about organizations, for instance about cultural attributes, before applying (Van Rooy et al., 2003) and can therefore use these information to decrease information deficiency and uncertainty by making inferences about unknown job and/or organizational characteristics (D. G. Allen et al., 2007). Notably, the information content as well as the form in which information is made available (i.e. graphics, text,

videos) is controlled by the organization, and thus the quality in terms of accuracy and completeness of the information is likely subject to variation (ibid.). Hence, it depends on the organization to which degree the communicated information reflects reality. Although job seekers cannot control for the quality of the information, organizational websites involve typically interactivity which in turn enables job seekers to control their search for information such that they can for instance filter their search (ibid.). Contrary, technological problems can impact the usefulness of organizational websites: Firstly, finding or navigating through websites can be cumbersome and secondly, poor quality websites may lead to negative impressions of the information provided and of the organization itself (Breugh, 2008; Feldman & Klaas, 2002).

Career-oriented social networks

Career-oriented social network platforms have the primary purpose to connect business people, who can leverage their contacts for improving their careers (Nations, 2018). Enders, Hungenberg, Denker and Mauch (2008) identify the superiority of this way of socializing compared to traditional forms of informal networks as follows: “SNS [Social Networking Sites] make a larger contact pool available to their members and allow them to easily manage and maintain virtually unlimited numbers of contacts by granting access to the long tail of social networking – an additional pool of contacts that is inaccessible via traditional networking” (p.18). Moreover, while organizations can post open vacancies and screen for potential candidates, job seekers can set up their personal user profile to present themselves to others (O’Murchu, Breslin, & Decker, 2004). Uploading and maintaining CVs permits that individuals can be found by interested employers even though they are not actively searching themselves (Mang, 2012). In fact, sensitive information can be hidden from current employers, so that these do not know whether one of their current employees intends to switch jobs (ibid.). Furthermore, through online career-oriented social network platforms, job seekers can easily contact current employees of the potential employer independent of whether they know each other in person or not (O’Murchu et al., 2004).

The largest professional network *LinkedIn*, has over 610 million members worldwide of whom 46 million are students or recent college graduates (LinkedIn, 2019). *Xing*, the European equivalent is mainly used by German-speaking regions that adds up to over 15 million members (Xing, 2019). In exchange for a subscription fee, both, LinkedIn and Xing, offer premium memberships that allow for a more sophisticated search and more defined filter options (Mang, 2012). Though, whether this

option is making the job search more efficient and effective is still an open question (Breaugh, 2008).

Others

Detailed information about jobs and employers also exist on other platforms, for instance on blogs or employer rating websites, virtual career fairs or videocasts (Olivas-Lujan & Bondarouk, 2013). The advantage of employer rating websites, for example Glassdoor, Kununu or Comparably⁶, is that actual or former employees can anonymously share information about more informal or sensitive topics such as corporate culture, salaries, hierarchies, and leadership styles with respect to a given organization (Stevenson, 2009). Although decreasing information deficiency about such topics, this form of knowledge sharing has the potential to be biased, unreliable or false, as former employees may be upset or current employees may be overenthusiastic (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). As a last point, rather than visiting career fairs or company presentations, virtual career fairs or videocasts provide an option to experience those job information sessions online (McIlveen, Gibson, Fallon, & Ross, 2002; Olivas-Lujan & Bondarouk, 2013).

3.5.4 Implications for the Employer-Employee Match Quality

Much research examining potential effects of the internet on job search and employment-related outcomes has focused primarily on the internet's impact on the process of matching individuals with jobs itself. Specifically, it has highlighted that the process of matching has become more efficient, for instance due to advanced filters and algorithms applicable in the internet (e.g. Autor, 2001; Eppel et al., 2014; Krueger, 2000). Moreover, the notion of more efficient matching relates to the widely accepted circumstance that the internet affects the mutual decision-making processes of the organization and the job seeker alike, which are both involved in job matching (Mang, 2012; Wanous, 1977). That is because more information about both parties is thought to be available and the unique characteristics (e.g. the feature of interactivity) are believed to enable both parties to screen one another more effectively (Autor, 2001; Bagues & Labini, 2009). Yet somewhat contrary, Kuhn and Skuterud (2004) do not find proof for job seekers using the internet to have shorter job search durations than those not using the internet; a finding which does not support the idea of more

⁶ Among others, Glassdoor, Comparably and Kununu are third-party employer review websites (Misa, 2016)

efficient job matching processes enabled by the internet (Bagues & Labini, 2009). Despite the question regarding the internet's impact on the efficiency with which job seekers and vacant jobs are matched per se, a potential change in the efficiency is not necessarily accompanied by improved employer-employee match quality (Mang, 2012). This being said, the following paragraphs further discuss theoretical implications for the internet's effect on post-hire employment match quality, as it is perceived by the individual when actually experiencing the job.

To start with, it can be implied from recent research that the internet is expected to improve the employer-employee match quality due to the benefits associated with the online innovations in the labor market which facilitate for instance an easy detection of job opportunities by means of filter possibilities (Bagues & Labini, 2009; Beard, Ford, Saba, & Seals Jr, 2012). The internet's characteristic of large quantities of available information is often used to support the assumption that using the internet in job search leads to greater employment quality. For one thing, the large quantity of information is said to enable the job seeker to identify a greater number of potential jobs and thus may permit him to choose the position with which he perceives to have the greatest fit (Eppel et al., 2014; Fountain, 2005). This in turn is suggested to increase the likelihood of experiencing a high employment match quality when being employed (i.e. perceiving P-O and P-J fit post-hire) (ibid.). Yet, such argumentation does not take into account whether the pre-hire fit perceptions are accurate so that they would conform to the post-hire fit perceptions. For another thing, the characteristic of great information quantity is also related to the ability of learning more about job and organizational characteristics, for instance on an organizational website (D. G. Allen et al., 2007; Stevenson, 2009). The additional information in the internet, which the job seeker would not be able to acquire through other formal information sources such as newspapers, are thought to enable the job seeker to make better informed decisions with respect to the final job choice (D. G. Allen et al., 2007; Braddy et al., 2006) and hence may positively affect the post-hire employment match quality. Yet again, the quality of information obtained is disregarded in this line of argumentation.

As outlined throughout this chapter, the internet enjoys great relevance as a job search tool and information source, albeit the quality of information available online cannot be guaranteed (Beard et al., 2012; Go et al., 2016). Generally speaking, the characteristics of the internet can relate to both, benefits and costs of using the internet, which points towards the difficulty in assessing the overall quality of information accessible through the internet and therefore the overall effect of the

internet on employment quality outcomes (Bagues & Labini, 2009). However, the concern for quality may hold serious implications for the employment match quality in case the job seeker relies on the information acquired during job search when forming perceptions of fit and also when making a job choice (Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Wanous, 1977). Whether or not the job seeker relies on gathered online information and to what extent (i.e. to what degree he uses the information for developing fit perceptions and for making a final job choice) likely depends on how credible the job seeker perceives the online information to be. Although several studies examine how individuals evaluate the credibility of online information by, for instance, validating the content, source or the website's structural features (Fogg et al., 2001; Hong, 2006; Lee, Strong, Kahn, & Wang, 2002), others state that individuals seem to unhesitatingly rely on online information without being concerned much about the credibility, and with that the quality, of the information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Metzger et al., 2003). Therefore, in case the information gathered online is misleading, inaccurate or incomplete (i.e. of low quality), so are the job seeker's pre-hire fit perceptions which are formed based on the information if relied upon nonetheless. In this instance, the internet has likely no positive impact on the post-hire match quality because pre-hire perceptions will probably deviate from post-hire fit perceptions that are based on actual experience.

Given that the job seeker unhesitatingly relies on available online information, the concern for qualitative information may challenge the proposition that the use of the internet in job search improves post-hire employer-employee match quality regardless of the amount of information. The following discusses exemplarily potential variations in the quality of information provided on (1) organizational websites and (2) employer rating websites. Firstly, even though an organizational website offers the hiring organization a tool to present the job seekers with realistic job previews (Travagline & Frei, 2001) as well as accurate and realistic information about the organization, such that the individual is enabled to form realistic pre-hire perceptions of P-J and P-O fit, respectively, it is down to the organization to use its website in such an extent (Gregory, Meade, & Thompson, 2013). Notably, organizations are probably driven by the goal of attracting applicants and thus may publish information that is expected to contribute to achieving this goal (Wanous, 1977). It is therefore assumed that organizations typically do not state information that could be interpreted negatively by the job seeker (ibid.). Moreover, organizational websites are found to obtain significantly more information about the organization compared to information about vacant jobs (D. G. Allen et al., 2007). In this case, individuals may not be able to form sufficient or accurate perceptions of P-J fit, such that the effect of using the internet on improving employment match

quality would fail to appear. Moreover, especially when an organization does not provide an adequate amount of information about its vacant positions or the organization on its organizational website, studies have shown that an individual's level of organizational attraction is then more influenced by the website's design features such as usability and aesthetics (D. G. Allen et al., 2007; Gregory et al., 2013). However, it remains questionable to what extent perceptions of fit, which the individual has derived from a holistic interpretation of job and organizational characteristics inferred from experienced ease of website navigation (i.e. usability) or visuals, are accurate relative to the later on experienced employment match quality. Secondly, with regard to employer rating websites such as Glassdoor, these obtain user-generated content which is neither verified centrally by the platform owners nor are the sources (i.e. users who publish information) identifiable and verifiable (Bowles, 2017; Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). This makes it difficult to assess the quality of information available on such websites. Nevertheless, it should be noted that even though a single content item generated by any user may be subject to manipulation or bias (in either direction) and may therefore be perceived as less reliable, scholars suggest that when considering user-generated content altogether the information is less readily prone to manipulation and bias (Flanagin & Metzger, 2013). Hence, employer rating websites may contribute to increasing the accuracy of fit perceptions formed during job search, in case sufficiently enough user-generated content is available, and thus may improve employer-employee match quality. Conclusively, these examples, emphasizing how the quality of online job information can be subject to variation, underscore the complex nature of the internet's potentially positive impact on the post-hire employer-employee match quality.

Various studies, focusing mostly on the effect of organizational recruitment websites specifically rather than on the effect of internet generally, have shown that online information content as well as website design features influence attitudinal outcomes such as organizational attraction (e.g. D. G. Allen et al., 2007; Gregory et al., 2013; Van Rooy et al., 2003). According to fit theory it can be implied that the individual then perceives a P-O and/or P-J fit with the respective organization and/or job (Chapman et al., 2005; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). While research accredits the internet to have an effect on job search and/or employment outcomes (e.g. Braddy et al., 2006; Dineen et al., 2002; Fountain, 2005), only few studies have specifically attended to the effect of the internet use on the employment match quality (e.g. Autor, 2001; Mang, 2012). In particular, Autor (2001) has argued, but not tested, that job seekers who search and organizations that recruit by means of the internet are able to take more match alternatives into account, which in turn should increase their

least match quality which each party is willing to accept. Furtherly, Mang (2012) has provided empirical evidence that job search by means of the internet should lead to ‘better’ matches (i.e. higher employment match quality) compared to job search by means of traditional formal information sources. However, this study entails a serious omission as it is only concerned with the post-hire match quality but fails to include and compare the job seeker’s pre-hire perceptions of fit that result from the online job search (ibid.). Hence, one could argue that the improved match quality may be the consequence of organizations having better tools to choose a ‘fitting’ candidate, rather than the result of job seekers being able to make a more informed job choice based on accurate pre-hire fit perceptions. When following the individual’s perspective, it is essential to take the individuals’ pre-hire perceptions of fit, which job seekers develop based on (online) information, into account in order to infer the extent to which the internet enables job seekers to decrease imperfect labor market information, form accurate fit perceptions, and thus decrease the risk of entering an employment match with low quality. Conclusively, this paper aims to investigate whether the internet improves the employer-employee match quality from a job seeker perspective by examining the retrospectively perceived usefulness of online information in forming accurate pre-hire fit perceptions.

Throughout the empirical part of the thesis, the present paper brings the results of the data collection into context by exploring and comparing findings to past research where possible. Potential deviations help to identify new insights into the job search from a job seeker’s perspective. The outlined theories and this paper’s proposed extensions of the PAT serve as guiding fundamentals, but do not replace the explorative analysis of the internet’s role in job search and in the employer-employee match quality. The following research methodology outlines the research design, the data collection method and procedure, as well as the data analysis and results, before the empirical research is finished with a discussion and conclusion.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This research aims at understanding how the internet has changed job search in light of incomplete and asymmetric information, and what this means for the post-hire employment match quality.

Ontologically, this paper is in line with social constructivism where social reality is a construction of social interactions between individuals in society (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, the

investigation is guided by the fact that there is no single reality but multiple realities that may change due to the fact that reality is created by people with different viewpoints (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2008). In accordance with this, the underlying notions of information asymmetries and perceptions of fit are individually and socially constructed as they differ depending on context and from person to person (e.g. generation and education; life stage) (Scotland, 2012). Such notions only come into existence when people act within their social surrounding and try to make sense of it (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Especially in the field of business research dealing with complex and context-dependent topics, it is vital to acknowledge individual perspectives and to consider the circumstances that drive an individual's actions and perceptions (Saunders et al., 2008). Epistemologically, researchers focus on details and the reality behind those details occurring within social phenomena in order to understand human behavior and how individuals interpret their social worlds (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2008). The nature of the inquiry is interpretive since the investigators are taking part in the research to retrieve meanings behind actions from individuals which entails that findings are created as the investigation proceeds (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). By following this interpretivist's view, this study examines the subjective perception of the internet's relevance in a job seeker's information search and perception of fit. Knowledge is derived by the interpretation of the opinions and behaviors of the subjects of investigation, which will help to get an idea of how different job seekers seek employment by means of the internet, as well as whether the post-hire match quality has improved (Marsh & Furlong, 2002).

The purpose of the empirical investigation is to build a relationship between data and theory in two consecutive steps: Firstly, this study explores how job seekers pursue their job search given the availability of information online and how this job search is different from the job search before the internet as information source has been available (Research Question 1). The second step of the investigation is to illustrate the (potential) effects of the changed job search on the post-hire match quality, which is based on the premise that job seekers form perceptions of fit during their job search (Research Question 2). An explorative study type is advised since this paper aims to assess the phenomena of job search and the accuracy of developed pre-hire fit perceptions in a new light by considering the rise of the internet (Saunders et al., 2008).

The nature of this study is subjective and varies heavily depending on the context of the job seeker, which is why a qualitative research strategy is advised and was adopted for this research (Scotland, 2012). Rather than finding proof in numerical data, the identification of various job search themes,

motives, and strategies are sought to get an understanding of the role of the internet in this context. Thus, qualitative research permits to get deeper insights into the reasoning behind the to be examined changes in job search, as well as the perception building with regards to fit (Savolainen & Kari, 2004a).

Within this research strategy, which is further outlined in the following chapter, a multi-method of data collection is applied by deriving primary data from semi-structured interviews, which will be compared to secondary data from literature on pre-internet job search. The interviews are conducted over a short period of time with participants that are employed for less than a year. This cross-sectional time horizon is helpful to get a snapshot of the job search of this study's sample in the current labor market situation. Lastly, concerning the ethics of research, the confidentiality of the primary data is ensured, and interviewees as well as organizations are presented in an anonymous manner (Saunders et al., 2008).

Exploratory studies usually require a certain degree of flexibility from the investigators (Saunders et al., 2008). Schvaneveldt and Adams (1991) highlight that the researchers need to be able to adapt their investigation when new considerations (– potential opportunities –) are encountered. Throughout the progress of the research, a broad focus will thus become narrower (ibid.). From conducting the literature review to collecting and analyzing data, such flexibility has been taken into account. The purpose of the investigation – exploring job search and post-hire match quality in the internet age in terms of behaviors, perceptions, and assessment – has remained unmodified, whereas the final research questions and approach of analysis have changed during the process. Supported by Agee (2009), adapting the qualitative research questions throughout this iterative process can “(...) give shape and direction to a study in ways that are often underestimated” (p.431), and permits interview participants to indirectly share their perspectives to give insights on the prospective research questions.

4.2 Quality Assessment: Trustworthiness of Research

The research design must be constructed in a way that results in trustworthy research findings. In general, reliability, validity and generalizability are vital for quantitative research, but less applicable in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). This is why, qualitative researchers have adapted these terms in order to assess the quality of research by referring to its trustworthiness (Bryman,

2012). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria, namely *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*.

Credibility parallels internal validity and is concerned with the issue of how believable findings are. This can be ensured by respondent validation and/or triangulation (Bryman, 2012). The former is provided due to the fact that interview transcripts and the final analysis have been sent to every interviewee respectively for validation. The latter is enabled due to multiple interviewers, as well as the use of primary and secondary data sources.

Transferability parallels external validity, or generalizability, and questions whether findings apply to other contexts (Bryman, 2012). As in this research, qualitative interviews tend to use small samples, and are oriented towards the contextual uniqueness of the people investigated (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). If so called ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz, 1973) of the context are provided, others can judge whether results are transferable. This study outlays thick descriptions of context-specific characteristics, more precisely of the current labor market by means of the chosen sample in Chapter 4.3.3. It must be noted that results cannot be generalized to such a degree as for quantitative research, a limitation acknowledged later in this paper (Chapter 6.1). However, the generalizability of the presented research findings could be strengthened by means of follow-up studies, which are proposed for further research (Chapter 6.2) (Saunders et al., 2008).

Dependability parallels reliability and identifies whether findings are likely to apply at other times (Bryman, 2012). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose an ‘auditing’ approach, in which the research process shall be recorded and then peer reviewed. The subjective and context-specific nature of qualitative research requires transparency that permits others to follow the chain of evidence used in this paper (Bluhm, Harman, Lee, & Mitchell, 2011). More precisely, the research process linkages to respective data sources and derived conclusions are made traceable by fully outlining the research process (Chapter 4.3 and 4.4), referencing findings to the collected data, and having all integrated data allocated and accessible in a virtual data base.

Confirmability parallels objectivity and investigates whether researchers have biased the study to a high degree (Bryman, 2012). In social research complete objectivity is not feasible, but the investigators should aim at providing an unbiased investigation. The degree of objectivity is higher in this study, as two researchers can limit each other’s personal bias.

Although, qualitative studies seem to require more or complex actions to ensure trustworthiness, its ecological validity is stronger than in quantitative research due its more naturalistic set-up (Bryman, 2012). In other words, data collection occurs in a more natural setting, which increases the chances of results, by means of participants' perspectives or behaviors that are closer to reality.

4.3 Data Collection and Procedure

Data collection is key to empirical research in order to obtain a rich set of data that is analyzed to answer the proposed research questions (Saunders et al., 2008). In support of that, the collection and application of several independent data sources strengthens the internal validity of the research by means of data triangulation⁷ and ultimately enhances the trustworthiness of the research (Bryman, 2012).

Consequently, *primary* as well as *secondary data* has been used for investigating the research questions. When data is explicitly collected for the purpose of a study, one refers to primary data (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Alongside the up-to-datedness of such data, another major benefit is the possibility to follow procedures that fit the research problem most appropriately (Hox & Boeije, 2005). On the other hand, secondary data is already available data, being collected by others (e.g. literature reviews, official statistics or newspaper articles) (Adams, Khan, Raeside, & White, 2007). Such data enables easy and fast collection of high amounts of information, and is seen as less biased, therefore more reliable and valid than primary data (Adams et al., 2007; Bryman, 2012). By aiming at filling the identified research gap, mainly primary data from semi-structured phone interviews is used to explore both, job search and match quality, in the light of the internet. Secondary data is collected from past research concerned with job search in the pre-internet context in order to facilitate a comparison of job search behavior under the influence of the internet. Using both types of data sources helps to triangulate research findings.

When employing various sources of evidence, the use of a systematic data base is recommended for two reasons: First, investigators keep an organized overview of all data collected and sorted, which ensures to not get lost in massive amounts of data pieces. Secondly, the dependability and reliability of the study is augmented because others can theoretically review the evidence not only as a final

⁷ Definition: "(...) two or more independent sources of data or data collection methods [are used] to corroborate research findings within a study." (Saunders et al., 2008, p. 154)

report, but also as raw data (Yin, 2006). For these reasons, a data base in form of a virtual folder structure has been built.

4.3.1 Semi-structured phone interviews

As stated above, semi-structured interviews are used. This is reasoned by the fact that they are well suited for explorative studies to understand underlying values, beliefs and motives (Barriball & While, 1994; Richardson, Dohrenwend, & Klein, 1965), as it offers participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important and thus share their subjective perspective (Longhurst, 2003). When assessing the subjective perspectives of job seekers concerning the internet's perceived influence and quality, individual interviews thus seem most appropriate for a fruitful investigation of both research questions (Savolainen & Kari, 2004b).

The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that a list of themes and questions can be covered but may be varied with regard to the context of the person's job search in order to adapt to their situation (Saunders et al., 2008). Thus, the interview guideline is structured according to the order and topics in the literature review which helps to have a red line to follow during the interview, and to enable a clearer process in the analysis. By following general and formal principles, researchers made sure to formulate open-ended indirect questions to receive rich, detailed and unbiased answers (Harvard University, n.d.). In addition, the interview questions are also inspired by Feldman and Klaas (2002), whose qualitative study poses some questions that indirectly ask for the usefulness of internet in search for information. Lastly, to create a flow in the conversation, semi-structured interviews have some predetermined order but permit flexibility in how issues are addressed (Dunn, 2005; Saunders et al., 2008). The final interview guideline is accessible in the Appendix B.

All ten interviews (Table 1) followed the same procedure: The conversation started off with an introduction including the research purpose, as well as general practicalities before proceeding with the actual research-related interview. For starting the inquiry easier and relaxed, participants first had to describe both, their 'perfect' or 'ideal' employer and job, which encouraged them to talk freely about their expectations and values regarding employment. The following main part dealt with the job search process and post-hire fit assessment, before closing the interview with the question of whether the participants would like to add anything further.

Reference	Interview Participant	Interview Date	Interview Length
Interview 1	P1	07.03.2019	49 min
Interview 2	P2	08.03.2019	32 min
Interview 3	P3	09.03.2019	23 min
Interview 4	P4	09.03.2019	25 min
Interview 5	P5	10.03.2019	37 min
Interview 6	P6	14.03.2019	65 min
Interview 7	P7	17.03.2019	61 min
Interview 8	P8	20.03.2019	36 min
Interview 9	P9	28.03.2019	41 min
Interview 10	P10	05.04.2019	44 min

Table 1: List of semi-structured Interviews (Recordings 1-10)

All interviews were conducted via telephone, due to geographical distance, time constraints, as well as preference on part of the interviewees. Since the interviewee did not see when researchers are looking at their prepared questions or are taking notes, this setting is believed to feel less of a discomfort of being observed, and thus created a more natural atmosphere for the participant. For all interviews, both researchers were present to ensure that one can guide the conversation and cater to the participant, whilst the other can take notes of the answers and pay attention to all details. Due to the different and often complementary perspectives of the two present researchers, chances of capturing relevant and novel insights are increased. In addition to the phone interviews, the researchers have also been in contact with the interviewees through informal calls and e-mails before and after recorded interview session.

For the later analysis process, it is highly beneficial to have the interviews done in English. This is why researchers have made sure to ask the interviewee for permission that the interview would be conducted in English. After having a consent form signed (Appendix C for an exemplary version) and been granted permission, each interview was recorded and transcribed. Capturing data by following this procedure is time-consuming, but it has two major advantages: For one, the researchers do not have to rely only on their memories and written notes, but they can also make use of the transcribed data, which is especially helpful for later analysis (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). For the other, providing documented proof of the data collection in the digital data base makes the line of evidence traceable for others, thus strengthening the research's credibility.

4.3.2 Secondary Data

Data originally compiled for other purposes is used for empirically investigating the first research question (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Specifically, in order to identify changes in job search and job

search behavior and accredit them to the influence of the internet, secondary literature concerned with pre-internet job search needs to be contrasted with the primary data collected through the interviews. Collecting and analyzing secondary data allows for the needed insights about job search and the individuals' job search behaviors in the era before the internet. Literature that is considered here either thematizes job search and has been published before 1989 – the time before the world wide web has been introduced and made available to anyone (Berners-Lee, Dimitroyannis, Mallinckrodt, & McKay, 1994) or highlights aspects the internet facilitates now in the context of job search compared to before.

With respect to the secondary literature, researchers use compiled data which consists of literature from past research including reviews, but also statistics and articles when applicable (Saunders et al., 2008). Such data is found by means of the university library, the research-oriented search engine Google Scholar, as well as research databases such as EBSCO or ScienceDirect.

4.3.3 Sampling

Since this study aims at information-rich and context-specific findings to explore the research gap, non-probability sampling is typically advised (Patton, 2002). When deciding on whom to interview, the research questions determine and guide on what category and characteristics of people to focus, and therefore sample (Bryman, 2012). As – per name – purposive sampling is a strategical approach that links a criteria-based selection of the research subjects to the goals of the research in order to answer the research questions (Bryman, 2012). More specifically, this study pursued homogeneous sampling by concentrating on a certain subgroup, in which sample members are similar, which enables an in-depth investigation of such (Patton, 2002).

In the following three main criteria are presented based on which interview participants were selected. Firstly, the sample should be composed of Millennials⁸. People from Generation Y are heavily influenced by technological changes, especially the world wide web, which makes them appropriate for investigations with regards to internet usage, internet affinity, and internet reliance (Ng et al., 2010). Secondly, interview candidates should be recent Graduates, so called 'New Entrants' to the labor market that have started their job under a year ago. As recent Graduates are

⁸ People born between 1980 and 1994

still new in the company, chances are reasonably high that they are able to reflect their pre-hire job search, while also being able to provide opinions on post-hire fit. In addition, many scholars emphasize that there are important distinctions between job seekers new to the market and those seeking reemployment in terms of both, the job search behavior and their fit assessments (Saks & Ashforth, 1999). The transition from college to work life is challenging, specifically because recent Graduates are unfamiliar and under-informed about the realities of work life (Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015). Realizing that the labor market is much different, they depend on available information which they gather in order to decrease their uncertainty about potential workplaces (McCall, 1970). In order to evaluate an organization as potential employer, they build perceptions based on the information they get about the organization, job, and current employees (Ng & Burke, 2006). Thirdly, the prospective interviewee should not have prior work experience with the organization currently employed. This is reasoned by the fact, that if previously employed at the organization individuals would have first-hand knowledge about the organization and work environment and could use past experiences to anticipate organizational recruiting practices (Cable et al., 2000). Such personal insights would bias or falsify the investigation of the effect of online information search on post-hire match quality, because the individual has already been able to assess post-hire fit with the organization in the previous employment.

The appropriate sample size for qualitative studies including interviews is open to debate by many different researchers (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2008). In general, smaller sample sizes lead to the advantage that more detailed information can be collected (Saunders et al., 2008). Due to time and manpower constraints, ten people have been asked to participate in the interviews, of which nine ended up being the subjects of this study. One interview has been excluded from the analysis due to language barriers that did not lead to substantial content for analysis purposes.

4.4 Analysis

A deductive approach for analyzing the data has been considered most beneficial to address both research questions. When pursuing a deductive method, existing theoretical groundwork helps to shape how the data analysis is organized and directed (Yin, 2006). More precisely, key themes from the literature review are used to build a predetermined analytical framework which guides the analysis of the collected data (Saunders et al., 2008). The theoretical groundwork of job search shapes the analysis for Research Question 1, while fit theory provides the foundation to assess Research Question 2.

The empirical investigation of the research gap involves interrelated and interactive processes. This being said, the process of investigation starts with the data collection and finishes when results are discussed (Kvale, 1996). This means, that during the collection of data important themes, patterns, and relationships become already apparent which are part of the subsequent analysis process (Saunders et al., 2008).

The analysis comprises four consecutive steps, which are illustrated in Figure 4. To begin with, this analysis' first two steps are based on categorization, which is a type of qualitative analysis processes that entails the grouping of meanings to organize the collected raw data (Saunders et al., 2008). Within the first step, categories are identified by means of the research questions and objectives of the research, according to which data should be fragmented (Miles & Huberman, 1994). More specifically, categories are derived from the theoretical basis presented in Chapter 3 and include the activities during the two job search phases, information search and sources, as well as the dimensions of pre-hire and post-hire fit perceptions. Preliminary categories are expected to emerge for later analysis from the answers given to interview questions (Saunders et al., 2008), which is why these categories have been considered while designing the interview guideline. However, the specific questions to be asked are subject to a certain degree of revision and development depending on the answers provided by the interview participant (Dey, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

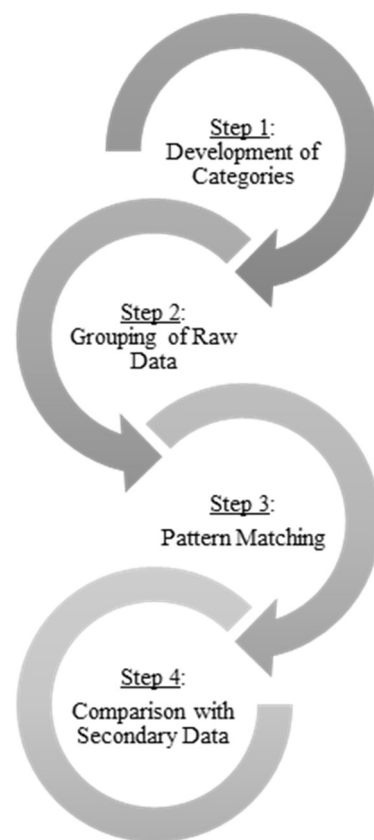


Figure 4: Four Steps of Analysis

In the second step, the gathered data is prepared for analysis. Raw data collected from qualitative interviews are non-standardized and complex and thus need to be grouped in order to enable a meaningful analysis (Saunders et al., 2008). Therefore, the researchers screen every interview transcript and label data units - or quotes - according to the predefined categories. Afterwards, these units are sorted in respect of their category belongings and listed in one document in the virtual folder. This list with quotes ordered by category ultimately provides the basis for the subsequent analysis. That is because such structured overview of processed data helps to recognize

relationships, both in terms of alignments and misalignments within each category, to potentially identify new themes (Dey, 2003).

In the third step, the technique of *pattern matching* is applied. Pattern matching is an analytical procedure wherein the collected and categorized data is investigated by means of the theoretical propositions. In this case, theoretical propositions suggested considering the research gap (Saunders et al., 2008), concern theoretically derived expectations towards how the internet may impact job search and post-hire job match quality. Pattern matching enables the researchers to identify what findings are expected from literature and which ones are new (ibid.). Consequently, if the data corresponds with what the researchers have proposed, then an explanation for the impact of the internet has been found (ibid.).

In the last step, only applicable to the first research question, the secondary data will be contrasted with the collected primary data in order to explore how the internet has changed a job seeker's job search and his behavior.

The following outlays in detail how the analysis regarding each research question is approached and how findings are identified. With regard to the study's two research questions and the respective analytical frameworks, namely job search behavior (Research Question 1) and fit theory (Research Question 2), the analysis is clustered into two interrelated parts.

Part One addresses Research Question 1 and focuses on job search and how it has changed with the advent of the internet. Therefore, the study participant's job search behavior is analyzed based on the two job search phases involving preparatory and active job search behavior, respectively (Blau, 1994). According to previous literature, job search corresponds to the search for and acquisition of information, first in an extensive and then in an intensive manner (Barber et al., 1994; A. Rees, 1966). Particular attention is given to when and how the study participants use the internet as a source of information throughout the job search. At this point, it should be mentioned that the analysis involves only those job search behaviors that are performed before the job seeker attends job interviews. The analysis of the primary data is then followed by the analysis of the secondary data. Research applicable to this study's secondary data are found to investigate processes preceding an individual's organizational entry predominantly from an organizational viewpoint (Wanous, 1977). Therefore, this study's analysis considers also literature from the field of recruitment. By analyzing such research, one can derive insights about the job information sources

used in job search before the commercialization of the internet. Finally, the analysis of primary and secondary data enables for a comparison of gained insights regarding the job search in a time with and without internet.

Part Two of the analysis is devoted to Research Question 2 (illustrated in Figure 5). As elaborated in the theoretical groundwork of fit theory, match quality is facilitated if the pre-hire perceived fit equals the post-hire perceived fit. Primarily, perceptions of fit before employment are based on the information gathered during the intensive search for information in the active job search phase. In order to analyze whether the internet increases the employment match quality (post-hire), one need to understand (a) whether the participant has actually sought the information determining her/her

post-hire perception of fit (i.e. employment match quality), (b) whether the participant has found the information (relevant to her/his assessment of employment quality) by means of the internet and (c) in case the information has been found, whether the participant has relied upon it. The participant is assumed to have relied upon found information and thus to have formed pre-hire perceptions of fit based on that information when s/he states to perceive the information to be useful or reliable. The participant's pre-hire perceived fit with the job and/or organization, which are either explicitly stated throughout or implicitly derived from the interview, are compared to

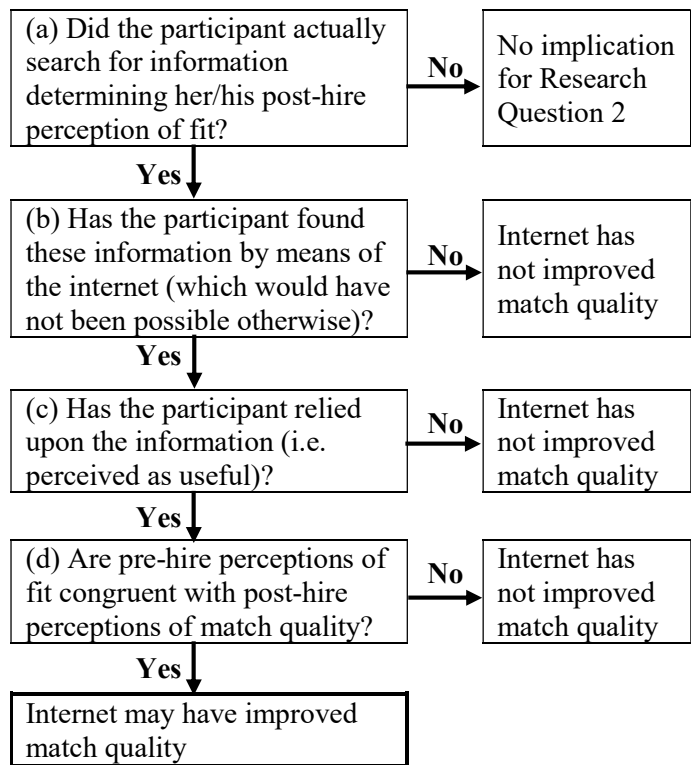


Figure 5: How to approach Research Question 2

the participant's post-hire fit perceptions. (d) If these perceptions are congruent with one another and the pre-hire perceptions are formed on information gathered from the internet, it is possible to derive that the internet may have improved the employment match quality.

The analysis examines the perceptions of fit with respect to the information gathered throughout the process of job search (i.e. as will be discussed in Part One). Therefore, the available information about organizational and job-related characteristics is used separately to infer the pre-hire

perception of P-O fit and P-J fit, respectively. Moreover, post-hire perceived fit is detected when participants deem pre-hire perceptions to be realistic and/or when they emphasize their organization and job satisfaction to be existent.

The next section presents the results derived from the interviews conducted with the purposively chosen sample. Appendix D presents an overview with exemplary quotes for each result that represent evidence for the researchers' argumentation. As stated in the quality of assessment section, generalizability of results is not possible since the study is not a quantitative survey. Due to the particular characteristics of the participants, results are therefore tendentious assertions rather than representative inferences. Thus, the ultimate findings are biased towards the subgroup of individuals.

4.5 Results

4.5.1 Part One: Job Search and Job Search Behavior

4.5.1.1 Pre-Preparatory Job Search with Internet

Pre-preparatory Job Search Behavior: Career-Oriented Engagement Online

The analysis suggests that two participants do not enter the job search process in a blank state. In fact, before they have identified and committed to the goal of finding a job, the participants showed interest in career- or job-related information throughout their education. The interest motivated their online behavior of subscribing to career-related websites or on various social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram. In consequence, the individual has received information via email or via newsfeeds on social media on a regular base and hence, is enabled to acquire information without searching actively or continuously. The analysis shows that individuals become aware of not only career-related possibilities but also recruitment events some of which they eventually visit.

“(...) by having social media ads, in your Instagram feed and your Facebook feed, or Google ads, and whatsoever (...) I see opportunities, for example, to meet them [different organizations] at recruiting events, but also [to learn] about new traineeships. I see these information, even though I'm not actively looking [for a job], but I still might consider to then engage with the company (...).” (P1)

Such online behavior, in particular subscribing to career-related webpages, is expected given that career- or job-related information can be received at no cost, in terms of effort and expense, which otherwise would hamper the individual's job search activities (McCall, 1970). The finding of such

online information gathering prior the actual job search can be related to the debate of whether social media platforms contribute to informing society (Cacciatore et al., 2018). In this context, several researchers acknowledge that the purpose of using social media, especially Facebook, is no longer only social but also informative (Cacciatore et al., 2018; Gottfried & Shearer, 2017; Mitchell, Gottfried, & Matsa, 2015; Olmstead, Mitchell, & Rosenstiel, 2011). However, others highlight that with increasing social networks, social media platform users are exposed to too many status updates and newsfeeds, thus to too much information, most of which the users do not consider as being important (Paek, Gamon, Counts, Chickering, & Dhesi, 2010).

Not all study participants report about such information gathering on social media platforms prior the actual engagement in job search. This is in agreement with how social media platforms such as Facebook have been used initially. In particular, such platforms enable individuals to connect socially, express and share their personal selves, and investigate their social networks, among others (Dijck, 2013; Joinson, 2008; Papacharissi, 2009). Another reason, albeit a less obvious one, for why the remaining seven participants do not engage in information gathering prior actual job search could read as follows: The participants are likely to differ in their personality traits which in turn influence their job search behavior (Turban et al., 2009). People who pursue a more proactive job search behavior in terms of gathering information and building networks with potential employers are said to be highly conscientious (Resick, Baltes, & Shantz, 2007). Thus, the participants may differ in their levels of conscientiousness which then affect their career-related information gathering behaviors.

#1: Facilitated in their behavior online, individuals gather career-related information before they start engaging in their actual job search.
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4.5.1.2 Preparatory Job Search with Internet

In the preparatory job search phase, four general job search behaviors directed at identifying potential jobs are noticeable. The first behavior comprises updating profiles and profile settings on career-related online platforms. The second is searching target-oriented for vacant positions on organizational websites. The third involves searching more randomly and the last preparatory job search behavior relates to using informal job information sources.

Preparatory Job Search Behavior: Maintaining Online Profiles

By updating profiles on career-related online platforms such as LinkedIn, the participants signal not only their interests in certain kinds of job positions and certain industries but also their qualifications, skills and work experiences. For instance, four participants clarify in their profile and profile settings not only to be looking for a job at the moment but also to describe what exactly they are looking for. In the terminology of fit theory, the job seeker expresses his needs as well as abilities which a job should be compatible with. By means of the internet, job seekers signal characteristics, qualifications and preferences to a broad, geographically unrestricted and somewhat unknown public. Thus, signaling in an online environment can be seen as more efficient than signaling in an offline context. That is because offline, a job seeker typically signals his characteristics within an application which is directed at a single organization at a time. Although the behavior of updating profiles and profile settings aims at identifying potential job positions, it does not pursue this goal directly. Rather, it facilitates the identification of job leads in a more passive manner. In particular, the individual enables the intermediary online platform to provide him with targeted information about relevant recruiting events or with customized information in terms of accumulated potential job matches. Additionally, updated profiles enable recruiters, using such platforms, to approach the individual with a suitable job position. The job openings suggested by the online platform or recruiters are presumably to some degree relevant for the individual job seeker. That is because, the internet makes the job seeker's profile information available to anyone on the platform, who then uses the information to properly profile candidates who match requirements of open job positions (Weitzel et al., 2018). As a consequence, the jobs suggested match the job seeker's profile, such as demographics, KSAs, among others. Conclusively, maintaining a profile on such career-oriented platforms allows for passive job search and lowers the initial effort that is needed to identify vacant job positions in the first instance. Nevertheless, the individual needs to evaluate the given information and decide whether or not to pursue some positions further.

Generally, it comes as no surprise that the study participants update their profiles on career-related online platforms such as LinkedIn during their job search. According to Erwin Goffman's theory of the self and society, human beings take different roles depending on the situation they are in. Furtherly, he asserts that individuals present various roles of their selves to the respective target audiences and thereby aim at controlling how they are perceived (Goffman, 2002). LinkedIn and

similar online platforms are strongly professional-oriented (Papacharissi, 2009) so that they present, in Goffman's terminology, stages optimal for the individuals to showcase professional knowledge, skills and experiences (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). Thus, updating a profile on career-related online platforms such as LinkedIn provides the individual with the possibility to not only form a (professional) online identity but also present this identity to the environment (Dijck, 2013; Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011; Shepherd, 2005).

#2a: The internet facilitates passive job search and thereby eases the identification of vacant job positions

Preparatory Job Search Behavior: Searching on Organizational Websites

This paragraph discusses the second identified preparatory job search behavior, namely the search for jobs directly on an organizational website. In order to search in such manner, hence target-oriented, the job seeker needs to be familiar with the organizations he could potentially work for. The analysis reveals that seven participants consider certain organizations as potential employers. Thus, when they begin to engage in job search behavior, one could say that they have already formed an initial set of alternative organizations. If this is the case, the participants are found to look directly for open job positions on the organization's website.

"(...) I started with companies that I was pretty much familiar with. I knew what they are doing and what kind of jobs I can expect from them. Starting from there, I was looking at [the organization's website] what kind of positions they are offering currently (...)." (P2)

This behavior responds to the organizations' initiatives of creating job listings on their own websites (Zusman & Landis, 2002). Target-oriented job search behavior can be beneficial to the job seeker for the following reasons: when searching for open job positions available on the organization's website, the job seeker can be certain that the organization would publish the jobs that are to be filled there. In contrast, when searching elsewhere, meaning through other channels that are not primarily controlled by the organization, the job seeker does not know whether the organization uses the respective channel as recruitment source to spread its job openings. Furthermore, while job descriptions on third-party job boards are often shorter and limited in their information, the organizational website dedicated to recruitment contains usually additional information, for instance about the organizational culture, history or employee benefits (Braddy,

Thompson, Wuensch, & Grossnickle, 2003; Gatewood et al., 1993). Hence, the job seeker is able to gather a relatively large amount of information by visiting only one online source. Ideally, job listings on organizational websites are up-to-date and come with filter functionalities. The study's and similar findings showing that job seekers search regularly target-oriented for jobs can be taken as an implication that job seekers find and navigate through the organizations' job listings easily (Jansen et al., 2005). However, this cannot always be expected because not all, but typically large, organizations maintain such listings on their own organizational website (Cappelli, 2001). Nonetheless, regarding those organizations utilizing websites to the fullest, the organizational websites in the internet enable the job seeker not only to search in a target-oriented manner but also to detect easily whether there is a suitable job at a desired organization at the time of search.

#2b: The internet facilitates target-oriented search for vacant job positions directly on an organization's website

Preparatory Job Search Behavior: Searching Organizations and Jobs Online

The analysis shows that almost all participants (except for one) also search for potential jobs in a random manner, meaning that they search for jobs without considering specific organizations upfront. It stands out that one can generally differentiate between two approaches to searching randomly, which are not mutually exclusive. The first approach comprises job search behaviors that are directed straightly at identifying vacant job positions. The second approach involves job search behaviors that are in the first instance aimed at catching sight of potential employers, before identifying potential job leads at these employers.

With respect to the first approach, it appears that the internet plays an essential role, because most of the participants (i.e. seven out of nine) not only use career-related online platforms such as LinkedIn, Stepstone, Indeed or more specialized ones such as StartUs⁹ but also recognize their unique characteristics and functions. One such functionality relates to the possibility to filter one's search which narrows down the returned search results to the relevant ones. For instance, six participants frequently report that they have certain cities in mind which they could imagine living

⁹ "StartUs is a professional network connecting (.) [job seekers] with the European startup community" (StartUs, 2019)

and working in. By setting filters accordingly, the participants are only exposed to those jobs available in their preferred cities. Hence, they do not have to screen all available job positions regarding whether these match with their personal criteria, in this case the specific locations. Another characteristic that has been mentioned is the constant up-to-datedness, which eases the process of identifying not only all open but also the most recently opened positions. This means, that job seekers can be sure that job advertisements posted on online platforms are valid. Another named characteristic of career-related platforms links to the phenomenon of the indirect network effect, which benefits job seekers and recruiting organizations likewise. This means that the more job seekers use a platform to look for vacant jobs, the more valuable is the platform to recruiting organizations as a source of recruitment (and vice versa) (Johnson, 2018). Especially, concerning popular platforms such as Stepstone, five participants are found to appreciate that seemingly all organizations publish their vacant jobs there, which is accounted for the popularity among the job seekers to use this platform as a job search tool.

“The searching at Stepstone is really easy, as well as to filter. That's really, really good. And there are quite new jobs. So when a company has a new job, it's always at Stepstone. So I think it's really really up-to-date. I think it's many of those companies post on Stepstone.” (P5)

Interestingly, the internet provides job seekers access not only to such online platforms but also to search engines such as Google that enable the job seeker to learn about the various platforms in the first place.

“I didn't know anything about those [start-up specific] portals. So I just googled 'start-ups in Munich' and then I found the portals and if you then google 'start-up jobs in Munich' then you find all the job listings.” (P6)

State employment offices are another formal, yet offline, job information source (A. Rees, 1966). Two participants also use these within their job search. Yet, the participants point out their futility concerning the usefulness for identifying job positions. Given firstly, that both have reported negative experiences regarding the support they had received and secondly, that visiting state employment offices is required legally in some countries, it can be implied that job seekers search primarily elsewhere in order to identify open job positions.

The more random job search behavior corresponds to what Rees (1966) calls extensive search because the job seeker derives value from identifying additional job positions. As described earlier,

the characteristics of online platforms such as, up-to-datedness and comprehensiveness, regarding the number of open positions that are announced, ease the process of identifying as much suitable positions as possible. All in all, the internet and the career-related platforms therefrom facilitate search activities that identify vacant job positions more effectively and efficiently.

Next, the second approach involves searching more indirectly for potential job leads, meaning the job seekers search for organizations first. The analysis reveals that seven participants use once more the internet, supposedly search engines like Google or career-related platforms such as LinkedIn, to identify potential organizations. Notably, the analysis shows that two participants also use offline information sources to identify potential employers, however less frequently than the internet. That is to say, participants visit recruiting events, of these they become aware through various online platforms or targeted social media advertising. Ultimately, while recruiting events allow for personal contact with organizational representatives, they are unlikely to represent all organizations that could be qualified for being a potential employer. In contrast, by means of the use of online search engines, the internet is more likely to provide the job seeker with an all-embracing list of possible organizations and, depending on the job seeker's query, with a comprehensive list of only relevant organizations. For instance, one participant searches via Google for 'start-ups in Munich' or another for 'companies in Hamburg' and are in consequence provided with search results whereof the first ones contain lists of either 'all' but only start-ups in Munich or all organizations in Hamburg.

Searching for potential organizations before performing behaviors that aim at identifying potential job positions, has not been considered as preparatory job search behavior in the job search literature (Blau, 1994). Nevertheless, such behavior finds support in fit theory. Based on Schneider's ASA framework, P-O fit research suggests that individuals are attracted to those organizations that have values similar to their own values (ibid.). This may be the underlying reason for why the participants identify potential employers before they identify potential jobs. That is because the job seeker is able to narrow down the set of organizations to those, he actually considers as potential prospective employers, thus perceives P-O fit. Only then the job seeker aims at finding a 'fitting' job at these organizations.

#2c: The internet eases job search behavior that is performed in a random manner.

Preparatory Job Search Behavior: Informal Information Search

The fourth preparatory job search behavior relates to the use of informal job information sources, while the aforementioned job search behaviors represent formal job search methods. Five participants report to utilize social networks as informal job information sources, thus as source of instrumental support (A. Rees, 1966). The analysis shows that the participants do not conduct job search behaviors exclusively by means of formal job information sources, but rather and if available complement these sources with informal information sources, such as family, friends and acquaintances. For instance, three participants state to approach their friends or acquaintances actively in order to ask for their help on gathering potential job leads.

“All of my friends started getting jobs and I didn't. Some of those friends were actually active in certain sectors I really wanted to get into. So I told them: "Okay, you got a job now. Look out for me. I need a job. (...) Sometimes it's just easier.” (P9)

Even if they may not have asked for help directly, they have obviously informed their social and/or professional network about their current job search, either personally or by changing their profile status on career-related platforms. This enables people within the participant's network to initiate contact when having information about potential job positions. Hence, such job search behavior parallels the more passive pursuit of identifying potential job positions.

Overall, it appears that friends or relatives are not as useful for gathering potential job positions as formal platforms or sources in the internet. While the job seeker can use filter functionalities on online platforms in such a way that he is provided with only those jobs he would consider as potential job leads, informal sources do not allow for such filter functionalities and may therefore provide the “unfiltered” set of vacant job positions. Furthermore, friends, relatives and other acquaintances are likely to inform the job seeker only about those vacant jobs that exist at the organizations they are currently employed. Therefore, if the job seeker relied solely on his informal network, he would likely miss out on job positions at organizations which are not represented as current employers within the informal network. Yet, these jobs may still be in line for being a potential match for the job seeker. Lastly, two participants declare that their informal network is not suitable for being used as an informal job information source. In this case, friends or relatives simply work in another industry or have not started working yet. Then, the job seeker needs to rely on other, hence formal, sources in order to identify potential job positions.

Besides, utilizing informal information networks for gathering information about vacant job positions, four participants also asked for advice regarding the general job search or the preparation of the formal materials required for applications.

“So when I did my job search I always connected to people who have been also in the job search at the moment in Germany. (...) in Germany you have to write a cover letter and all that stuff. So I connected to people who were in the same situation as I was, (...) like ‘oh, that person has been looking for a job recently, so maybe she can help you with a CV and cover letters – to help me with how they should be written.’ So that was quite helpful, (...).” (P6)

#2d: Job seekers use informal job information sources to complement formal ones. Yet, only those friends, relatives or acquaintances who are currently employed at organizations that search for new employees are useful for identifying vacant job positions.

4.5.1.3 Active Job Search with Internet

Active Job Search Behavior: Getting in Touch with Potential Employers

As elaborated in the literature review, one active job search behavior involves actually applying for jobs (Blau, 1994). Three study participants state that often it was not them who had initiated the contact with an organization by applying actively. Instead, their active job search behavior relies on replying to messages sent by recruiters, for instance on LinkedIn, or by applying for recruiting events rather than for actual job positions. In the former case, the preparatory job search behavior, namely maintaining profiles on career-related online platforms (i.e. #2a) lays the foundation for being contacted by recruiters with suitable jobs and in consequence enables for this active job search behavior. In other words, the possibility of passive job search in the internet results in the opportunity to skip the active behavior of applying and still get in contact with the organization.

“(...) I just replied to recruiters that contacted me on LinkedIn. So, I haven't applied actively in quite some time.” (P4)

Another possibility that may facilitate to skip applying actively originates in the use of informal information networks. With regard to such networks in an online environment, recent research emphasizes the superiority of online social networking sites in maintaining and accessing large social networks compared to traditional social networks (Enders et al., 2008). Considering the platform LinkedIn, for example, among the more than 500 Million people using LinkedIn

approximately 40 percent¹⁰ have between 300 and 1000 first level connections (Anciaux, 2018), which is likely more contacts than any individual has in an offline environment. By means of these platforms and available search functionalities, the job seeker who considers a particular organization as a potential employer is then able to identify if someone within his online network is currently employed at this organization. Besides, these online networking sites not only enable the job seeker to identify individuals who are currently employed at the organization of interest among his first level connections, but also among second and third level connections. Therefore, the internet and personal online networks provide the potential to benefit from a larger informal network as well as from the easy identification of those connections that may be useful for getting referred to the desired organization. However, none of the participants made use of such online network when it comes to actually getting in contact with a potential employer by means of being referred from someone within this network. Only one participant has recognized such possibilities that arise from the online social networks' superiority.

“[In LinkedIn,] you can also see who else is working in that company and whether you know someone in that company. Obviously, you can use your network for that. So if you know someone in that company, that person might be able to refer you directly to a job.” (P6)

In contrast to online informal networks, the analysis indicates that traditional or offline informal information networks are more likely to be used by the participants to skip applying actively. More precisely, two participants state to have used their offline informal networks throughout the active job search phase and one participant reveals that s/he has eventually gotten in contact with an organization in consequence of a friend referring her/him. The reason for why traditional informal information networks, compared to online ones, may end up to be more useful for actually getting in contact with potential employers could read as follows: individuals are inclined to refer someone only if they can be certain about the to be referred person's attributes and qualifications so that the referees' own reputation is not at risk (Sicilian, 1995). Within the context of the internet, it can be assumed that the individuals cannot assess with certainty the qualifications of any other individual within the large networks.

¹⁰ The survey has included a total of 900 respondents (Power Formula, 2016)

“So actually, my friend just asked me to send over my CV, that there might be something or he could maybe forward the CV. (...) So I forwarded my CV and then I got an email from one of my bosses now saying that he's interested in interviewing me, (...).” (P9)

It should be noted, that although three participants regularly skip applying actively, this behavior is often only used to complement the behavior of applying directly elsewhere.

#3a: While career-related online platforms facilitate the job seeker’s initial contact with an organization without applying actively for a job position, online informal information networks appear not to be useful for skipping the behavior of actively applying.
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Active Job Search Behavior: Intensive Information Search

Within the active job search phase, the analysis provides evidence that the participants look for and gather more information about specific jobs and organizations. In order to gain insights in how the internet has changed the job search behavior, the intensive search is discussed subsequently in terms of what information the participants seek, which information sources they use and how they evaluate these sources or the obtained information in respect of perceived usefulness. The table that reflects the subsequent elaboration is attached as Appendix E.

Active Job Search Behavior: Intensive Information Search regarding Jobs I

The following discusses the participants’ formal job search methods used within the intensive search. All participants seek for additional information in order to learn more about a specific job’s attributes and characteristics. This being said, the analysis reveals that the information sought relates to attributes that would fulfill the participants’ needs or desires, for instance the salary paid, the prospective pay raises or the opportunities for personal and professional development as well as to KSAs that are required by a specific job. Starting with job-related attributes that should ideally supply the participant’s needs, it catches one’s eye that almost all interviews (except for two) revolve eventually around monetary rewards such as salary. Six participants who actively attempted to learn about the salary state that they have searched online on Glassdoor.

“I looked there [on Glassdoor], because you get a lot of information: ‘Are people happy there? How is the pay and the work environment in general?’. You get information about these kinds of things. You get a feeling for it, at least.” (P2)

This and similar statements suggest that formal online information sources enable these participants to acquire some information which they evaluate useful to the effect that it gives them an idea of how much they would approximately earn. Nevertheless, the internet is not sufficient for those who seek more and also more detailed information than the average (participant) about monetary rewards. This is reflected in the explanation given by one participant saying that while the internet enables her/him to get some information about monetary rewards, most information about precise compensation practices usually remains unknown until later stages of the recruitment process. Notably, the analysis suggests that availability of organization-supplied information about salary and so forth differs with organizations. This being said, one participant remarks that s/he perceives European organizations generally more transparent regarding information about their monetary reward systems, compared to, for instance American organizations.

Another need that plays a role in the intensive search relates to professional growth. Four participants have repeatedly stated a need for personal and professional growth and in consequence were looking for more detailed information about the opportunities which a specific position would provide them. Assuming that professional growth is accompanied with increasing salary, the need for professional growth can also be seen as a need for increasing monetary rewards. While the participants desire to be provided with precise information by the organizations directly, for instance on their organizational website, the organizations do typically not accommodate them with this practice.

“I guess that's across all companies, is that usually your professional development, your career path, is not always that clear. (...) All the other companies really lacked that personal growth, professional growth, opportunity kind of thing.” (P1)

Subsequently, the respective four participants make use of the internet in order to find information through other formal online sources, such as LinkedIn or Kununu. Again, the participants perceive the obtained information as useful in order to get at least an impression. Yet, the analysis suggests that if a job seeker desires precise information about growth opportunities, the internet will not facilitate the availability of such information in the case that the organization itself has not published the information accordingly. To sum up, the participants aim at gathering more information about the specific job attributes that should ideally fulfill their (mostly monetary) needs by means of multiple third-party online sources. They do so because most organizations do not provide them with such information on their organizational websites. Hence, the internet may

enable job seekers to gather somewhat more information via various platforms and websites that are independent of organizations, even if this information is likely to be conducive to get only a rough idea about how the accurate job attributes may look like.

#3b: Regarding need fulfilling monetary job attributes, third-party online platforms enable the job seeker to acquire respective information, which he deems useful for getting an indication.

Active Job Search Behavior: Intensive Information Search regarding Jobs II

Next, the focus shifts towards the intensive search for information about the job's characteristics which demand the job seeker to have certain skills and abilities. In case the participants have searched for vacant job positions in a more random manner in the preparatory job search phase (i.e. #2c), they usually start off into the intensive search with a job description. Conversely, only when they have been contacted by a recruiter or have obtained a job offer after visiting a recruitment event, the participants usually do not possess a job description. Generally speaking, job descriptions published online, either on an organization's own website or on a third-party online job board, contain some information about a job's tasks, scope of responsibilities and the required KSAs. Even though, the participants classified vacant jobs as potential positions based on the respective descriptions, three of them do not always perceive the given information to be useful for forming impressions about how the job would be experienced on a daily basis. What may contribute to the perception of uselessness is that participants deem the content to be unrealistic. For instance, two participants describe that job descriptions regularly portray KSAs which they think are unrealistically high in the light of the advertised job position. In this study, one participant who does not perceive the information about the job position likely to be accurate, simply disregards the information but still pursues the position further. On the other side, one other participant becomes discouraged to pursue a position further due to the stated job requirements, even though s/he perceives them to be unrealistic. These findings point towards differences in how job seekers might react to information provided about the requirements of a specific job, despite their evaluations of the information being consistent. It should be noted that the usefulness of job descriptions likely varies with organizations, as they provide and control the content, rather than with online platforms. That is because the latter only make the job descriptions available but usually do not influence the content itself.

While half of the participants have considered the content of certain job descriptions enough to apply, the other half has been searching further for job specific information. However, if the organization has not made more information available, for instance on its website, it seems difficult to retrieve additional information through other online sources. Notably, one participant uses LinkedIn to infer what experiences the people have had who previously performed the job position which the participant pursues. While this enables the participant to assess the likelihood of being accepted by the organization, it probably does not help her/him to get a clearer impression of how the job experience would look like specifically.

Due to the difficulty in retrieving information about job attributes online, in case the organization has not made such available, the majority of participants relies on informal information networks, if available with regard to the organization and job of interest, or on personal interactions with organizational representatives, for instance at recruiting events. Overall, despite the many online platforms available in the internet, finding information online about specific tasks, responsibilities and so on that are specific to a certain job position does not seem to be fully satisfactory for any participant in this study.

“I think more helpful for me was to having detailed information provided by the recruiter about the job description. Especially, for getting to know what my daily tasks would look like and so forth.” (P5)

#3c: Concerning attributes required by or reflecting the experience of the job, the internet does not facilitate the gathering of more information when the organization has not made such available.

Active Job Search Behavior: Intensive Information Search regarding Organizations

All participants use formal job search methods to look not only for more information concerning the job but also for more information regarding the organization considered as potential employer. The information sought concerns, for instance, the organizational culture and the overall level of satisfaction among the individuals previously or currently employed, the organization’s reputation, the organization’s products and services, the organization’s current strategies, profitability and growth potential, or other organizational characteristics. Starting with the organizational culture, employee satisfaction and reputation, four participants name the organizational website or the organization’s social media as potential information sources. While half of them perceive the

information as useful, the other half points out that organizations try to come across appealing which in turn makes the information perceived to be less useful to obtain realistic impressions. Unquestionably, the internet provides organizations with yet another channel to communicate their recruiting relevant information. Yet, the internet does not influence the information released by the organization itself. Therefore, the subject of employer branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) and how it affects the accuracy of organization-controlled information remains relevant in an offline as well as in an online environment.

“Well, sure, there is a lot of new information now, but I would not say that it is totally unexpected. But surely, it is always that every larger company reflects an image to the outside and then in real life it's always probably 25% less of what they were promoting.” (P2)

Potentially to address the need for less branded information, four participants report to have used third-party online platforms such as Glassdoor, Comparably and Kununu. As described within the literature review, these platforms make user-submitted content available (Stevenson, 2009). Generally, two participants perceive such platforms to provide accurate and authentic information which is therefore thought of being useful to make inferences about how experiencing the organization as an employee would look like. Even though these platforms are widely used among the participants considering less factual information sought about organizations, there are also some critical voices. The skepticism originates in the question whether single opinions of strangers can be trusted and generalized in regard to the entire organization. The stance of skepticism regarding the generalizability and thus reliability of online reviews does not only concerns those reviews given on career-related platforms but instead any other kind of reviews, regarding for instance products, available in the internet (Racherla, Mandviwalla, & Connolly, 2012). That is because everyone can share opinions freely and anonymously on online platforms, without being verified and/or without the content of the review being verified, which is also the case for Glassdoor (Bowles, 2017; Flanagan & Metzger, 2000). Hence, the analysis points to the aspect, that job seekers are able to acquire a greater quantity of information from various sources in the internet, for instance organization reviews published by anonymous individuals. However, the issue of non-verified shared content remains so that job seekers have to evaluate on their own to what extent they are going to rely upon the available information. It might be for that reason that four participants clarify that online platforms with anonymous reviews about employers or organizations are perceived useful only if no informal source linking to the organization is existent.

“I mean, on sites like Kununu, I always think that mostly those people who were not super happy post on there. So, I think it's a little biased.” (P3)

“See, I feel like it's an important source as if you actually don't know anyone in the company. But I didn't really care too much about Glassdoor.” (P4)

The following paragraphs concern the intensive search for additional and more detailed information regarding an organization's products and services. For this purpose, the participants state to have checked the respective organizational website. Only one participant reports having used the online platform Youtube.com and was able to get better information due to uploaded interviews with organizational representatives. Overall, the perceived usefulness of the information provided by the organization appears to vary greatly with the different organizations. The analysis suggests that if the organization itself has not made information about its products and/or services available, the participants were not able to find satisfying information elsewhere in the internet. In this case, information gained from more personal interactions with recruiters or with organizational representatives at recruiting events was perceived to be more useful.

With regard to information sought about the organization's strategies, profitability and growth potential, two participants only use online sources such as investor listings of start-up organizations, press releases accessible on Google News and the organizations' financial statements. It appears that due to search engines, the internet eases considerably the detection of relevant press releases and financial statements and thus the acquisition of therein obtained information, making such available at anytime from anywhere. The respective participants evaluate all information sources and the therein obtained information as useful to learn about strategies, profitability, and/or growth potential.

“Then, you can put in the company's name in google and also say 'growth' or something else – a keyword like this – and put it on Google News; then you can go through the latest press releases and see what they are saying there.” (P6)

What stands out, while LinkedIn has been extensively used within the preparatory job search phase, most (seven) participants do not rely on the information provided by the platform in their intensive search.

#3d: Job seekers look a lot for information about organizational characteristics throughout the intensive search and generally deem the information found satisfactory. The internet enables to complement organizationally controlled information by means of multiple third-party information sources.

It appears that all participants are more concerned with organizational characteristics, when taking into account how much they engage in job search behaviors aimed at gathering additional information. This is opposing former literature, wherein job search behavior is shown to be more strongly related to perceived P-J fit compared to P-O fit, which in turn implies that information sought concerns job characteristics rather than organizational characteristics (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). The interviews do not permit a consistent explanation for why this study's participants search more for information about organizational compared to job-related characteristics. Possible reasons read as follows: firstly, the participants perceive it difficult to acquire additional information online specific to a job beyond what is provided in a job description. In consequence, they may have 'given up' on searching more and simply accept that only experiencing the job will reveal reality. This is line with Jovanovic's (1979) concept of job as 'experience good'.

"Well, sure, there is a lot of new information now, but I would not say that it is totally unexpected. But surely, it is always that every larger company reflects an image to the outside and then in real life it's always probably 25% less of what they were promoting. But I think, everyone knows it, and everyone expects it. So, you are not really surprised about it." (P2)

Another reason that can be assumed is that four participants gather general information about a certain type of job and work environment in a certain industry, which they then use to make inferences about a specific job of that type or in that industry. In consequence, the participants may perceive an intensive information search regarding attributes specific to a job at one organization as unnecessary. For instance, with regard to working in an agency environment, one participant explains that s/he has been aware of the fact that working in this industry generally means working long hours. This perception is not based on acquired information but instead depicts the participant's assumed knowledge of how it is to work within that industry.

#3e: Job seekers use the internet more extensively to search for information about organizational characteristics as opposed to job-related attributes during their intensive search.

Active Job Search Behavior: Informal Information Search

When referring to the informal job search method within the active job search phase, almost all (except for one) participants prefer to gather first-hand information, if available, about the organization as well as the job. Based on the premise that social contacts, such as former colleagues or friends, work or have worked for the potential employer, the participants perceive to get better insights about aspects such as job satisfaction and work environment. The participants repeatedly highlight that such insights are perceived as especially helpful, because the participants trust the source itself and thus believe the information to be honest and therefore reliable. This is in accordance with the above stated. Namely, that information anonymously shared on online platforms are seen as less trustworthy than the information gathered via personal contacts. Besides using informal information networks to gather additional organization or job-related information, one participant is found to also ask concretely for advice regarding the decision to apply for a certain position. Such behavior can be seen as reflection of how much value the participants, but especially this one, attribute to the opinions of their informal information sources.

“(.) I have a lot of old colleagues that work there. (...) I could speak to my old colleagues that I knew and with whom I was doing the same job before. I was asking them to tell me how it compares, whether they are happy, and whether they would recommend me to do the step. And this was really, really helpful.” (P4)

Interestingly, participants do not only favor their informal information network as information source, but often any form of personal interaction. In this context, two participants state to gather preferably detailed information about job and organization directly from an organizational representative, which is a formal source of information. This is reasoned by the fact that both participants hope to get even more detailed and relevant information about the specific job and organization from that professional source.

As thoroughly discussed in #03b until #03e, the participants conduct an intensive search for more detailed information about previously determined potential jobs and employers. This is in line with job search scholars stating that job seekers gather more information among considered job alternatives (Barber et al., 1994). Furthermore, these scholars assume that job seekers conduct such intensive search to guide their decision processes in terms of whether to apply for a particular position. This analysis, however, reveals that the participants search often for additional and

detailed information to tailor and target their letters of application with respect to prospective organizations. Another reason for why participants are regularly found to use the intensive search is to prepare themselves for upcoming job interviews, if they have been invited. Therefore, almost all participants pursue intensive search often after they have already decided to apply for a specific job. As it becomes explicit in the following statement, the participant searches the minimal amount of information required in order to apply for a certain position in a targeted and thus appealing manner. On the other hand, s/he conducts intensive search to the full extent only once invited for the job interview. While not always stated explicitly, at least half of the participants take this approach, likely in order to ensure not to invest too many resources such as time and effort in case the invitation to a job interview stays away.

“(...) [I] do the minimal research you need to know so you sound good. (...) And then once they accept you and they have interest in you, then you do all sorts of research and prepare so you blow them away in the first interview. (P6)

#3f: If available, informal information sources are preferred over any other source throughout the intensive search because they are deemed more trustworthy, and thus more helpful.

4.5.1.4 Job Search without Internet

Literature from the recruitment or job search domain repeatedly states the following job information sources as used by individuals during their job search: Informal information networks (e.g. friends or relatives), newspaper advertisements, state employment agencies as well as private employment agencies (e.g. Breaugh & Mann, 1984; Decker & Cornelius, 1979; Ellis & Taylor, 1983; Holzer, 1988; Quagliari, 1982; Taylor & Schmidt, 1983). Job information sources such as school or university placement centers, labor unions or radio advertisements are mentioned less often in recruitment or job search literature (e.g. Holzer, 1988; Taylor & Schmidt, 1983; Tom, 1971).

Job (Information) Sources used	#mentioned
Walk-ins	14
Newspaper advertisements	13
Informal information networks	11
Public [State] Employment Offices	11
Private Employment Agencies	10
College Placement Office	9
Referrals from current employees	7
Media advertising (TV, radio, magazine, etc.)	3
Unsolicited application	3
Other	2

Table 2: Information Sources Used in Secondary Literature

Table 2 portrays how often each job (information) source has been stated in the secondary literature that is used in this study (n= 19). For a more detailed view, the table (Appendix F) lists all empirical research including the job (information) sources which each study mentions.

Pre-Preparatory Job Search Behavior without Internet

It is likely that students gathered career-related information even before actually searching for a job. In this context, students have had the possibility to register with university or school placement offices (Ellis & Taylor, 1983; Tom, 1971). These placement offices have provided registered students with career-related information and information about existent job opportunities. The offices have also scheduled job interviews with organizational representatives when those visited the university for recruiting purposes (Tom, 1971). The students' registrations can be seen as behavior motivated by their interest in career-related information. After registration, the students receive information from the placement office without searching in an active or continuous manner. In a similar vein, students have also attended recruiting events during their educations. They have done so for similar reasons as today: to attain career- or job-related information and to potentially develop a consideration set of alternative organizations (Collins, 2002). While the attendance of such events reflects the student's interest in gathering career-related information, the student did not have to behave in a certain manner that signaled general interest in recruiting events in order to be provided with information about upcoming events. Instead, mass communication such as advertising at university facilities or an individual's participation in company workshops or presentations resulted in the individual becoming aware of specific events (Wiley, 1992).

#4a: On account of university placement offices or campus advertising for upcoming recruitment events, individuals gathered career- or job-related information during their educations.

Preparatory Job Search Behavior without Internet

Early research on recruitment or job search has not explored for what reasons job seekers use job information sources, hence whether they search for vacant job positions or whether they aim to gather more information about already identified positions (exception: Kanfer & Hulin, 1985). This being said, all aforementioned information sources could be utilized in both, the preparatory and the active job search phase. The majority of studies investigate the relationship between the source,

which an individual has used initially to identify the job he is performing while participating in the study, and long-term outcomes such as turnover ratio (e.g. Breugh, 1981; Gannon, 1971). In other words, studies report only on the single source that resulted in successful employment which is why one cannot derive from previous literature which job search activities the job seeker has likely performed and which other sources the job seeker has likely consulted within his extensive and intensive search. Having this in mind, research concludes that informal networks (i.e. friends and/or relatives currently employed at the organization of interest), newspaper advertisements, direct applications or walk-ins, and state employment agencies have been most commonly used among those individuals who successfully found a job (Breugh & Mann, 1984; Holzer, 1988).

#4b: Most commonly, current employees have initially encountered their current jobs through informal information networks, newspaper advertisements, direct applications and state employment agencies.

Active Job Search Behavior without Internet

Regarding the active job search phase, early recruiting or job search literature does not explore the information content that job seekers gather in the course of their intensive search (Wanous, 1977). Furthermore, no literature is found to regard the specific job search activities that are performed in order to gather additional and more detailed information about specific jobs and/or organizations. Therefore, the following walks through the job information sources available before the advent of the internet and discusses the information the job seeker could likely have acquired from such. Starting with informal information networks, previous research suggests that the individual job seeker is enabled to acquire relatively complete and accurate information about a job and an organization from friends and/or relatives, if they are working at that organization (Sicilian, 1995). This suggestion is supported in previous research investigating recruiting source differences in turnover ratios combined with the so-called 'realism' hypothesis (Breugh & Mann, 1984; Taylor & Schmidt, 1983; Wanous, 1980). Specifically, several studies have shown that the voluntary turnover rate of those individuals who were hired by means of current employee referrals has been lower compared to the quit rate of, for instance, individuals who were recruited through private employment agencies or newspaper advertisements (Decker & Cornelius, 1979; Gannon, 1971). Assuming that lower turnover rates can be associated with more positive attitudinal outcomes, the 'realism' hypothesis provides an explanation. The hypothesis asserts that job seekers who acquire

more accurate and more complete information about a job position will have greater levels of job performance and job satisfaction if employed, compared to those individuals who have obtained less accurate and less complete information (Wanous, 1978). The drawn implication that job seekers are able to obtain more complete and more accurate information about a job from friends and/or relatives who are currently working at the organization is in line with perceiving the job as experience good (Jovanovic, 1979). That is because some job attributes or characteristics can only be known when the job is experienced, which is the case for the informal network currently employed, who in turn are presumed to provide the job seeker with information that he would not find through other formal sources (Datcher, 1983). In other words, the informal information network is said to provide the job seeker with information about the job and/or organization that can otherwise only be obtained through actual work experience (ibid.).

Continuing with newspaper advertisements, several studies point out that newspaper advertisements perform poorly when comparing organizational outcomes of individuals hired through them with the organizational outcomes of individuals hired through other sources such as employee referrals (Decker & Cornelius, 1979; Gannon, 1971; Reid, 1972). Following the logic of the literature on realistic job previews, the job seeker is not believed to be able to gather complete and accurate information about the job and/or organization from newspaper advertisements. This comes as no surprise as traditional job postings in newspapers are fairly short and do not contain much detailed information (Mang, 2012). Due to the very limited information in newspaper advertisements, it appears that such job postings are useful to identify open job positions in the first place. However, the question remains if and if yes, how job seekers conducted an intensive search for more information after they had identified the vacant position in the preparatory job search phase.

Proceeding with walk-ins, or unsolicited direct application, to the best of one's knowledge there is no research about the information the job seeker typically searches for during intensive search before 'walking in'. Interestingly, the voluntary turnover rate of individuals who have been employed in consequence of walk-ins does not differ significantly from the turnover rate of those individuals who were referred by current employees (Gannon, 1971). Walk-ins or unsolicited direct applications are job search methods frequently used before the internet has been commercialized (Breugh & Mann, 1984; Holzer, 1988). However, the question remains whether individuals had searched for and obtained more information about the organization through other sources before.

Lastly, the discussion shifts towards the role of state employment agencies in job search. McGregor (1978) recognizes that when concerning the overall number of job matches initiated by state employment agencies, their influence on the efficiency with which matches form is relatively low. According to Zweifel and Zaborowski (1996), the services provided by employment agencies, no matter if public or private, find little attention in recruitment or job search literature. One service involves the matching of job seekers with jobs which relates to the job seeker's preparatory job search phase as it supports him in identifying vacant job positions (McGregor, 1978). Yet, it is not known how much job seekers have made use of state employment agencies in order to obtain more information about the jobs they got matched with.

As this study concerns the special case of Graduates, the role of school or university placement offices in job search should be discussed. The job seeker's use of such during job search in the era before internet can be overrated for following reasons. First, school or university placement offices are less frequently mentioned in recruitment literature which indicates that when job seekers used placement offices, they presumably aimed at getting familiar with companies or at learning about job opportunities (i.e. preparatory job search phase), instead of obtaining a specific job (i.e. active job search phase). Second, recruitment studies sometimes use samples wherein individuals are by research-requirement registered in a placement office (Ellis & Taylor, 1983; Tom, 1971), so that these researches are not overall valid and thus cannot be generalized regarding the role of placement offices in job search. Lastly, primarily large organizations are found to use school or university placement offices as recruitment source (Pritchard & Fidler, 1993), whereas many students may have finally searched and found jobs at smaller organizations (Barber, Wesson, Roberson, & Taylor, 1999).

#4c: The job seeker is able to gather information during his intensive job search only from informal information sources which can act as a substitute for the information obtainable through actual work experience. While newspaper advertisements may be useful for identifying vacant job positions, they obtain only limited further information.

4.5.1.5 *Changes in Job Search*

The previous paragraphs have illustrated how the study's participants have pursued their job search in light of the internet. This has been continued with insights derived from the secondary literature regarding how job seekers have conducted their job search in times before the internet. For better

comprehensibility, these findings are summarized in the middle columns of Table 3 to 5, for each job search phase respectively. The following provides an overview of the differences in job search that lead to the identified changes due to the access and use of the internet. The respective changes are highlighted in the last column of each Table. It should be again noted, that changes identified here are of rather tendentious nature because the job search and involved behaviors are specific to the characteristics of the chosen sample (i.e. the academic background, internet affinity, etc.) which might significantly differ from subgroups with other characteristics.

Starting with the pre-preparatory job search phase (Table 3), it seems that at both times students are provided with career-related information and eventually visit recruiting or other company events during their educations without searching actively or continuously for job information. In particular, with the registration at university placement offices, students have already received information without actively searching for jobs which is similar to receiving emails or news feeds on Facebook or Instagram after subscribing to or browsing on career-related webpages. Yet, the content and scope of information has changed by means of the internet. The information received from placement offices has likely not been as targeted to the student's individual interests, preferences or KSAs as opposed to the information provided in emails or news feeds. Furthermore, and with respect to recruiting events, the difference lies in how students become aware of such. Before the internet, students were exposed to mass communication targeted at all students so that the released information was again not tailored to the individual. In addition, such advertising has likely been physically restricted to university facilities. Nowadays, as this study's results show, the participants have become aware of events online as a consequence of their engagement with career-related webpages on social media and regardless of their geographical location. Due to online preference settings or general tracking of browsing behavior, it can be assumed that job seekers are exposed to targeted information that is of relevance to some extent to the individual. Conclusively, the behavior itself that aims at receiving career-related information has not changed. Yet, the information content has changed with the internet as it is more targeted to the individual. Also, career-related advertising transmitted online is not only more targeted but also not restricted to the student's physical vicinity.

	<i>...without the internet</i>	<i>...with the internet</i>	<i>Change in Job Search</i>
Pre-Preparatory Job Search Phase	registration at university placement office & exposure to campus ads ↓ continuous exposure to mass communication	#1 career-oriented engagement on Social Media & subscription to career-related websites ↓ continuous and targeted exposure to Advertising/ Newsletter/ E-Mail	- targeted information - no geographical restriction of advertising

Table 3: Changes in Pre-Preparatory Job Search Phase

Continuing with the preparatory job search phase (Table 4), participants have shown four different behaviors to identify potential jobs, while secondary data revealed only two sorts of behaviors that could be categorized as extensive search. Consequentially, the internet facilitates two additional job search behaviors that have not been possible as such before. Firstly, with regards to maintaining profiles on career-related online platforms or social networks (#2a), one could argue that the possibility of such behavior has made the job search more efficient and maybe also more effective. The job search becomes more efficient due to the possibility of constant signaling which facilitates the supply of job leads by either the platform or recruiters through the platform. The job search has become more effective, if the job seeker is provided with job positions which he considers suitable. To sum up, due to the internet the job seeker does not have to engage in job search with great effort and still has the potential to identify (relevant) job alternatives. The second additional behavior identified is the one of target-oriented search. This study reveals that those participants, who were aware of specific organizations, have directly screened the organizational websites for job openings (#2b). Not only is such extensive search easy and fast, but also effective as the individual can be sure to find open positions if available at the organization as these would be published on the organization's own website in the first instance.

Before the internet era, screening newspaper ads has been one of the most common behaviors to identify potential jobs; however, these ads only reflected job openings within a certain geographical radius. Opposing this, an online search in a more random manner (#2c) enables the full spectrum of options, while offering the possibility to filter for relevant jobs. Hence, the internet facilitates to look more regularly for jobs and organizations from anywhere in the world at considerably lower costs in terms of expenses and effort. With respect to the role of state employment agencies, mentioned in primary as well as secondary data (#2c), their usefulness has been questionable in both times (i.e. before and during the internet era), which implies no change on that account.

Lastly, identifying job alternatives through informal information sources is thematized in both settings (#2d). Yet, the success of this premises that contacts within the informal networks are employed at organizations that recruit at the time of search. Maybe due to this restriction and the availability of other and new possibilities online to identify job positions, the importance of and reliance on informal information networks has become less nowadays, as these sources are now mainly used as support in preparing application documents. Notably, the internet and career-related social network platforms have not triggered the use of online informal networks throughout the participants' extensive search.

To sum up, throughout the preparatory job search phase the study reveals several changes that can be associated with the internet: Firstly, maintaining online profiles and target-oriented search on organizational websites are enabled. Secondly, the job seekers are able to search from an unrestricted pool of jobs, while being able to easily and with less effort narrow this pool down to the suitable vacancies. Probably due to these changes, the reliance on informal information networks has lowered.

	<i>...without the internet</i>	<i>...with the internet</i>	<i>Change in Job Search</i>
Preparatory Job Search Phase		#2a maintaining profiles on career-oriented online platforms ↓ passive identification of job leads	- constant signaling to unrestricted audience on platform
		#2b target-oriented search ↓ easy and ensured detection of open positions at targeted organization	- target-oriented search on websites of desired organizations
	screening newspaper ads ↓ geographically bound job openings	#2c searching in a random manner ↓ Wide-spread and suitable job leads & all-embracing and relevant organizations	- potential to access full spectrum of jobs and narrow down to suitable vacancies - accessible at any time at considerably lower cost
	visiting state employment agencies ↓ identification of vacant job positions, unknown usefulness	#2c visiting state employment agencies ↓ not useful	- no change
	asking friends & relatives for job leads ↓ identification of job leads at informal networks' employers	#2d pursuing informal search ↓ 'unfiltered' set of vacant job positions & instrumental help for CV preparation	- informal sources now mainly used as instrumental support for application documents

Table 4: Changes in Preparatory Job Search Phase

Following concerns changes in the active job search phase (Table 5). To start with, the possibility of applying through the official recruitment channel by the organization (#3a) has been of relevance before as well as with the availability of the internet. However, as outlined before, there is now the potential to skip any form of application due to the possibility of passive search facilitated by the internet. On the contrary, many job seekers used to directly walk-in or hand-in an unsolicited application, which is a job search method not used anymore today. Another change is that informal networks utilized for referral hiring had much higher importance in times without the internet. Although online platforms such as LinkedIn widen extensively an individual's professional network, with respect to this study's participants, being referred by someone from within the network did not seem to be a method used.

Turning to the intensive information search, this study reveals that informal information sources or representatives as formal information sources have been used now and then (#3f). Nevertheless, if nobody from the informal network works for an organization that is of interest for the individual or if the organizational representatives are out of reach, the job seeker had no viable options to pursue an intensive search and gather additional information about the job and/or organization in times before the internet. In consequence, the job seekers were left with the limited information from the job descriptions retrieved from newspapers. In contrast, job descriptions published online (#3c) may still be general, but they usually contain more and more detailed information than the ones in the past. At this point, while newspaper advertisements have been a primary source in job search once, none of this study's participants have made use of them in the presence of the internet. As aforementioned, in pre-internet times it has been difficult for the job seeker to gather additional and more detailed information if information search through personal interactions has not been an option. In contrast, with the advent of the internet, the job seeker has several other possibilities to acquire information even though the study's participants still prefer to acquire information from informal sources if possible. When it comes to monetary compensation practices (#3b), most participants use the internet to get an indication. Referring to information about organizations (#3d), the internet facilitates to gather large quantities of information as organizational websites as well as third-party platforms contain these. The analysis shows that heaps of organizational information are available online, while job-specific information are similarly unsatisfactory as in the time before the internet. The simple aspect of availability could be the reason for why the intensive search itself has changed to the extent that the participants are shown to gather more information about organizations rather than about specific jobs (#3e).

Concluding the active job search phase, research in the internet enables to skip any form of application, and provides a greater quantity of information as well as a variety of formal sources to obtain information. The opportunity to pursue intensive search online is especially important in the case, when informal networks are not useful.

	<i>...without the internet</i>	<i>...with the internet</i>	<i>Change in Job Search</i>
<i>Active Job Search Phase</i>	getting in contact with potential employer ↓ Walk-ins, unsolicited application, directly applying through official recruitment channel or being referred	#3a getting in contact with potential employer ↓ Passive search online, directly applying through official recruitment channel and/or being referred	- potential to skip any form of application - no reliance on walks-ins and unsolicited applications - larger social network online
		#3b third-party platforms used to search for monetary compensation ↓ indicative, but neither precise nor complete information	- possibility for information even if no informal reference
	screening newspaper ads ↓ General, not satisfactory information	#3c screen job descriptions for abilities required ↓ General, not satisfactory information	- more and more detailed information
		#3d thorough research about organizational characteristics on multiple online channels ↓ Satisfactory information due to information obtained from various online channels	- usage of more sources to complement information - eased and unrestricted (time and location) search - information quantity
		#3e search for organizational characteristics rather than job attributes ↓ little information about job attributes	- more organizational information available - no change in job-specific information
	asking informal sources working for respective company ↓ relatively complete and accurate information about job and organization	#3f prefers to seek out information from informal network & interaction with company representatives ↓ more trustworthy, detailed and accurate information	- no change

Table 5: Changes in Active Job Search Phase

4.5.2 Part Two: Internet use, Perceived Fit and Employment Quality

4.5.2.1 Information Sought and Employment Quality

As outlined in the Analysis (Chapter 4.4) it is necessary to examine whether the individual participant has actually sought information about those job and organization characteristics which s/he deems relevant when assessing employment quality in a post-hire work relationship. In order to do this, one need to however identify what these characteristics are. From the interviews, and specifically from the question of how the participant would describe the 'perfect' employer and job, one can derive the sum of characteristics that would be relevant to the individual participant in her/his post-hire employment in order to perceive overall high match quality (Table 6). While the composition of relevant characteristics differs among study participants, single characteristics, such as the opportunity for personal and professional growth, are found to be important generally. Each individual's set of relevant characteristics, determining the high level of employer-employee quality, comprise both, job-related and organizational attributes.

Determination of Employment Quality

With regard to organizational characteristics, the participants have emphasized the relevance of some of the following aspects: Good collaboration in and with inter-organizational teams, employers caring about their employees, existence of a work-life balance and being treated fairly throughout the employment, among others. From the analysis it becomes apparent, that the participants have described certain values or rather, their preferences for certain values, most of which can also be found in O'Reilly III et al.'s (1991) Organizational Culture Profile which is regularly used to assess P-O fit (Appendix G). With respect to job-related attributes, the participants highlight the relevance of having, for instance, not only interesting and challenging, but also diverse tasks, a scope of responsibility and opportunities for personal growth. Generally speaking, it can be assumed that those organizational or job-related attributes, which the participant retrieves from memory at first, are of greater importance in the personal assessment of employment quality compared to those attributes which s/he memorizes to be important only after some time (of thinking). This being said and concerning job-related attributes, the analysis suggests that generally all participants perceive job-related characteristics which satisfy their non-monetary needs, preferences or desires (e.g. interesting and challenging tasks, diverse task, teamwork etc.) to be of essence with respect to the employment quality. Moreover, only after careful thought about what else is important in a prospective employment, the participants repeatedly declare salary to be of

relevance. Therefore, one can presume that monetary job-related attributes such as salary and other monetary benefits, when existent to a satisfying degree, do not prevalently determine the perceived quality of a match. Furthermore, as the study's sample involves recent Graduates who have entered employment not long ago, it can be assumed that the salary offered in return for performing a given job has been considered satisfactory by the participant or else s/he would have not accepted the job offer. Following this line of argumentation, it can be implied that the level of salary as well as other compensation practices do not impact the participants' perceptions of employment quality after experiencing the job because the participants have not only learned about the exact monetary job-attributes when signing the employment contract but also been satisfied with these when accepting the offer. Therefore, the subsequent analysis, concerned with the internet's impact on the employer-employee match quality, disregards the participants search activities that aim at gathering information about monetary job attributes.

Organizational Attributes	#	Job Attributes	#
Flexibility, adaptability, freedom	8	Interesting & challenging tasks	7
Work-Life Balance (being people-oriented)	7	Personal & professional growth opportunities	7
Collaboration, being team-oriented	6	Compensation (Salary), benefits & rewards	5
Informality, flat hierarchies, open culture	6	Diverse tasks	3
Sharing information freely, feedback & being reflective	6	Teamwork	3
Being easy-going, fun	5	Fitting abilities (KSAs)	2
Being supportive, fairness	4	Responsibility	1
Products	4		
Developing friends at work	3		
Values	3		
Being innovative	2		
Being socially responsible	2		
Fitting in	2		
Stability	2		
Being successful, good reputation	2		
Organizational goals	1		
Professionalism	1		

Table 6: List of Participants' Desired Organizational and Job Attributes

The analysis of the interviews shows once more the importance of taking the viewpoint of the job seeker, because the participants determine their perceptions of employment quality by taking their needs, desires and preferences into account rather than by considering performance criteria required by the job (i.e. whether or not their KSAs meet the job requirements), which in turn are frequently considered when following an organizational perspective (Chapman et al., 2005).

The identified characteristics (Table 6) are in line with research showing what is generally important for the generation of Millennials in an employment context. For one, job aspects that satisfy their need for self-actualization, such as meaningful and fulfilling work, as well as professional and personal development (Kuron et al., 2015; Ng et al., 2010). For the other, organizational aspects reflected in a nurturing work environment, that appreciates collegiality and work-life balance (ibid.).

Relevance of the Information Sought for the Employment Quality

When analyzing the participants' job information search (i.e. intensive search) in this part of the analysis (i.e. *Part Two*), only those search activities that aim at gathering information about job and/or organizational attributes, that the respective participant considers important to the employment quality, are considered. That is because, it is required that the participant has incorporated the beliefs and perceptions derived from acquired information about job- and organizational attributes in her/his perceptions of fit in order to conclude whether the internet has enabled the participant to form accurate pre-hire fit perceptions, and thus to judge the influence on the employer-employee match quality. Conversely, information that is gathered for the sole purpose of writing an appealing letter of application or preparing for an upcoming interview, is believed to matter to a negligible extent in the participant's formation of pre-hire fit perceptions. This being said, even though all participants are found to be concerned with the compatibility between the job demands and their own abilities, none has stated this compatibility to be of importance in determining a high quality of employment. Therefore, no matter how useful or accurate the information about job requirements available in the internet might be, it is argued to not have consequences for the job seeker's perceived employment quality later on. Thus, from this no implications on whether the internet improves the match quality can be derived.

As aforementioned, non-monetary job attributes (e.g. interesting and challenging tasks or degree of responsibility) that fulfill the participants' needs are shown to be of essence for the entire sample in order to perceive a high employment match quality when experiencing the job. Nevertheless, none of the participants has mentioned to have searched for more information which would enable her/him to infer these attributes of the considered job and to form pre-hire needs-supply P-J fit perceptions. This might be reasoned by the fact, that these attributes are expressive ones, which must be experienced in order to be evaluated in an explicit or holistic manner (Ratchford et al., 2001). Probably, the participants, who have not even attempted to search for more information, may

have already anticipated this circumstance. Due to this lack of information search, one cannot make a valid implication whether the internet would have improved the match quality.

4.5.2.2 *Influence on Employment Match Quality*

The following is concerned with the development of pre-hire fit perceptions that are based on information, which is actually sought pre-hire in the internet and could not have been acquired otherwise. This being said, within *Part Two* of the analysis, no attention is given to the information acquired from, for instance, informal information sources as these can be argued to contribute (if available) to improving the employer-employee match quality before and at the time of the internet (Sicilian, 1995). Furthermore, another requirement for the information acquired online to be considered here is, that the participant has incorporated the derived job and organizational characteristics in her/his holistic interpretation resulting in the formation of perceived fit. It can be argued, that in order for the information to play a role in the formation of fit perceptions, the participant needs to rely upon or trust the gathered information, at least to some extent. Conversely, if the participant does not perceive the information online as reliable or credible, one can say that s/he will not rely upon it in the formation of perceived fit. Hence, no matter how accurate the information in the internet might have been, it does not contribute to the improvement of match quality.

In order to determine whether the internet may have improved the employer-employee match quality, the following also outlines the participants' perceptions of the quality of their current employment, by means of either perceived P-J or P-O fit. The present study assumes that when the participants' pre-hire and post-hire fit perceptions are in alignment, the internet may have improved the match quality. Yet, it should be noted that the alignment may also be a consequence of other aspects which are not considered here.

Compatibility between Pre-hire and Post-hire Perceptions of P-J Fit

It becomes prominent throughout *Part One* of the analysis, that rather general and limited information is available in the internet that enables the participant to infer the characteristics of a specific job. Even though the information that can be found online may be limited and/or general in its content, the internet facilitates more sources, including third-party platforms, to be used throughout the intensive search, as well as more available information, compared to what had been available in pre-internet times.

Monetary job attributes that cater towards the participant's needs (i.e. professional growth opportunities) are stated by the participants to be relevant to her/his perception of employment match quality. *Part One* of the analysis has revealed that the participants have searched for respective information online. The internet - in terms of third-party platforms - enables the job seeker to acquire information that can be used to infer need-fulfilling monetary job attributes (#3b). Four participants perceive the information as useful and thus, it is assumed that they incorporate the information from the internet in their formation of pre-hire P-J fit perceptions. Later in the interviews, they state to perceive the opportunity for professional growth to be present in their current employment, thus perceive post-hire P-J fit in this regard.

Conclusively, the internet, mostly by means of third-party platforms, has enabled the participants to gather more and potentially accurate information about professional growth-related job attributes, which determine the participants' perceptions of employment quality. Nevertheless, considering all other relevant job attributes and characteristics, they have not been found to search information throughout their intensive search. Yet again, the internet enables the hiring organization to provide additional and more detailed information in job descriptions published online which are encountered by the participants throughout the extensive search. However, the analysis shows that the participants perceive job descriptions still to be too general and limited in relatable content, thus not useful to form perceptions of P-J fit. This circumstance points to the aspect, that while the internet may afford the opportunity to improve match quality, organizations do not properly take advantage of it in P-J fit related matters. Overall, one can conclude that the participants' internet usage throughout their job search has a low impact on the employer-employee match quality in terms of post-hire perceived P-J fit.

Compatibility between Pre-hire and Post-hire Perception of P-O Fit

As outlined in fact #3d, almost all participants gather additional information about organizational characteristics online and are also found to be enabled to acquire large quantities of information through diverse online channels (i.e. organizational websites and third-party platforms). Particularly, information that is sought and detected satisfactorily throughout the intensive search concerns the overall company culture as well as satisfaction of current employees, the organization's products and services, its reputation, strategies, profitability and growth opportunities. While former characteristics (i.e. culture and overall employee satisfaction) are shown to be relevant to the participants' perceptions of employment match quality, none has

considered the remaining organizational characteristics to be important when assessing the quality of an employment match. Hence, the subsequent analysis disregards the information about latter characteristics that can be found online when investigating the impact of the internet on post-hire employer-employee match quality.

With regard to the information, which the participants have gathered online and used to infer the organization's overall culture or level of satisfaction among current employees, the participants have elaborated retrospectively that such information has been accurate. The participants view third-party online platforms as especially useful in deriving more insights about the organization in general.

“So usually the stuff that is written on there [third-party online platforms] is mostly very accurate and it is actually reviewed by employees, I would say. It gives you a picture of what it is like to work in the company.” (P6)

Notably, the participants evaluate information published on the platforms with respect to its credibility and state to take the consistency of shared opinions into account. In other words, the participants state to trust the information and thus perceive provided insights as useful only if several people have made the same claims regarding a specific organization. Hence, the individual is assumed to base her/his pre-hire fit perceptions on acquired information, only in the case when shared opinions on third-party platforms are sufficiently consistent among each other. However, without the advent of the internet and with that the possibility of sharing anonymously and publicly sensitive information about an organization, a job seeker would have not been able to gather such information elsewhere (given no informal sources have been existent).

“I was collecting information from these rating websites, where you can rate employers. (...) And that is information you wouldn't have otherwise without the internet and without knowing anyone in the company.” (P2)

Due to the fact that the participants confirm the usefulness and accuracy of information acquired on organizational websites and third-party online platforms, one can infer that the participant has been able to not only gather information about the organizational characteristics (i.e. culture and overall employee satisfaction) relevant to the later match quality through the internet but also form accurate or realistic pre-hire fit perceptions in terms of P-O fit. Therefore, the internet has contributed to

improve the employer-employee match quality when regarding these organizational characteristics because it provides the space for making information public.

The following is concerned with cultural attributes that are more dependent on an organizational subdivision or a single team such as the amount and frequency of feedback provided or the actual work environment within teams. In this context, two participants point out that they do not perceive the information provided on organizational websites to be specific and thus sufficient enough to form beliefs about how it would be to experience the organization when being employed at a specific team in that organization. As Ratchford et al. (2001) have already acknowledged, the internet is mainly used to provide factual information, rather than information related to experience goods, which would incorporate information about team dynamics, feedback culture, and work atmosphere, among others.

Pre-hire: “(.) it's kind of hard to see those points [work environment, fun atmosphere, etc.] through a webpage of a company because they can write whatever they want on those webpages. And that doesn't tell you much about the people, you are working with in the team in the future. So, I think that's kind of hard to see if the team fits your personality or the other way around.” (P10)

From this it can be inferred that the rather general information on organizational websites has not been useful for the participants to form P-O fit perceptions with respect to team- or division-specific organizational culture attributes. The participants are neither able to form sufficient nor accurate pre-hire P-O fit perceptions with respect to the within-teamwork experience. Therefore, the internet, as it is used by the organization for communicating information, has not improved the employment match quality.

Conclusively, the internet can most certainly deliver the information needed to form accurate P-O fit perceptions regarding the overall organizational culture by means of organizational controlled and non-controlled content. Nevertheless, findings show that it fails to enable the participant to gather more specific information in terms of how it would be to actually work in a division or team of the given organization. In this case, the internet contributes only partially to the improvement of employer-employee match quality and most likely only if team-specific cultural attributes are in congruence with the overall organizational culture.

After all, in order to ensure a high level of employment quality, the individual needs to perceive both, P-J and P-O fit, as existent when being employed. Compared to pre-internet times, the

participants are shown to be able to acquire some relevant information that leads, at times, to the development of accurate pre-hire P-J and P-O fit perceptions, respectively. These perceptions are assumed to facilitate a discontinuation of ongoing recruitment processes, if they do not reflect an anticipated 'fit' before being hired (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Johnston, 1992). Thus, the internet improves the employment match quality compared to times when no intensive information gathering beyond informal sources has been possible (i.e. prior to the advent of the internet). Yet, the results of *Part Two* demonstrate that still many job and specific organizational characteristics remain unclear because the participants either have not succeeded to detect information in the internet or have not searched for respective information online. Thus, the ultimate perception of employment match quality continues to be a matter of actual work experience, reflecting the conceptualization of the job as an experience good (Jovanovic, 1979).

5 Discussion

5.1 Answers to the Research Questions

A high employer-employee match quality is of importance for both, the employed individual and the employing organization. Yet, the majority of research concerned with post-hire match quality has traditionally focused on the organizational perspective. Seldom has research focused on how the job seeker searches actively for job-related information in an attempt to reduce asymmetric information and with that to decrease the risk of entering a work relationship of low quality. Although research on how internet usage changes the functioning of markets (including labor markets) has increased in recent years (e.g. Cappelli, 2001; A. D. Smith & Rupp, 2004), it has concentrated mostly on the organization's use throughout recruiting rather than on the individual's use throughout job search. These are substantial gaps as existing research fails to provide insights in how the individual searches for employment driven by the goal of finding a job that is of high employer-employee match quality. The purpose of the present study was to bridge these gaps by acknowledging the job seeker's job search and information gathering - in light of the internet - which is argued to be relevant to his perception of post-hire match quality.

Research Question 1: How did the internet change the job seeker's job search?

The results indicate that the internet has changed the job seeker's job search in various aspects. Firstly, the internet facilitates new job search behaviors, namely passive job search by means of maintaining online profiles and target-oriented job search by means of organizational recruitment

websites. Secondly, it increases the amount and variety of formal information sources which in turn enhances the scope of available information which would otherwise, if at all, only be acquirable through personal informal information networks. Lastly, it decreases the effort that is needed to engage in job search behaviors and still acquire relevant information as the information transmitted and acquired through the internet is timely, independent from geographical location, and targeted by means of interactivity features. In summary, the study's findings suggest that the individual's job search intensity (i.e. job search behavior in terms of quantity) has increased, especially in intensive search, when considering each activity utilizing online channels. Furtherly, the individual's type or job search methods used has changed from informal to mostly formal job search methods (i.e. potentially changing the job search behavior in terms of quality).

Research Question 2: Did the use of the internet increase the employer-employee match quality?

Consistent with assuming the job seeker perspective, this paper has conceptualized the employment match quality from the individual's viewpoint such that the quality is high when the individual perceives both, P-J and P-O fit, to be present in the eventual employment. Past research has highlighted that pre-hire perceptions result from the individual's job search and link to post-hire fit perceptions, respectively (i.e. employer-employee match quality) (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Given these connections, the present paper's results suggest that using the internet increases the individual's perceived employer-employee match quality to some extent by making information available that enables the job seeker to infer job- and organizational characteristics, and thus to form P-J and P-O fit perceptions pre-hire. The findings indicate that the extent to which the use of the internet has increased the individual's post-hire fit perceptions depends for one on the number of characteristics about which the individual has sought and found information through the internet relative to the number of characteristics important to his employment match quality, and for the other on the quality (degree of accuracy and completeness) of the found information which is used to form the pre-hire fit perceptions. The results from the present paper contribute to the understanding that the information content acquired from the internet matters in terms of quality rather than quantity when being concerned with the eventual post-hire employer-employee match quality.

5.2 Implications for Research and Practice

5.2.1 Implications for Theory

The findings allow for drawing a number of implications for the underlying and conceptualized theories illustrated in this paper.

Principal-Agent Theory

Research utilizing the PAT usually only takes the viewpoint of the employing organization. Solely, organizations are described to be disadvantaged by agency problems and to be applying solution approaches pre- and post-hire to reduce the existent information asymmetry which ultimately fosters a better hiring choice. In the context of this study, the PAT has been utilized to acknowledge the information disadvantage on part of the job seeker and thus to understand his underlying motivation to reduce information asymmetry as well to make a more informed job choice. The findings of the analysis demonstrate that job seekers heavily pursue information search in order to fill the information gaps about potential employers and jobs. Therefore, researchers extend the theory by thematizing job search as a way for job seekers to actively gather information rather than only signaling their capabilities, as well as to anticipate the post-hire employment quality. Nevertheless, Signaling has also received a new notion, because job seekers constantly signal their KSAs and interests on online platforms with the intention to be approached by recruiters rather than actively searching themselves. Consequently, the PAT should not only reflect the principal's solution approaches for agency problems, but also illustrate the agent's strategies to reduce information disadvantages.

Concept of Job Search

Acknowledging the sample's specific characteristics, the study still revealed additional themes partially facilitated through the use of the internet. The job search process usually comprises behaviors throughout two phases: the preparatory and the active job search phase. The investigation's findings conceptualize another preceding phase, that researchers claim 'pre-preparatory job search phase'. It describes the behavior driven by career-related interests already throughout an individual's education. Thereby, individuals might already build perceptions of organizations and jobs. Another dominant aspect, which is especially facilitated by means of the internet, is passive search, or else, recruiters' active sourcing of prospective employees. As a consequence of getting an offer in response to their profiles, job seekers regularly skip the actual

application, a consequence that requires special attention in the recruitment and employer branding literature. Furthermore, job search behavior is predominantly operationalized in terms of effort and intensity, whereas this study shows that rather the content and the quality of the content determine whether an individual's job search is leading to the desired search outcome. Therefore, the quality of job search behavior should gain a stronger focus when evaluating the success of job search. Lastly, while job search generally has the goal of finding employment and having a match of high quality, this study shows that the active job search phase is heavily driven by the purpose of properly setting up application documents and/or of being prepared for the recruitment process. This implies that job seekers pursue intensive research after they have already decided to apply.

Concept of Fit

The findings suggest that job seekers pursue more research related to P-O fit, rather than P-J fit, which is in contrast to existing fit literature posits job search behavior to be more strongly related to perceived P-J fit compared to P-O fit. However, the study's insights allow for inferring that the internet supplies much more information than job seekers had without the online source. Consequently, job seekers gather more information about organizational characteristics that only partially help to build pre-hire perceptions of P-O fit. In congruence with the last implication made in the previous paragraph, job information search is in large part conducted to prepare for subsequent interviews rather than for the evaluation of pre-hire P-O and P-J fit perceptions. This implies that job seekers form a perceived fit later in the process, not before having applied.

5.2.2 Implications for Practice

Above and beyond the theoretical contributions previously stated, this thesis also builds ground to give recommendations for practice. Derived insights are of relevance for both parties within the labor market: the organization and the job seeker, which will be discussed below.

Implications for Organizations

Providing more and more realistic information: Regarding job descriptions, the analysis has shown that job seekers are quite unsatisfied with the information provided on job descriptions: For one, often requirements are seemingly too high, for example the required work experience for an entry-level position, which involves the risk to discourage suitable candidates from applying. For the other, such descriptions usually only contain information about demanded abilities, but not what the job supplies for the needs of a job seeker. Latter is shown to be a decisive factor for job seekers as it

influences their P-J fit perceptions, and thus their job choice. For example, if important information such as salary is known from the start, inefficient and expensive recruiting can be avoided. Therefore, organizations need to not only provide more realistic, but also more detailed and all-embracing information on job descriptions as well as on their other channels. Along with the concept of realistic job previews, the more and more realistic information the organizations provide, the better can the job seeker infer a fit, leading to an employer-employee match of high quality. This will ultimately decrease the probability of undesired outcomes such as dissatisfaction, inefficiency and turnover, which should be of highest interest to an employer.

Recruiting strategies: The study has shown that the internet has become a valuable job search tool, especially among the subgroup of highly educated Graduates. Therefore, organizations should capitalize on recruiting efforts online, when attracting or recruiting young people for entry-level positions. Especially with regards to attracting job seekers from the Millennials it is highly important to provide them with information they need and value to make a job choice (Kuron et al., 2015; Ng et al., 2010). Furtherly, the study revealed that already in the pre-preparatory job search phase social media advertising can strengthen an organization's visibility and image which helps to become part of the individuals' pre-determined consideration set formed during their education. Generally, firms should therefore capitalize on interdisciplinary actions of HR and Marketing by integrating online recruiting with overall corporate marketing and branding activities to have more effective but also consistent employer branding strategies. Finally, passive job search has gained importance therefore employers should consider to actively source highly qualified job seekers because those might not perceive the need to apply.

Implications for Job Seekers

Findings from the analysis have demonstrated that the internet provides large quantities of information which result from the variety of channels available. Generally speaking, job seekers have the possibility to search information even if they do not have informal networks working in the respective organization. Especially, third-party platforms can complement information that organizations do not provide on their controlled channels despite the fact of possibly biased information.

As mentioned in the topic delimitation, this paper examines a sample comprising internet-affine academic Millennials with regards to their job search activities before the attendance of job interviews as well as their post-hire perception of employment match quality. Although discussed

implications result from the particular behaviors of the chosen sample, they are of relevance for both theory and practice, as well as for organizations and job seekers.

6 Conclusion

From beginning to end, the thesis explored how job seekers behave in response to the problem of imperfect information in light of the internet. On account of that, past research has already acknowledged the internet as an information source, but this study provided empirical evidence of how job seekers' job search has changed and whether information available online lead to more complete and/or accurate pre-hire perceptions of fit, and thus a match of high quality. In order to achieve a well-founded investigation, an interdisciplinary literature review has been conducted delineating the underlying concepts and theories that are contextualized within the notion of job search. Thereby, the paper placed special emphasis on the perspective of the job seeker, which has received only little attention so far. Subsequently, research on the internet as an information and search tool has been introduced to lay a foundation for the empirical analysis. The qualitative investigation of newly entering job seekers (Graduates) from a generation that embraces the internet in their everyday life has given new insights on mentioned topics. Not only did the study reveal that the internet has changed job search in terms of additional behaviors and approaches as well as usage of sources. But there is also proof that it offers more and more detailed information on various platforms that aid any job seeker to gather information even if s/he does not have informal networks within a desired organization. With respect to the employment quality, the internet has been found to potentially supply relevant information that helps job seekers to anticipate the P-O fit with respective organizations, whereas findings about P-J fit cannot give clear statements. Based on this, it was concluded that the job remains an experience good. The derived insights allowed for drawing relevant implications for research and practice. Thereupon, limitations of the research will be acknowledged that build ground for further research.

6.1 Limitations

By nature of the chosen research design, results cannot be generalized. Therefore, results need to be applied with caution when referring to different economic times, generations, regions, educational backgrounds, levels of work experience as well as types of job seekers, namely Job Losers or Job Switchers.

Another limitation is the time horizon of the empirical investigation. Due to time constraints the cross-sectional approach was preferred, which only captures interviewees already working for their

employer. This way, people could not be interviewed at both times, before and after being hired at the organization, to assess their fit perceptions respectively. In addition to this, the investigation of the objective quality of the information acquired by the participants has not been within the scope of this paper. Therefore, it could also be possible, that the participant's pre-hire and post-hire perceptions are congruent by coincidence rather than by the fact of forming pre-hire perceptions based on accurate and/or complete online information.

Within the data collection, some limitations have to be acknowledged as well. Firstly, opposed to face-to-face interviews, conducting the interviews via telephone entails the limitation of perceived impersonality, which could ultimately hamper the willingness of participants to share personal information (Adams et al., 2007). Making use of secondary data goes along with the fact that gathered data is neither customized to the research problem nor up-to-date (*ibid.*) (Adams et al., 2007). Hence, researchers had to rely on any kind of available data that is concerned with job search in the pre-internet era. In addition, the small sample size is acknowledged as a limitation as well by not being representative enough for the entire subgroup investigated. Since this kind of research includes purposive sampling which usually cannot be generalized, this circumstance is not a major issue: The purpose of the research is to get an idea of how Graduate students from the Millennials perceive the internet in their search for employment. This can be used as a basis to pursue follow-up research, both of qualitative and quantitative nature.

6.2 Suggestions for Further Research

Emerging throughout the interdisciplinary approach within the literature review and based on the findings from the empirical investigation, this study's researchers recommend to further explore the role and impact of the internet in the labor market context in general. But in particular, further research should consider devoting attention to the following:

- Quantitative follow-up studies that test hypotheses resulting from the findings of this thesis. Using a representative sample can then help to make generalizations.
- Longitudinal studies that assesses first job seekers' perceived fit with the organization and job before being hired and then again after being hired. This could provide more precise and unbiased insights from the study participants.
- Explorative studies of how job seeker behaviors change later in the application process in terms of which sources are used for information gathering, how and if, why pre-hire perceptions of fit change throughout the process, and how relevant the internet is in that context.

- Conceptual work on the extension of the PAT, as suggested and used for reasoning in this study.
- Explorative studies of the job search phase preceding the preparatory phase that touches upon the thereby pre-determined perception building of organizations and jobs.
- Explorative studies of third-party online platforms in the context of organization and job reviews. Among others, this should include the investigation of the perceived and the objective reliability of posted reviews, as well as the underlying motives of current or previous employees to share their opinions online.
- Explanatory studies that help to identify which (1) online information sources and/or (2) which information content facilitates the highest match quality.

This being said, the presented paper set ground for new research gaps that call for expansive academic attention.

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8 Appendix

Appendix A: “Table IV Difficulties Encountered in Internet Job Searches”

TABLE IV Difficulties Encountered in Internet Job Searches		
<i>Rank</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>	<i>% A Lot or Some Difficulty</i>
1.	Slow feedback or follow-up	55.67%
2.	Not enough relevant jobs listed to make worthwhile	42.83%
3.	Lack of relevant data in a company's Web site	33.33%
4.	Concerns about security of personal information	25.77%
5.	Poor links to specific firms' Web sites from general sites	25.77%
6.	Want more personal contact	26.53%
7.	Difficulty in posting resumes	23.66%
8.	Site navigation problems	19.19%
9.	Difficulties downloading or printing out information	15.15%
10.	Computer glitches in Web site	15.00%
11.	Trouble accessing sites during normal business hours	12.50%
12.	Difficulty finding company's Web site on the Internet	10.10%
13.	Trouble accessing sites evenings and weekends	4.12%
14.	Costs of downloading data	3.06%
15.	Poor quality graphics	2.06%

Source: Feldman and Klaas (Feldman & Klaas, 2002)

Appendix B: Exemplary Interview Guideline for Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview Guideline

Practicalities

- Consent form?
 - For our research, we need to record the interview
 - Give structure/Introduction
 - Purpose of interview: Master Thesis – Graduates who just started a job
 - How long will it take?
 - We will record, but hope to have a relaxed atmosphere
 - Answer honestly (confidentiality ensured)
 - No names of companies, names of co-workers etc. Revealed
 - Okay to conduct in english?
-

Start

- When have you graduated and What have you studied?

Fit

Hypothetical ‘perfect’ PO and PJ fit

- How do you describe the 'perfect' employer?
 - How do you think about hierarchies?
 - Autonomous working, open space?
 - Team work?
 - ...
- What is important to you in a job/working life?

Information Asymmetry / Job Search

OVERALL Job Search

- When you needed to find a job, how did you start your job search? (What did you do?)
 - Did you know what you were looking for (job, industry, company ...)?
- When did you look? What situation where you in? (during master thesis,...)
 - How did you feel?
- How long did you look for jobs?
 - (How long between search and employment?)
- Where did you look for open job positions?
 - Have you asked any friends for job information?
 - **If not mentioning Internet: Did you make use of the Internet?**
- How many jobs were you applying for at ones?
 - What did you do before applying?
 - *If not, what else did you do?*
- Where there positive/negative experiences (e.g. website didn't work; recruiter were unfriendly; no information available about XYZ)?

COMPANY Job Search

- How did you find (or hear about) your current job?
 - Did you know the organization before you have started working there? (Where from?, idea/perception of organization before job search)
 - Did you know anyone from the organization?
 - Did you contact any current worker from the company?
- When you found the position, were you looking for more information about the job/organization? (What was important to you?)

- Why did you choose channel XYZ?
 - (Which had the biggest impact?)
- Was it hard to find information on the employer/job?
 - Why?
 - What did you do then?
- Do you believe this was helpful?
- Was the information you found enough/satisfactory (in order to apply)?
- What were your thoughts about the organization/job based on the information/the information you found?
 - **Job:** based on the information, did you think that you have the skills ... for this job
 - **Organization:** Do you think you fit in the organization
 - (Impression/Expectancies)?
- Why did you choose to apply? (Reason – e.g. culture, salary, career advancement, ...)
- Have you considered other jobs/organizations simultaneously? What made you decide against them?

POST-Hire Reflection

- If you reflect your job search, which source or channel was most helpful/made you feel informed about the company or job?
 - *What aspects of job hunting using the Web have you found most helpful or satisfying? Least helpful or satisfying? Why? (Feldman and Klaas, 2002, p.179)*
 - *Any issues using the internet? (quantity, quality, time costs,...)*
- Concerning the information you found, was it realistic (closest to reality)?
 - If informal yes: which information was more helpful: the ones from current workers or official

Current Situation/Perceived Post-Hire Fit

- Can you tell us more about, **to what extent** the information have been (not) realistic?
 - Job (KSA?, Needs?) - Organization (Values)?
 - Was there anything unexpected?
 - Does the company follow what they state in XYZ?
- Do you enjoy working in your organization?
 - What makes you think this way (What do you enjoy explicitly)? (Is the job or the organization enjoyable?) (Why?)
 - Would you recommend your organization to a friend? (Why?)
- If not, what is missing? How can the company/job improve?

Last Question --> closure

- How frequently do you use the Internet as a source of information?
- Did the internet/online information improved your job search? (or the opposite) + How and why?
- How would you comment the following statement:
 - "The internet has helped me to better identify whether the job/company is the 'right one' for me!"
 - Do you agree/disagree?

End

- If time permits, ask the participant if there is anything else they'd like to share?
- Thank you for your time!!

Appendix C: Exemplary Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of Project: XYZ

Master of Science (cand.merc.) in Economics and Business Administration – Brand and Communications Management at Copenhagen Business School

Name of Student: Ella Kramer and Frederike Annuszies
Contact Information: elkr17ac@student.cbs.dk and fran17af@student.cbs.dk

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves answering questions for the duration of the interview.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted anonymously in the Master Thesis.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained for the purpose of the study.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for the specific period of the Master Thesis Examination.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Date

.....
Signature of researcher

.....
Date

Appendix D: Overview of Categorized Quotes

#Cat.	Content	Exemplary Quote/s
1	Pre-Preparatory Job Search Phase	<i>"(...) I had quite some time during my studies to look at interesting companies and to get to know them. I participated in some very nice recruiting events, for example, sailing from Mallorca to Ibiza, and getting to know PwC." (P1)</i>
		<i>"So in England, for example, there is a whole email distribution list which is called 'work in start-ups' where companies can post and the email will be send around to all subscribers of that list – so that is quite helpful." (P6)</i>
		<i>"I have been to recruiting events a while ago which kind of influenced my knowledge about those consultancies. I went to Women in Consulting, (...). It was really interesting to hear what they say about the work or the daily life of the ladies working at each company. Furtherly, I went to a sailing event with Accenture." (P3)</i>
		<i>"I signed up for this website (squeaker.net) a long time ago, I follow them on Facebook and they send me emails every once in a while. (...). It is kind of a career website but specialized on consultancies. They post a lot of events and tips on how to apply, as well as experience reviews." (P3)</i>
2a	Passive search	<i>"(...) when you use LinkedIn, (...) you can put in what you are looking for, you can change your status so it says that you are looking for this and this job in the moment." (P6)</i>
		<i>"(...) I do [maintain the profile], because I just like to get offers (...) you want to know your market value, your opportunities (...) [a]nd you will only know that when you let people know what you do." (P1)</i>
2b	Target-oriented search	<i>"If I had a specific company in mind, then I usually look them up directly." (P6)</i>
		<i>"Well, of course you know all the big consultancies and then check out their corporate websites and apply through that." (P3)</i>
		<i>"(...) for this one company it was quite hard to get some information because it was a new company and you didn't have an own website (...)." (P7)</i>
2c	Random search	<i>"(...) and then there are also other [online] sites [besides LinkedIn] like Stepstone and Avant-Garde and there you can also set yourself some reminders that they sent you your job postings every week or every day depending on how frequently you want to have them." (P6)</i>
		<i>"I also went to the [state] employment office. (...) They gave me an appointment – I think two weeks later – at a time where I had a couple of interviews. So, when they gave me the appointment, they actually put it on a time where I had interviews. So I had to cancel it. They were really shit about it and did some real terror. I had to prove that I actually had interviews. They offered some help, but it was a bit too late after two weeks of waiting. I don't know what they have expected." (P6)</i>
		<i>"I started my job search by using the internet. So, I was just looking for interesting companies in Hamburg, since I planned to have a new job in Hamburg." (P5)</i>
		<i>"(...) once you have [identified] one organization or a few [in a specific industry] - you see with whom they are working, what are similar organizations, who is working within these organizations, for instance on LinkedIn, and who has been working there before. If I really like an organization, I would go and see what employees seem very interesting and try looking up the past organization they worked for. And then you find more organizations. (P9)</i>
		<i>"I sometimes just went to random recruiting events and I thought: "Okay, that's nice. Let's learn something about a company that you may not think about at the</i>

		<i>moment. But that may have the best opportunities". (P1)</i>
2d	Informal network	<p><i>"(...) I already had a contact to those people [managers from pharmaceutical companies]. And what I did is I just asked them. After the interviews [within the frame of my Bachelor's thesis] and after I sent them the results of the interviews, I asked them, if there are maybe open positions in their companies that fit my profile." (P10)</i></p> <p><i>"(...), I occasionally did this stuff [visiting recruiting events] and kept networking with the guys [organizational representatives and possibly other event participants] I met over there. So that kind of helped me to never lose contact and to always have different options [jobs at specific organizations] in mind." (P1)</i></p> <p><i>"(...) [I] talked to friends and family to ask what kind of companies they know and what they think would be interesting positions for me." (P2)</i></p> <p><i>"(...) I talked to a lot of friends. That was good and helpful, (...). I asked for good companies with nice values. I talked to them a lot." (P5)</i></p>
3a	Getting in contact with employers	<p><i>"(...) I just replied to recruiters that contacted me on LinkedIn. So, I haven't applied actively in quite some time." (P4)</i></p> <p><i>"(...), I didn't really apply for the job; I rather applied for the recruiting event. And, eventually, afterwards, they already asked you if you want a job." (P4)</i></p> <p><i>"If I wanted some specific role, I would look through my network and get referred for positions I'm interested in, or I would actively get in contact with recruiters. But I would never apply through the normal process or just a normal platform." (P4)</i></p> <p><i>"So the actual position in the moment was also through LinkedIn. I just applied for it and that worked out." (P10)</i></p> <p><i>"I just went the normal way over the HR of the company and writing my CV or sending my CV to them." (P10)</i></p> <p><i>"I actually got contacted by a recruiter on LinkedIn (...). So he connected me with his colleague and then we had a little chat (...) she tells you about the job and you tell her from your previous experience. (...). So actually because the company [for which the recruiter has been recruiting for] advertises on LinkedIn quite a lot, I have seen their name." (P6)</i></p> <p><i>"(...) I was pushing my CV, took a nice picture of myself – like the conservative approach. I applied directly on the website, on the website of the company." (P7)</i></p> <p><i>"Well, of course you know all the big consultancies and then check out their corporate websites and apply through that." (P3)</i></p> <p><i>"But for the job I'm working at right now, that was just an open position in the internet, where I was looking the normal way. So, no Vitamin B [referral] or something like that." (P10)</i></p>
3b	monetary Needs-Supplies	<p><i>"Then you can check on Glassdoor what your salary will be like." (P3)</i></p> <p><i>"But on the other end, German companies are more transparent on salary and professional development. And also because of their strong unions, you can sometimes just easily see what you're going to make in terms of money before you even have to talk to someone." (P1)</i></p> <p><i>"I would have loved to know more about the salary beforehand. (...) some crucial information [such as the salary] is lacking and that you need to get the job offer and usually an application round before job interviews and so on before you actually have numbers. (...) So those were just some bits of information, I could have found out some of them on Glassdoor, for example. But definitely not all of them." (P1)</i></p>

	Professional Development	<p><i>"[A good website defines] to have a really, really good description about the company, and maybe history, values and the alike. Good company websites should also have a good description concerning in what they want to develop you. What are the chances and what kind of trainings do they offer? I think, this is really important. And also the really international way, the different areas they are offering products in. A thorough description of all these company." (P5)</i></p>
		<p><i>"(...) Kununu how the company culture is like and what development opportunities people talk about. There is a lot of information." (P3)</i></p>
		<p><i>"And also, LinkedIn to see what people are doing after they worked at that company two or three years and then left. To see whether it was a career boost to see whether it was inspiring or not. Those were some information I was looking for." (P1)</i></p>
	Role & KSA	<p><i>"The job description (...) were really, really detailed." (P5)</i></p>
		<p><i>"(...) the job description was quite general [,] but I could identify with the tasks and I thought that they fit with my competencies. (...) So, it wasn't really relatable – it was not clear really what they were doing." (P7)</i></p>
		<p><i>"But I never take job description seriously because they say something like: "Oh, I want to have someone with like 10 years of experience". They still hire you if you only have three years of work experience, if you have the right attitude." (P6)</i></p>
		<p><i>"I was watching some videos on the company website regarding that [trainee] program and all that. So, I got all the information possible on the program at least." (P2)</i></p>
		<p><i>"[I look up] (...) the people who already work in the organization in a similar job or similar role. So I look [on LinkedIn] whether they have a degree, whether they have work experience, how much work experience do they have, so I kind of look that up. So if I have a certain position I look up the position in that company and then you find that." (P6)</i></p>
		<p><i>"So, for that job, of course, I also did some Google research and so on, but since it was a new job in a new division, basically working with external consultants, more than with employees. I did some research, but honestly, most of the time I just talked to these people who are looking for someone to take that job." (P1)</i></p>
		<p><i>"So the job description itself I wouldn't take too personal, not too strict, because obviously it is a job description. Usually you end up doing 15 percent of what is in that job description and then 85 percent of what you actually do in companies. You do the work, which is not stated in your job description." (P6)</i></p>
		<p><i>"I was doing some research on the job title, for example. I was looking for some other job descriptions, what they expect and or what the position, as described, is responsible for." (P7)</i></p>
3d	Organization's reputation	<p><i>"(...) So yes, before I apply for a job, I was doing some research on the company, for example. Well, sometimes you know the company because it is a huge one or because it is well-known in Germany." (P7)</i></p>
	Organizational Culture (OC) & Overall employee satisfaction	<p><i>"I mean they all have their values written on their website and also, they have a great company culture. So, actually I did not look too much into it on the website, because for me it seems like it is an open company with great values. But you never know until you actually start working there or unless you here from somebody who has worked there before." (P3)</i></p>
		<p><i>"Well, sure, there is a lot of new information now, but I would not say that it is totally unexpected. But surely, it is always that every larger company reflects an image to the outside and then in real life it's always probably 25% less of what</i></p>

		<i>they were promoting." (P1)</i>
		<i>"I have to say that, I guess, the most interesting channel was Glassdoor, where I got the feeling that I get the most authentic information." (P1)</i>
		<i>"I was always checking Glassdoor, for example, if it's a company that I didn't know. I was collecting information from these rating websites, where you can rate employers. (...) And that is information you wouldn't have otherwise without the internet and without knowing anyone in the company." (P2)</i>
		<i>"Yes, the recruiting events, definitely, where you meet different people of the company. You see THEM interact. And you also see who else attends these events. Who else is interested in the company and who the company also invites to come over. So, I think that's the best way to get a feeling of the company culture, to get a feeling of different types of people working for that company, and also to have a more informal way to interact and to still find out whether that's interesting for you or not to work in that company." (P1)</i>
		<i>"To have a really, really good description about the company, and maybe history, values and the alike. Good company websites should also have a good description concerning in what they want to develop you. What are the chances and what kind of trainings do they offer? I think, this is really important. And also the really international way, the different areas they are offering products in. A thorough description of all these company." (P5)</i>
		<i>"Yes, as I said, for this one company it was quite hard to get some information because it was a new company and you didn't have an own website and only few people had experiences with this company." (P7)</i>
		<i>"So usually the stuff that is written on there [third-party online platforms] is mostly very accurate and it is actually reviewed by employees, I would say. It gives you a picture of what it is like to work in the company." (P6)</i>
	Organization's business model and products/services	<i>"They actually have an extensive online learning platform. (...) what was really, really good is I actually the information provided by the company that was helpful." (P4)</i>
		<i>"The company website? I usually always look at the company website. Most of them are absolutely terrible. There are not many companies where I can say 'wow, you have an amazing website'" (P6)</i>
	Organization's strategies, profitability, growth potential	<i>"And then also the financial statement because it is a traded company. So, there you can read a lot about their current strategies, the biggest exhibitions to stay up to date on the things that matter to them." (P4)</i>
	Other organizational characteristics	<i>"And also, LinkedIn to see what people are doing after they worked at that company two or three years and then left. To see whether it was a career boost to see whether it was inspiring or not. Those were some information I was looking for. Also, employee turnover, because it's always exciting, quite interesting to see how long people in general stay at a company." (P1)</i>
		<i>"I think it was the company website. I think that was the most informative channel for me." (P5)</i>
3e	little information about jobs	<i>"So the job description itself I wouldn't take too personal, not too strict, because obviously it is a job description. Usually you end up doing 15 percent of what is in that job description and then 85 percent of what you actually do in companies." (P6)</i>
		<i>"Once you write one of the applications, it does not take that much time to write the other ones, because all the positions were pretty similar." (P3)</i>
		<i>"Once you know about organizations and once you know business, the more</i>

		<i>research you do about a sector, the more you get about that kind of position” (P9)</i>
3f	informal sources/network	<i>“Then, I started to talk to these people [interns], whether they know someone who is in this program. So, I got more and more information about it and really like what I was hearing and then was applying for it.” (P2)</i>
		<i>“I wanted honest insights, so I asked another student who worked there. In general, I talked to friends and people from my university who have already worked at consultancies and asked for their feedback “ (P3)</i>
		<i>“The most helpful was definitely the personal information I got from people I knew (...). So, I trusted them in what they are saying and that they are honest with me.” (P2)</i>
		<i>“But, in the end, for me, the main point to go to this company, was my friend who has already experienced working there and I trust him more than some blog post I read.” (P3)</i>
		<i>“(.) regarding the job description and detailed information about the company, it was better for me to talk to the recruiter [than to my friends and family]. Because they are normally closer to the company” (P5)</i>

Appendix E: Analysis (Categorization) of Active Job Search Phase

Information Content sought	Information Sources used	Evaluation (helpful/partially helpful/not helpful)
Organization's reputation	Internet: several online platforms (P7)	helpful (P7)
	Internet: organizational website (P7)	not always helpful (big agency yes but new daughter of holding no) (P7)
Corporate Social Responsibility	Internet: online newspaper articles (P10)	useful for the CV and interview preparation (P10)
Organizational Culture (OC) & Overall employee satisfaction	Internet: Glassdoor (P1+P2+P4+P6) Internet: Comparably (P6)	most of it seems accurate and authentic (P1+P6) especially useful if not familiar with the organization (P2) useful for less factual information (P4)
	Internet: Kununu.com (P3+P6)	a lot of information, but people may only post negative experiences (P3)
	Recruiter (P1+P5+P6)	not as useful as recruiting events because less natural setting (P1) more detailed information (P6)
	Recruiting event (Jo+Na)	very useful (P1)
	Internet: Organization's website & social media (P1+P2+P5+P3 - not really)	a lot of information but employer branding effect (P1+P2) very informative (P5) Not really: Organizational values can be easily found but may not play a part in daily worklife (P3)
Organization's business model and products/services	Internet: Search engine (e.g. Google) (P7)	
	Internet: Organizational website (P2+P4+P5+P6+P7)	not always helpful (big agency yes but new daughter of holding no) (P7) helpful (P5) very helpful (P4) Most of the times not useful at all (P7) not helpful to gain deep understanding of products (P1)
	Internet: Youtube.com (P6)	more useful/informative than organizational websites (P6)
	Recruiter (P6)	sometimes more helpful than organizational website (P6)
	Recruiting event (P1)	helpful (P1)
Organization's strategies, profitability, growth potential	Internet: online portals or websites with investor listings (P6)	
	Internet: Google News (press releases) (P6)	Useful - good indication (P6)
	Financial Statement (P4)	
Other organizational	Recruiting event (P1)	

characteristics	Internet: Google (P1)	useful to form an impression (P1)
	Internet LinkedIn (employee turnover) (P1)	useful (P1)
	Internet: Organizational website (P3+P5)	most informative (P5) helpful regarding most of the information you need (e.g. location of and what is produced at a specific production site) (P10)
	Internet: e-fellows (P3)	more trustworthy than Glassdoor or Kununu (P10)

NS vs. DA	Information Content sought	Information Sources used	Evaluation
Needs-Supplies	Hard facts (e.g. salary, pay raise, benefits)	Internet: Glassdoor (P1+P2+P3)	helpful (some bits of information P1 would not get otherwise) (P1) helpful (lot of information --> indication) (P2) helpful (P3)
		Internet: general (P1+P4)	helpful (P1) - German companies helpful to compare salaries (P4)
		Recruiting event (P1)	helpful (salary offer) (P1)
		Recruiter (P6)	helpful in terms of benefits (P6)
	Personal/Professional development opportunities	Internet: LinkedIn (P6)	helpful (P6)
		Internet: company website (P5)	helpful (P5)
		Internet: Kununu (P3)	a lot of information, but might be biased (P3)
		Internet: general (P1)	not helpful (only german companies?) (P1)
Demands-Abilities	Role & tasks	Internet: LinkedIn (P2)	helpful (looked at similar jobs) (P2)
		Internet: Company website (P2)	helpful (P2)
		Recruiter (P5)	more helpful than informal (friends) (P5)
		Internet: Job description (P5+P6+P7+P9+P10)	helpful (P5+P9+P10) too general, but helpful for identifying (P7) not helpful, cannot really rely on it (P6)
		Recruiting event (P1)	not helpful (job did not exist before) (P1) helpful? (could answer Qs) (P1)
		Internet: Search engine (Google) (P1)	not helpful since job is new --> prefers talking to people (P1)
	KSA	Internet: Job description (P5+P6+P7+P10)	fitting (P7--> Stepstone + P10 --> helpful for his position) confusing (concerning work experience) (P5) work exp --> not reliable (P6) or unrealistic (P10)
		Internet: LinkedIn (P6)	helpful (P6)

Information Content sought	Information Sources used	Evaluation
[J] - roles & tasks	friends (=also current employees) (P2)	helpful, trusted (P2)
[O] organization overall (soft facts)	friends (=also current employees) (P2)	most helpful, trusted, consistent (P2)
	friends (=former employees) (P3)	most helpful, trusted -> honest insights (P3)
	friends (=also current employees) (P5)	really, really helpful (P5)
[O+J] overall	former colleagues (P4)	most/really helpful --> most reliable, trusted (P4)
	friends and family (P5+P6)	good (P5), but company representatives provide more detailed and valid information
		more information than without friends (P6)
	friends (=current employees) (P7)	not helpful, no information because Tochtergesellschaft (P7)

Appendix F: Table with Job Information Sources used in Secondary Data

Study	Perspective	Job (Information) Sources used/job search behavior
Allen & Keaveny (1980)	Individual's Perspective	Formal job sources (e.g. state employment services, private employment agencies, executive search firms, college placement offices, union hiring halls, and newspaper advertisements) Informal information networks (i.e. friends and/or relatives) Direct application
Barron (1975)	individual perspective	walk-ins
Breugh (Breugh, 1981)	Organizational Perspective	College placement office Newspaper advertisements Professional journal/Convention advertisement Informal information networks (i.e. friends and/or relatives who is currently employed at the organization) (unsolicited) direct application
Breugh & Mann (1984)	Organizational Perspective	Informal information networks (e.g. friends or current employees at the organization) Newspaper advertisements Walk-ins (direct applications)
Collins (2002)	Individual and Organizational Perspective	campus recruiting advertising in form of brochures and job postings through various media (e.g. TV, magazine, radio, etc.) referral job fairs sponsorships of campus activities Word-of-mouth Endorsements
Decker & Cornelius (Decker & Cornelius, 1979)	Organizational Perspective	Informal information networks Newspaper advertisements [State or private] employment agencies Walk-ins Others (e.g. rehires)
Ellis & Taylor (1983)	Individual Perspective	Entire sample has made use of the school placement office Informal information networks (i.e. friends and/or relatives) Newspaper advertisements State employment agencies Private employment agencies Direct applications

Gannon (Gannon, 1971)	Organizational Perspective	Newspaper advertisements Private employment agencies Informal information networks (Referred by current employee at the organization) Referred by high school Rehires Walk-ins (direct applications)
Holzer (1987a)	Organizational Perspective	<i>"Hiring Procedures in the Firm: Their Economic Determinants and outcomes"</i> informal: referrals (from current employees or other employers) formal: help-wanted signs newspaper ads referrals from institutions (public & private employment agencies, schools, community agencies,..) walks-ins
Holzer (1987b)	Job seeker Perspective	<i>"Informal Job Search and Black Youth Unemployment."</i> friends/relatives direct application (walk-ins) state agency newspaper ads school or community placement programs
Holzer (1988)	Job Seeker Perspective	Informal information networks (i.e. friends and/or relatives) Newspaper advertisements State employment offices Direct applications Others (e.g. private employment agencies, labor unions, school placement programs etc.)
Kanfer & Hulin (1985)	Individual Perspective	Informal information networks (i.e. friends and/or relatives) (<i>in preparatory job search behavior</i>) Newspaper advertisements (<i>in preparatory job search behavior</i>) [State or private] employment agencies (<i>in preparatory job search behavior</i>) Contacting prospective employers via telephone (<i>i.e. active job search behavior</i>) Sending in applications (<i>i.e. active job search behavior</i>)
Quagliari (1982)	Organizational Perspective	Informal information networks (current employees at the organization) Informal information networks (friends or relatives who are not employed at the organization, but still know about an open

		position) Newspaper advertisements Professional journals Walk-ins
Rynes, Bretz and Gerhart (1991)	Job Seeker Perspective	informal information sources (Having friends or acquaintances already in the organization) recruitment interactions as reasons for decisions to take jobs in companies that were not initial favorites.
Simon & Warner (1992)	individual/job seeker Perspective	referrals from current employees direct applications public employment service unsolicited application private fee-charging agencies want ads college placement office passive search (contacted by recruiter) professional society meeting
Taylor & Schmidt (1983)	Organizational Perspective	Informal information networks Newspaper advertisements Public [State] employment offices Radio advertisements (unsolicited) walk-ins
Tom (1971)	Individual's Perspective	Entire sample has made use of the Career Placement Center at the University of California
Wanous (1980)	Individual and Organizational Perspective	newspaper advertisements governmental employment agencies private employment agencies informal information sources (friends or relatives)
Wiley (1992)	Organizational Perspective	word-of-mouth walk-ins news advertisements Private employment agencies community agencies Tele-recruiting job fairs college recruiting advertising employee referral informal networks (social information networks)

Appendix G: “APPENDIX Organizational Culture Profile Item Set”

APPENDIX Organizational Culture Profile Item Set

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| 1. Flexibility | 27. Decisiveness |
| 2. Adaptability | 28. Action orientation |
| 3. Stability | 29. Taking initiative |
| 4. Predictability | 30. Being reflective |
| 5. Being innovative | 31. Achievement orientation |
| 6. Being quick to take advantage of opportunities | 32. Being demanding |
| 7. A willingness to experiment | 33. Taking individual responsibility |
| 8. Risk taking | 34. Having high expectations for performance |
| 9. Being careful | 35. Opportunities for professional growth |
| 10. Autonomy | 36. High pay for good performance |
| 11. Being rule oriented | 37. Security of employment |
| 12. Being analytical | 38. Offers praise for good performance |
| 13. Paying attention to detail | 39. Low level of conflict |
| 14. Being precise | 40. Confronting conflict directly |
| 15. Being team oriented | 41. Developing friends at work |
| 16. Sharing information freely | 42. Fitting in |
| 17. Emphasizing a single culture throughout the organization | 43. Working in collaboration with others |
| 18. Being people oriented | 44. Enthusiasm for the job |
| 19. Fairness | 45. Working long hours |
| 20. Respect for the individual's right | 46. Not being constrained by many rules |
| 21. Tolerance | 47. An emphasis on quality |
| 22. Informality | 48. Being distinctive-different from others |
| 23. Being easy going | 49. Having a good reputation |
| 24. Being calm | 50. Being socially responsible |
| 25. Being supportive | 51. Being results oriented |
| 26. Being aggressive | 52. Having a clear guiding philosophy |
| | 53. Being competitive |
| | 54. Being highly organized |

Source: O'Reilly III, Chatman and Caldwell (1991, p. 516)

9 Interview Transcripts

(I) = Interviewer

(P) = Participant

Participant 1

(I): To give you a rough structure about the entire conversation, the purpose of the interview is our master thesis. The interview takes approximately 30 to 45 minutes. And, you know that we will record you. Though, we hope it's going to be relaxed atmosphere, and that you can feel just like talking about what we're asking. And, please be as honest and thoroughly in your answers, because everything will be confidential and anonymous. Put down, so no names will be put out or anything. Is it okay for you that we conduct the interview in English?

(P): Yeah, sure. Please go ahead.

(I): Okay. So, first question to start off with is: you've started your job, but beforehand, when was the time or when have you graduated? And in which topic?

(P): So, I graduated in 2018 in June in a double degree, meaning a master's degree in management, and a master's degree in business informatics, so it's management basically.

(I): All right. And so, you were already thinking about a potential employee, I guess, when you were doing your studies, and kind of had an impression of what you would like to do. So maybe you could describe what would be the perfect employer for you?

(P): Oh, that's a quite difficult question. Let me try, um, I guess, a perfect employer, to me, is something different than the perfect company. Okay, because when I look for an employer, I also look for, you know, what's in it for me. And that usually differs quite a bit. And some great companies may not be the greatest employers, especially when it comes to personal development or salary or whatsoever. Having said that, I would say that a perfect employer is, of course, a very innovative, thriving company for me, in the digital space. Because, I mean, that's where I think the music is at the moment, that's where our companies are extremely successful, and also have rapid growth opportunities. And that is also something that I would look for when choosing my job at such a company. So, I do not only want the company to be innovative, to be growing to be successful. But I also want a place where I feel that I'm in the same position. So that I'm working in an innovative environment with inspiring people and that I also have personal growth opportunities. Both on the professional side, meaning that I can learn lots of stuff, having the possibilities to climb up the career ladder, but also, to have a personal fit within the company. So, meaning that I like my co-employees, or my colleagues. And that it just feels as if I'm in a company, that I like working for, an employer that I like. That very much depends on the people and that very much depends on the boss, not only the colleagues, also the boss. And it, obviously, also depends on the company's goals, on the company's perspective on sustainability, on the company's perspective on social responsibility, and all that stuff. And I try to take that into account when, deciding to go for a job or not. And, when it comes to trying to find out what a perfect employer would be for me.

(I): All right, that was very, very good explanation on how you have different views or how you split the employment from the overall organization. When you were actually doing your job search, and were in search for finding a job, how did you start your research?

(P): Well, maybe my situation was a little special, because before going from a master's degree, I already worked in a company, between my bachelor's and master's. And I worked, especially in recruiting and employer branding topics. So basically, from my job back then, I already got quite a good overview, I think, especially on companies and consulting and digital. Just because it was part of my job to see what other companies are doing. And that, I guess, really helped me - maybe also biased me in a way - when I was looking for a new job, because what I have already learned back then was that what companies say on their websites and also what you may read about companies in the media is the one thing. But a totally different thing is a specific division, specific colleagues you're going to work with, also your boss and your personal opportunities you have in that job. And that [latter] is not always comparable to what you may think of a company when just looking at the company in the first place. So that is just something that led me to, of course, inform myself online about companies and looked at their social media feeds. Especially, that's why I decided to read on Glassdoor, on online forums, and meet the people in person at recruiting events. So, I used to meet lots of companies at recruiting events, and eventually ended up working for a company that I met at a recruiting event. So, for that reason, it's just in the end, I guess, not so much the mass media communication, but rather the personal note that I was looking for, in order to complement the view I already had on the company, but there wasn't enough for me. So yeah, that was basically where I was concentrating on focusing on given the companies that I was interested in. And also, I mean, sometimes, honestly, when I was just not sure about a company, I just applied and talked to them in the application process. Because they don't always have a recruiting event or whatsoever. So, I just occasionally went there and had a look. And then maybe I got an offer, or maybe I didn't, and eventually I decided to go for it or not. But I mean, still, it's two-sided. I think it's a two-sided application process. It's not just the very traditional one-sided process from maybe 20 years ago, where I get an offer and take it. It's rather getting to know companies, getting to know your boss, but also colleagues, and whether you do it via recruiting events, whether you do it via applications, or whatsoever. It's just something that I was concentrating on, given my experience with other mass media communication, social media communication, online communication, that may in the end, not always be as fitting and as accurate, as you may hope, when you end up in a different division and different team. So, that's what I was going for.

(I): You seem like - due to your experience - that you knew quite exactly what you already wanted. Was it that you were looking for specific companies or industry? Or were you looking broadly for open job positions, and then got all the knowledge you are having?

(P): I did both. And I would say I focused on the first part [looking for jobs at specific companies]. So, I looked at companies that sounded interesting. I, for example, went for application processes at Google and at Salesforce. And, I went to recruiting events of interesting consulting firms that were offering those recruiting events. And that was, I'd say, rather my starting point, than a very interesting job offer I saw somewhere. But it wasn't that I was specifically looking for [certain] jobs.

(I): So, you went more looking at the organization, then looking if they have something to offer for you?

(P): Yeah, yeah, exactly. But then, I mean, obviously, was having quite a detailed view of what they offer: 'what do they have salary wise, development wise. Is it a traineeship? Is it something else? What do people say about this company's worth? About the salary development? About the personal growth?', you know, all these kinds of stuff. I mean, I obviously looked at that, but I

basically started at companies. But not always. I sometimes just went to random recruiting events and I thought: "Okay, that's nice. Let's learn something about a company that you may not think about at the moment. But that may have the best opportunities". But still, that was my focus back then. Yeah.

(I): Do you remember how long it took you from starting your job search until you actually got your position? And when did you start looking?

(P): So, I think it took about a year, just because I knew back then that after my master's degree - and I knew when I would graduate - that I want to have a job. And I had quite some time during my studies to look at interesting companies and to get to know them. I participated in some very nice recruiting events, for example, sailing from Mallorca to Ibiza, and getting to know PwC. So, there was some quite nice events. Rather leisure time, to be honest, than really getting to know the company. But I mean, since there was just something I could add on top of my study life, I occasionally did this stuff and kept networking with the guys I met over there. So that kind of helped me to never lose contact and to always have different options in mind. That's how I went along with it.

(I): It seems like you were really informed and structured in your search. But did you also ask your friends for help? Or was it only those people you met on the recruitment events you were networking with?

(P): It was rather the people, I met at the companies and also at recruiting events, than my friends, because most of my friends hadn't started working yet. Or they were working at companies where I might end up working at some other time, but where I was pretty sure that I don't want to start there at the moment.

(I): You were collecting a lot of information about companies. But were you also applying for multiple ones at the same time?

(P): Sure.

(I): Do you remember, how many you applied to at the same time?

(P): Oh, I don't know. Maybe five? I don't know. So, I mean, the obvious digital stuff: Google, Salesforce, SAP. Then, I don't even really remember to be honest. Some other companies, but just very few, because usually, I didn't really apply for the job, I rather applied for the recruiting event. And, eventually, afterwards, they already asked you if you want a job.

(I): Were there also negative experience you can talk about during your job search? Did you think that you didn't have enough information regarding job or the organization?

(P): So, when it comes to the organization, I always got quite a good feeling. When it comes to the job, I usually did not. So especially in the digital space, you rather go for something very specific, which I'm not able to, because I'm not the technical guy. Or you go to something broad, and then they talk about project management, design thinking, blah, blah, blah, and you don't really know what it means. Because it always depends on the company, it always depends on the setting, and so on. So when it comes to job specifics, I found it difficult. But since I was focusing on getting to know the company, and on recruiting events, and so on, it wasn't too stressful for me, because I

wasn't applying for those specific jobs in the end. But still, I mean, when I was applying, I was usually applying for more general positions where I was able to specialize afterwards. But I would still say, that even the very nice websites of some very awesome companies who really know how to do employer branding, and get people attracted to them, for example, the digital ones, like Salesforce, or maybe Google and so on. What I didn't like about them: I mean, I got an offer from both, from Salesforce and from Google. I would have loved to know more about the salary beforehand. Because actually, some German companies pay you well - way better - than those American companies that sometimes don't even want you to work in Germany, but in Dublin, for example, which is very expensive. So, something frustrating, well maybe not frustrating, but that's interesting to me was that some crucial information [such as the salary] is lacking and that you need to get the job offer and usually an application round before job interviews and so on before you actually have numbers. And I mean, I'm a business student. In the end, I want to crunch numbers to also make a decision where I go for. I mean, I love all the emotional arguments, I love all that stuff. I totally get it. But I'm not going to work for a company that's famous for tax evasion in fucking Dublin. I get paid less than I would get paid if I started working at a German company after an apprenticeship. So those were just some bits of information, I could have found out some of them on Glassdoor, for example. But definitely not all of them. And where I thought: 'Okay, just from my perspective, but maybe I'm just very logical. You're focused on numbers.'. But just because I base my decision partly on that, there was maybe something where I thought: 'Okay, maybe it would have been nice to know that before.'. But still, all the application rounds were nice. It was nice to get to know companies and so on. So, I wouldn't say there was a real pain. It's just, I think it [information such as salary] is good to know. And something that in the end, might very much change, decision making, even though everything was great beforehand.

(I): Yeah. So, it's mainly the effort and time you put into it, until you get to the point where you get to find out the extra information you were looking for.

(P): Yeah, maybe one thing to add here, but I guess that's across all companies, is that usually your professional development, your career path, is not always that clear. I think the only companies that are good at really communicating that and making good arguments there are consulting firms. All the other companies really lacked that personal growth, professional growth, opportunity kind of thing. So, when you really want to grow within a company and stay there for more than two years, I'm not finding good information on a standardized process, because they usually don't have it. And I get it that it doesn't always make sense. But in the end, that's also something you take into account when making a decision, right? I mean, it's always nice to read about the company, to read about the career opportunities, to read about the job specifications, which as I said, are sometimes to general. But still, after all, you are not really able to imagine yourself working in that company in three years and being maybe in a different position or maybe no. That's just somehow a bit difficult.

(I): If you think about or the job that you're in right now, did you have some trouble finding the relevant information? Where did you find the job that you're in right now?

(P): So, I work in venture development at a hidden champion in Germany, now. I thought I was going to work at an American digital tech company, but I then decided to not go for it. I really ended up working there [the German company] because of a recruiting event, which was just near me. And I thought: "Okay, it sounds interesting. There's a random company I've never heard about, but they are making billions." A company that is now offering a recruiting event, asking me to

come to a recruiting event that is based in an abandoned swimming pool, where they are having co-working spaces, and are working with external consultants and internal employees on new innovation projects in the digital space. So that was just so odd and so random, that I thought: "Okay, let's have a look." And when I went to the recruiting event, and had quite a good time there, I later was just called by them and asked whether I could imagine working there/for them. And I said: "Well, maybe, but actually, at the moment, I think about some other opportunities". But then we had a discussion, and they made quite a good offer that I in the end ended up taking. And if you would have asked me a month before me choosing the offer, I basically couldn't even have told you the name of the company.

(I): And where did you hear from the recruitment event itself then?

(P): On a social media feed. They did just some ads on Facebook, Instagram, and so on. So, focusing on student demographics, and then the typical social media stuff for employer branding and recruiting.

(I): Nice. After you went to the event, did you do some further research?

(P): Yeah. So, I mean, I, of course, I researched the company, I had a few talks with some stakeholders within the company with, for example, my boss, but also with some recruiters. So afterwards, again, to get to know the company and also to talk about my ambitions. And then I actually decided to, you know, fuck it, just go for it. Because whenever I don't like it, I can just leave it. My Google offer is still valid. I can still go to Google, if I want to and also some other companies. But, at that moment, I didn't want to leave my area [location], because of some other stuff. However, I didn't really feel that this decision that I'm making is such a crucial one, because, yes, definitely, it's a job. And it's interesting. And hopefully, it's interesting, and it has a huge impact on me. But in the end, my opinion was really: 'Okay, you know, I'm just going to try it out. And if I don't like it, I can leave in two weeks in the probationary period or three months afterwards.' So that's how I was thinking, but I guess that's just my personality and my character that I thought it's so awkward and random, that it is really interesting that I may just try it out. And also they made, to be honest, quite a good salary offer, and quite some nice stuff around there. That's just where I thought: 'Okay, this is a new position. They are looking for the very first time in a company that has 15,000 employees and that is now turning digital. It just sounds interesting. And no one can obviously really tell me much about the job because it's new, and I am just going to try it out. If I don't like it, it's just normal by now that people can still get a great job somewhere else, and that people are not going to say: "You quit the job after a few months, you must be a very bad employee." I didn't take that into account. I just felt like: 'Yeah, come on, go for it.'

(I): So, you said it was a new job. And you didn't have that specific information about it. But how about the organization itself? Was the information you had [about the organization] before more specific? Or did you know what kind of organization it is?

(P): Yes, I did, because I met them at the recruiting event, and they were talking about the company. And so I then got a good impression about the company, though, I still don't understand many of the products. But that's basically what I told them. I told them: "I don't understand your product. I'm not an engineer. And that I don't want to [understand the products], to be honest." And they were saying: "Oh, yeah, great. But actually, we are looking for someone like that to ask stupid

questions and looks at that stuff in a different way." So yeah, I got to know the company via the recruiting event, also via Google search, and so on. But, yes, that was not all of it. In the end, for me, the decision was less the company and more the actual job in that case. Okay, which is - I just remembered the question of a few minutes ago - which is quite contrary to what I looked for, when I was looking for companies, that I knew I was looking for: very interesting, innovative digital companies that I know or that at least many, many people know. And then I was looking at jobs they offer and then it was basically the other way around. I was thinking about the job, but less about the company. But I didn't know the job [the current job] before I went to the recruiting event.

(I): Did you feel like you had a good impression after they explained it?

(P): Yes, I had a good impression then.

(I): I remember you said like, nobody really could tell you about the job because it was new. So it was not that clear in the job role or description?

(P): Yes. But I think by now, I got a good impression. But not only by now, but I mean, also by back then, right. When talking to, for example, the boss, and so on. I got quite an impression, even though they were all like: "Okay, we'll have to see in the end how it goes." But, yes, I think I got a quite good impression.

(I): And did you have the feeling you were kind of able to do the job when they were presenting it to you? Or were you thinking: 'Oh, that's something I would like to try that I'm not quite sure if I will be able to?'

(P): Yeah, that's the case. I thought I'll try but I don't know.

(I): Okay, so, we talked a lot about the entire job search, and how you were looking for different positions and companies using different kinds of channels and sources and everything. If you reflect now, could you say, which was probably the most helpful source or where you felt most informed and well informed for making a decision if you are interested in the company and job?

(P): Yes, the recruiting events, definitely, where you meet different people of the company. You see THEM interact. And you also see who else attends these events. Who else is interested in the company and who the company also invites to come over. So, I think that's the best way to get a feeling of the company culture, to get a feeling of different types of people working for that company, and also to have a more informal way to interact and to still find out whether that's interesting for you or not to work in that company. Because when you take into account personal contact in general, it can, of course, also be a personal interview with a recruiter. I would say that this is also important. But it's [a personal interview with a recruiter] something totally different and less natural than meeting those people in a different informal atmosphere and really have an interaction.

(I): When you were at the recruitment event from the organization, you're working at right now, have you had this feeling that you would fit in the culture and how they are? Is, or was it not that visible there?

(P): Yeah, I pretty much had that feeling. Yeah.

(I): And you said that after the event, you were doing some more research on different things you felt like you need more information. You were saying you were using a lot of the internet for doing that. What aspects of using the internet did you find most helpful?

(P): Well, maybe my case was a bit special. At least when it comes to the job that I in the end applied for. So maybe we can talk about two things: about the job I took and other jobs. Because for the job I took, I didn't apply for the job, I just got it offered after their career recruiting event. So, for that job, of course, I also did some Google research and so on, but since it was a new job in a new division, basically working with external consultants, more than with employees. I did some research, but honestly, most of the time, I just talked to these people who are looking for someone to take that job. And so, I was in the very lucky position there to be able to make some demands, to say what I'm looking for, to say what I want to be paid. And also, I could come back with questions to them, and they were happy to answer because they were basically creating that role at that very time, as well. So, I guess that's a very different situation, compared to when you apply for a job that hundreds of people already do within the company or have done, for example, a traineeship or, for example, a Sales role or whatsoever. A specific position that exists for a longer time. Therefore - given the fact that I also had a few application rounds there - I was also thinking about these companies. I have to say that, I guess, the most interesting channel was Glassdoor, where I got the feeling that I get the most authentic information. And also, LinkedIn to see what people are doing after they worked at that company two or three years and then left. To see whether it was a career boost to see whether it was inspiring or not. Those were some information I was looking for. Also, employee turnover, because it's always exciting, quite interesting to see how long people in general stay at a company. That's quite a good hint. When people, on average, leave after two years, when the company is telling you that you have such a great career path prepared for you, you can be pretty sure that that's not the case. So those were things I was researching, and that I was able to find out usually. But when I wasn't, there was, obviously, something that I would have been interested in. So internal statistics to all these kinds of stuff. What I always liked, especially for American companies, and what I was missing in German companies usually, was all the culture stuff, the lifestyle stuff, social media blogs, and so on. Everything that shows you, how people actually are like, who work there. So, that [information about organizational culture and people working in the organization] was something, I found lots of when looking at Salesforce, Google and so on. But really not much, when I looked at German companies, for example. So, there was definitely an interesting gap. But on the other end, German companies are more transparent on salary and professional development. And also because of their strong unions, you can sometimes just easily see what you're going to make in terms of money before you even have to talk to someone. So, there was the different gap on that side. So, I guess it's also a question of a company's heritage, company's culture and an international dimension.

(I): Would you say that the information that they gave you on the recruitment event is congruent with what you're experiencing right now? Or is there something different than they told you?

(P): Up to some point. Obviously, a daily job is something totally different than your experience at a recruiting event. And it [the job] can be sometimes very annoying, and sometimes it's nice. Overall, I'm satisfied. But when I decided to go for that job, I even told the people - the recruiters and my boss - that I don't see myself working there in five years. So, I said, I probably am going to

go maybe for a consulting role later or maybe just do something else in that company. But it's just not something I want to do for all the time, and given that, I am quite happy with where I am right now, and how things go. Because I think, it's still super interesting. And I still do like this different vibe there [at the company]. Because, I work in an innovation lab, which is not located within the normal organization. You don't always see the people you see at the recruiting event. Of course, there's not always free pizza. So, when it comes to what they suggested, and what they are looking for, given the fact that they were not sure themselves, it is quite what they talked about. In the end, it sometimes just means more work for me, because there's not a support structure in that way, because maybe no one has ever done or supported that particular job. To give you an idea: I'm now organizing an event for all the employees who have worked in the Innovation Lab. I'm organizing it because no one ever came up with the idea to organize it. I mean, the Innovation Lab exists for two years now. And nobody did. And I'm pretty sure if I would work at Salesforce, or Google or whatsoever, they would have events for me every two or three weeks. But that is something that, again, has to do with the novelty of what they are doing there. And also the different culture, given the fact that it's a German company. So, I knew that before, even though of course, at recruiting events, they are also trying to sell you that company.

(I): All right. So, would you then recommend this company to a friend?

(P): Definitely, depending on the job. So, depending on what you want to do, but also what they offer you to do. Not in general. But I would never recommend a company in general. I mean, maybe some nonprofit organization, but definitely not a fucked-up tax evasion American company or some German Mittelstand, where you might, in the end, not learn anything after 10 years. You can always really have bad luck at all these organizations. Maybe there are exceptions, but I can't really think of some, except for nonprofits.

(I): Okay, then now we have two final questions. So, the first question is, if you leave the recruiting events aside, and just think about the internet or information online, did you feel like that the online information improved your job search?

(P): Yes, it did, definitely. Because you can find all sorts of information online about IT companies. So, it can be important statistics such as employee turnover, employee satisfaction. It can also be very interesting insights in forms of customer or employee voices, such as on Glassdoor. But also how the company sees itself, meaning, it's social media blogs, its landing page for employees, and so on. So, I guess, that really helps a lot. And also, not only when I am actively looking to get to know a company. I think it's always also very nice that companies keep engaging with me and with others, even though I'm not actively looking for them, for example, by having social media ads, in your Instagram feed and your Facebook feed, or Google ads, and whatsoever. Meaning, that I see opportunities, for example, to meet them at recruiting events, but also about new traineeships. I see such information, even though I'm not actively looking, but I still might consider to then engage with the company, even though it was not my first idea.

(I): And the second question, which is also the final one. Just because you said you were also contacted, and not only through feeds, but do you spend a lot of time on maintaining your social profile on LinkedIn or Xing or the alike?

(P): Oh, yeah. Actually, that's a very good question, because we haven't really talked about LinkedIn, Xing and so on, right? Yes, I do [maintain the profile], because I just like to get offers. But I mean, honestly, you want to know your market value, your opportunities and all that stuff. And you will only know that when you let people know what you do. So, I guess, especially LinkedIn is very valuable for that. But sometimes also Xing. I mean, Xing is obviously dying. Give them five more years, but whatsoever. But still recruiters just like to contact through Xing because it's cheaper. But coming back to the general question: these professional social media sites, such as LinkedIn, Xing, and so on. I do like to keep my profile updated. I don't post, I just have my profile to be able to be found. But I usually get a message, on average, maybe every two weeks on LinkedIn or Xing from some, usually, recruiter who wants to talk about job opportunities. Depending on what they talk about, I sometimes then have a chat with them on the phone, for example. Tomorrow, I will talk to someone who's told me, she's working for a strategy consulting firm, and they're trying to set up a new digital practice. I just think it's interesting to hear from them. And occasionally, maybe if there's something that's really interesting, then go for it and actually talk to the company. But it's just because I just feel more satisfied also with my current job, when I'm informed about what's going on. And when I just see what else I could do without having to do much. I mean, the people can contact me, that's all.

(I): Did you not actively look on LinkedIn or something for jobs?

(P): No, just sometimes, when some interesting jobs pop up, and I see there is a super nice job in Cologne, then I sometimes click on it and read about it. And then I'm like: 'Oh, it's not that interesting.'. Occasionally, I look, but not with the intention to apply but rather to be informed. If there would really be such a nice job, but I'm not betting on that. I'm just occasionally looking at them, because LinkedIn usually suggests me to look at those top 10 new jobs to just update me. Then, I sometimes look at it, but I'm not actively looking for a job change at the moment. But, for example, if it's Xing or LinkedIn, there's some options that you can check. And I think that's pretty much what sums up my attitude there. You can check a box, which says, 'I'm not looking for a new job. But I'm always interested to hear about opportunities or something like that.' And that basically sums up my attitude there. Because, in the end, for example, from my perspective, I'm working at a German hidden champion at the moment. So, it's an industry company. And they are not known for really giving you a great speedy growth path. So, I know, that I'm happy with it at the moment. But I know that I won't stay there. And it's always good to have a clue where the next step might be.

(I): That was it. Unless you have anything else you would like to share with us?

(P): No, thank you very much. I think you had quite a few interesting questions there. That might - whatever you find out in the end - really help some companies to adjust their employer branding or their way to inform potential applicants. So, I just hope you're going to have some more good interviews and I just hope that my answers will help you at least a bit.

(I): You definitely raised the level of expectation. That's a good thing. But honestly, thank you so much. You were answering so much in detail. That's going to be very helpful for us.

(P): Yeah, of course. Thank you.

Participant 2

(I): When did you graduate and what were you majoring in?

(P): I graduated last July, so July 2018 and I studied in a Management Master with the major in Strategy and Finance.

(I): As a starting point, could you describe what would be the perfect employer for you?

(P): Sure, I guess the perfect employer, or the perfect company, is a surrounding where it feels very agile. I would not say young, because that implies that people have to be young per se, but the organization itself and the character of the people should be young, agile, and still be willing to change in order to tackle new problems. Not very static, where they tell you all the time what to do and how they practiced in the past 20 years, and thus do not want to change it. Overall, I would say 'agile' is the right word for it. Moreover, the perfect employer has convincing products. I need to be convinced by these products so that I can sell these products to someone and that people can feel that you are really enthusiastic about them. Then, it has to be a well-being atmosphere, like...I don't know...that you have fun at your workplace and that people have the same character as you do. Ultimately, that you really feel like at home while you are at work.

(I): What about job-specific conditions, e.g. work-style, collaboration,..?

(P): I would say it really depends on your specific field and job tasks. Actually, for me, none of these things are super important to me in general, as long as it fits to you and what you want. In my case, I like team work, but sometimes I have the feeling that the teamwork is not really efficient, and I prefer to work alone. So, it really depends on the team and their specific projects.

(I): What would be the most important part in your working life? What do you value the most?

(P): Probably, that you get responsibility, because it shows that you are valued as an employee and that people value your opinion.

(I): Think back into the situation, when you started looking for a full-time position: What did you do? How did you start?

(P): Basically, I started with companies that I was pretty much familiar with. I knew what they are doing and what kind of jobs I can expect from them. Starting from there, I was looking at what kind of positions they are offering currently, what would be interesting in relation to my fields of knowledge and took it from there. So, these were basically the first couple of employers I contacted and positions I applied for. Then, I started searching randomly. I used a lot of LinkedIn, but also talked to friends and family to ask what kind of companies they know and what they think would be interesting positions for me. Basically, I took a geographical approach, because I knew a couple of cities that I could see myself living in and then started searching for companies and jobs in these cities. I mainly used LinkedIn, because you can filter for cities and locations, and then you get job offers for these areas.

(I): Can you remember how long you were looking for jobs?

(P): I would say a quarter of a year or maybe a little bit more from the first application to the last job offer.

(I): When did you look for jobs? Where you still studying?

(P): Shortly before I started my thesis, and during the time, I was writing.

(I): Was it troublesome: Did you feel overwhelmed or rather saw it as a good distraction from your thesis?

(P): I was pretty relaxed while looking for jobs. At least in the beginning, because you are still in the middle of your thesis, so it [job search] is not your first priority. Towards the end, you realise that the whole process takes ages and that companies are so slow and unreliable in responding to your applications. You are not really in the loop about what is going on behind closed doors. Then, you start getting a little bit nervous and unsatisfied

(I): What did you do then you?

(P): You cannot do anything. You have to wait for the company anyway. But at least you probably start thinking about new options. It does not mean that you already take new options or new roads but that you at least start to think about: 'ok, what happens if it doesn't work out?' I have to send a lot more applications or do something.' You think about it at least. I was researching for more positions.

(I): You said you mainly used LinkedIn, but where there any other channels that you used as well? If you wanted to gather more information about something specific?

(P): Usually, I was just using the company websites, when I needed more information. But at first, for the recognition of the company and whether they have cool jobs, LinkedIn was really helpful. If you really wanted to know more about the employer and the specific position, then I was looking under same position in LinkedIn and on their company website.

(I) Any very positive or very negative experience when you searched for jobs?

(P): What is really annoying is - we have so many digital options - but especially on the employer sides they don't use it that much. For example, it could be so easy to send out a lot of applications with a standardized form or anything. But there is nothing like standardization in that whole process. So, for every employer, you have to type in the same data in their company-specific masks and it's all troublesome to do that approximately 50 times. I also didn't like the timing, or rather, that the process took so long sometimes. Some companies are super quick, some companies just take the time in responding. Then, you have the first step and it takes another three weeks until you get more information and how to process, before they further go on and that is really troublesome. Maybe, if there could be a standardized tool or something where all companies aggregate their open jobs etc, then it would be so much more transparent for everyone.

(I): It seems like it was influencing your perception about the company. Did it keep you from applying for those companies when you had the feeling they were slow in the process?

(P): To the first question: it definitely influenced my view of the company or the company reputation. Most of the times, I didn't dig deeper into the company then. Especially, if I had the

feeling that it is not really a quick working atmosphere there and that no one really cares about you or what's happening to you.

(I): Turning to your current employment. How did you find the job you are in right now?

(P): I knew a couple of people who were interning there. Therefore, I had a good image of the company and then I was looking for jobs there and saw that they had a really cool trainee program. Then, I started to talk to these people [interns], whether they know someone who is in this program. So, I got more and more information about it and really like what I was hearing and then was applying for it.

(I) What was especially appealing about what you heard about the company?

(P): More or less, it was pretty much, what I was explaining earlier about a 'perfect' employer, I would say. It has a lot of these characteristics and it feels like I have made the right decision with the employer at least.

(I): Would you say the way they have been presenting themselves and the information you got from your friends conform with the reality that you are experiencing right now?

(P): Yes.

(I): You said you were mainly asking some friends about potential positions there and about the trainee program itself. But was there anything else that you did than asking your friends in order to find some more specific information you were looking for?

(P): I was watching some videos on the company website regarding that [trainee] program and all that. So, I got all the information possible on the program at least. Nothing on top of that to be honest. I mean, I had this official channel on the homepage and I had this informal channel with friends and what they were doing. I knew a lot about the company and the program probably.

(I): What were your references mainly talking about in order to explain the company? Was is more job-related information or rather the organization itself?

(P): I was more interested in the organization itself. So, they told me that the company is pretty open in what you want to do. Specifically, what job would it be later, but that was not that important to me. Sure, it was interesting, what people are doing and how they are working, but it was more interesting to hear how the company itself functions and feels.

(I): Would you say you fit into this concept of the organisation?

(P): Both, retrospectively and from my current position

(I): Before you started the job: did you feel that you would be able to do the tasks or was it more that you were not sure but interested in pursuing these new tasks?

(P): A combination of both. I was confident that I can do it and many things are similar to what you have already seen in other companies and organisations. Some things were very company-specific and there you feel the challenge and want to tackle these things probably.

(I): If you have to decide: What was the main reason that you were applying? Something very specific that you think of that distinguished the company from others?

(P): Ok, before I've been to the first interview, it was most of all the information I got from the people I knew there. Since it was so consistent, and it felt like a place that I could see myself working in, it was basically the information I wanted and that was what made me apply there.

(I): You said earlier that you were applying for different other jobs as well and do you remember what made you decide against them?

(P): Definitely one decision was, that I didn't like the timing about another employer, since it took so long in the whole process. I felt pretty insecure during the whole process, because I was not in the loop of about 'when will be the next step' or 'when can I expect the next information', for example. I don't mind waiting, but I'd rather know how long I have to wait until I can expect a new step in the process, for example. Eventually, it was just a stomach feeling – a good feeling about this employer and so I took the job there and not somewhere else. Sure, what is important as well are the hard facts. But since they have been similar with all companies: the job itself was similar, the pay was similar. So, it was really important for me that I had a good feeling about company in the end.

(I): If you now reflect your entire job search, which source of channel was probably the most helpful or made you feel the most informed about the organisation that you chose in the end?

(P): The most helpful was definitely the personal information I got from people I knew or at least I knew that the people I like know them. So, I trusted them in what they are saying and that they are honest with me.

(I): Besides these people, were there any aspects of internet-related information, strategies or channels that you thought were the most helpful?

(P): I was always checking *Glassdoor*, for example, if it's a company that I didn't know. I was collecting information from these rating websites, where you can rate employers. I looked there, because you get a lot of information: 'Are people happy there? How is the pay and the work environment in general?'. You get information about these kinds of things. You get a feeling for it, at least. If it's consistently bad, then you think twice whether to apply or not. If it's mostly good and some people didn't like it, then – it's like always in life, that there is always someone who is not satisfied with anything – but you are still open to apply to these companies, I would say.

(I): In general, when you were looking for information online: Did you have any issues or were there situations where you preferred not using the internet?

(P): As I said already, what was tiresome was that you had to send or to use the company-specific tools, they give you in the internet. I think, before using the internet, it was pretty easy to have a standardized CV, for example, and a standardized portfolio of information you have, which you sent to companies. But now, every company has their standardized form. So, you have to use this. In one case, I had an issue that a company had two different portals: depending on what link you were using or from what website you were starting, you ended up in different portals. And I was pretty concerned about, what portal to use. So, I had to contact the IT department before I could apply. That was really annoying as well.

(I): Now, since you are in the job, is there anything unexpected about the position or the company that you were not aware of before you started?

(P): Well, sure, there is a lot of new information now, but I would not say that it is totally unexpected. But surely, it is always that every larger company reflects an image to the outside and then in real life it's always probably 25% less of what they were promoting. But I think, everyone knows it, and everyone expects it. So, you are not really surprised about it.

(I): Being aware of what you just said, did you then use those other channels to gather more information that might be more realistic?

(P): Not per se, no. It was more about the general working environment, that I was using other channels for in order to get a feeling of whether people enjoyed working there. But not for this unrealistic kind of thing [that the company reflects a better image of itself], where you know that or already expect that it is a little bit different from what someone [the company] is promoting. And concerning daily work, for example, I would say no, because you already expect it.

(I): Would you say you enjoy working in the organisation and would you recommend the organisation to a friend? If yes, for what reason?

(P): Yes, I enjoy working there and yes, I would DEFINITELY recommend it to a friend. It is a place where I really like to work because it fulfils the criteria I mentioned in the beginning. I guess, a lot of people have similar criteria and they like these things from a company. And if I had the feeling that a friend of mine is looking for a similar experience, then I would definitely recommend the company.

(I): Do you use the internet a lot for looking for information?

(P): All the time for everything. I use it a lot, like several times a day to get information about anything.

(I): Do you feel confident to use the internet or do you feel overwhelmed?

(P): Not really overwhelmed. I think everyone has certain patterns using the internet. So, I think, you always use the same portals, for example, to get the information even though there probably are a million other channels of information in the internet. Once you got one, you trust, you use this one all the time and you ignore the others. I use LinkedIn for job-related information, and, for example, Google for restaurant critics all the time. If it has a lot of stars in the google reviews, I am open to trying it at least.

(I): Do you think the information you found online - besides the information from your friends - improved your overall job search?

(P): Yes, for sure. There is a lot of information about that; the company presents itself on their website, for example. On top, you have all the additional information from other people that vote or add additional information on other websites. So, it helps a lot to get first information about processes, how the company structures their processes, or what they expect, probably. You get [information about] all these kinds of things. You get that information about the working environment there, about pay raise in wages and all this stuff. And that is information you wouldn't have otherwise without the internet and without knowing anyone in the company.

(I): Last question, or rather I will provide you with a statement and I would like you to comment on it: “The internet has help me to better identify whether the company or the job is the right one for me!”

(P): Overall, yes.

Participant 3

(I) When will you graduate and what are you studying, what is your major?

(P) I will graduate in the Fall of 2019 and my major is called a management and technology with two majors: one in strategy and one in Informatics

(I): Could you please describe what a ‘perfect employer’ is for you?

(P): For being a perfect employer, there needs to be an open culture. So, I am looking for a good feedback culture, as well as for open people who are friendly and that leave room to make mistakes. But I am also looking for interesting projects and the pay is important to me.

(I) You mentioned the company culture and people. But are there other aspects, specific to the job, that are particularly important to you?

I like if I can work autonomously, but also if there is good collaboration between people and being part of a team. Also, my freedom is important to me, so that every once in a while, I can do home office and I get my own tasks that I can fulfill whenever I'd like to.

(I) You are currently pursuing an internship. If you think back to when you started to look for the Internship, how did you start that process? What did you do?

(P) I first looked into the area, that I was interested in. So, I decided I wanted to do an internship in Consulting. And then, when I applied, I looked at the company culture as well, because those companies are all kind of similar. But if you look at the consultancies there are some differences, for example in the one I work at now, work life balance is a big topic which is not that important to other consultancies.

(I) And how did you find out about the information? How did you get to know about the culture as you describe it?

(P) I wanted honest insights, so I asked another student who worked there. In general, I talked to friends and people from my university who have already worked at consultancies and asked for their feedback.

(I) You said you did not look only for this company. How did you, in general, look for all the consultancy companies you were thinking about?

(P) I have this book from *squeaker.net*, an offline book, which contains a list of all consultancies. Specifically, I looked at the field I'd like to work in. So, I applied for Strategy and IT consultancies.

(I) Were you just using the book to look for potential internships?

(P) Well, of course you know all the big consultancies and then check out their corporate websites and apply through that.

(I) Did you use other channels? E.g. recruiting event to get more information?

(P) I have been to recruiting events a while ago which kind of influenced my knowledge about those consultancies. I went Women in Consulting, an event organized by squeker.net, which had smaller consultancies and offered the chance to talk to and interview other women who are working at consultancies. I had two interviews within this event with one representative from Detacon and one from Commerzbank Consulting. It was really interesting to hear what they say about the work or the daily life of the ladies working at each company. Furtherly, I went to a sailing event with Accenture. There was a really nice atmosphere to just talk about their life and work at Accenture.

(I): When you were looking for internships, what kind of situation were you in and how long did it take you to look for an internship?

(P): I was in my exchange semester and I knew I would have some spare time after it and before University back in Munich starts again. So, I started looking in October and the internship started in January.

(I) Was it a stressful period of time to find the position or did you feel that it was quite ok doing it while you were in exchange?

(P): It was fine, because I had some spare time at night during the weeks. Once you write one of the applications, it does not take that much time to write the other ones, because all the positions were pretty similar. Then, the consultancies are pretty fast in responding, so that I already had a few interviews shortly after. I also talked to a few of my friends about their experience at those companies and I could see on LinkedIn who worked at the consultancies before, so I just asked the people.

(I): Can you remember roughly how many jobs you applied for?

(P): I believe, it was about 10.

(I): Did you have particularly positive and negative experiences? E.g. in terms of searching for information, websites, recruiters, and so on?

(P): The websites were all great. Most consultancies were fine with just doing a telephone interview. But one of them would neither accept a telephone interview and nor would they let me have a personal interview in one of their offices in Mexico. So, I would have to wait until after I am back in Germany, but I planned to already start an internship at that point of time.

(I): Did this incident influence your perception of the company?

(P): Not really, because it's a better-known consultancy and they just have a more intensive application process than the others.

(I): Did you already expect that it might be quite difficult?

(P): I knew it would be difficult, but I would have thought they'd be more open to let me have an interview in Mexico, because they have offices there.

(I): Now turning to your current company: You said you used that offline book, but how did you get to know about it in the first place?

(P): I signed up for this website (squeaker.net) a long time ago, I follow them on Facebook and they send me emails every once in a while. So, I saw it somewhere on either of these.

(I): What kind of website is it?

(P): It is kind of a career website but specialized on consultancies. They post a lot of events and tips on how to apply, as well as experience reviews.

(I): When you applied, did you feel like you had all the information you wanted? Was there enough information so that you could apply or were there some things that were unclear to you before you had the first talk to an employer?

(P): I mean they all have their values written on their website and also, they have a great company culture. So, actually I did not look too much into it on the website, because for me it seems like it is an open company with great values. But you never know until you actually start working there or unless you hear from somebody who has worked there before.

(I): You said, it was especially what you heard from your friends about the culture, what drove you the most towards that company that you chose?

(P): Yes

(I): When you were doing your research and looking at other companies, what made you decide against them? Do you remember anything besides this one incident you mentioned before?

(P): Actually, when I talked to my friend, he was so excited about working at this one company. And I really liked the interview partner as well. I mean, they [all consultancy interviews] were really nice, but with them it was some small talk before the interview and they were super interested in my exchange semester. Simply, it was a really easy-going nice conversational interview. They actually offered me the job right after the interview and I accepted right away.

(I): We have been talking about the entire pre-hire process. But now you already work for the company. Now, if you reflect would you say that all the information that you got before, and what your friend said, were realistic? Can you say that it's matching what you're experiencing right now?

(P): Yes. To be fair though, I did not know what exactly I expected, but he [my friend] was really excited about the people, and that everybody is super young and helpful. And now I can say, it is really like that. You can see it based on the fact, that all the employees work there pretty long for consultancies. They all want to stay there because people are so nice, they do so many events, and they are super flexible. So, I think, he [my friend] was right!

(I): Would you say that you would fit the company and that you were you able to do the job? Or is it something you don't know, if your skills are appropriate or are developed enough and you are more into learning those skills new?

(P): I think, for my position right now, my skills are enough. But you have a lot of chances to continue learning and if you really push hard, you can get a better position really soon. There's always room to improve your skills on the job.

(I): You said that the referral was the main source of information that you found most helpful in getting the right image of the company?

(P): Of course, in every interview you always have room for questions. Then most of the time, I ask what it is like working at the company, what the company culture is like. That question was really easy to answer for my interview partner as well.

(I): Besides the referral, the book and the websites, were there any issues when you used the internet for doing research?

(P): Not really, because you can also – besides the website – look on other sites. E.g. you can find a lot of reviews on all those companies, because they are really big and there is a lot of information out there. Then you can check on *glassdoor* what your salary will be like, and on *kununu* how the company culture is like and what development opportunities people talk about. There is a lot of information.

(I): Would you say you can trust those statements on these websites, or see it as a trustworthy way to inform yourself?

(P): I mean, on sites like *kununu*, I always think that mostly those people who were not super happy post on there. So, I think it's a little biased. But, for example on e-fellows, when you have an interview with a former intern or the alike, I think it's kind of trustworthy. But, I mean, you only read one person's opinion.

(I): Your friend was very enthusiastic about the company. Would you also say that you enjoy working for that company? And do you also enjoy the task that you're doing?

(P): In the beginning, I did! Right now, our project is still in trouble. The task really varies from project to project. It is a super interesting project, but right now it is kind of a slow. So, I feel like I could have more work or more interesting tasks. But I also know it is going to change again soon.

(I): In the beginning of the interview, you mentioned that a perfect employer must offer responsibility, an open culture, and a feedback culture. Does your employer fulfill that?

(P): Yes, I have a weekly one-on-one with my manager and he is really open about whenever he likes something or does not like something. So was I! Therefore, he is well aware of the fact that I am not super happy with my tasks at the moment and he's trying to find a way to change that.

(I): In general, do you use the internet or information online a lot? And when you look for something, do you know how to find the information immediately?

(P): Yes

(I): Did you feel like the internet improved your job search, when you were looking for the internships?

(P): Definitely!

(I): More precisely, in what way?

(P): Because to start with all the information I had, was coming from the internet. So, I would not have known about the book of career blog without the internet. And then, I would not even know how to contact all the companies without the internet.

(I): Lastly, I will give you a statement and I would like you to comment on it and if you agree or disagree: “The internet has helped me to better identify whether the job or the company is the right one for me”

(P): I partly agree with it, because you find a lot of information on the internet. But, in the end, for me, the main point to go to this company, was my friend who has already experienced working there and I trust him more than some blog post I read.

Participant 4

(I): All right, thank you so much for taking the time. Before we start with the interview right away, any could you tell us first when you have graduated, and what you have studied?

(P): Well, I still haven't graduated, I just handed in my master thesis. So, I'm going to graduate in the next few weeks. And I studied the Master Program in Management at the University of Mannheim.

(I): Alright. While you are pursuing your master's, right now, you probably already have some kind of expectation in terms of what kind of career path you want to go in, and maybe you have already developed some ideas of what your career is going to look like. Could you describe us how your perfect employer would look like?

(P): Okay, so my perfect employer should ideally be a market leader and should be recognized for being a good employer. And yeah, offer great opportunities to develop and set a clear path for the next steps regarding how you get there.

(I): And what about things like, collaboration? company culture?

(P): So, I feel like it all goes into the thing being recognized for being a good employer. So, this should be like, you should be able to say, speak up your mind and have a way to communicate if you're concerned about things. So yeah, that's important, and to have a great team you like working with.

(I): Do you consider yourself more like a teamwork kind of person or do you prefer working autonomously and by yourself?

(P): Well, I like if it's always a mix. I need the contact to other people. But I also sometimes just like to lock myself in and just do some focused work when it's necessary.

(I): And if you would have to pick one specific, or the most important thing about your work, what would be the thing that is most important to you, when you think about the work life?

(P): It must be challenging. I think it's important that you have a stretch. It shouldn't be, you know, the same repetitive boring tasks the whole time. It should change and require you to acquire new skills on a constant level.

(I): While you were thinking about getting a job in your career, how did you start your job search process?

(P): Well, I have already worked before in a field that's very popular. So, I just replied to recruiters that contacted me on LinkedIn. So, I haven't applied actively in quite some time. If I wanted some specific role, I would look through my network and get referred for positions I'm interested in, or I would actively get in contact with recruiters. But I would never apply through the normal process or just a normal platform.

(I): Because you were already very certain about the industry you were interested in, you mainly contacted old colleagues? Or was it, that you contacted potential new colleagues from the companies you are interested in?

(P): Um, well, the thing is, I work in sales. So, I get to know a lot of people. So, I have a broad network of previous customers, partners, old colleagues, and my colleagues' old colleagues that work in certain companies, and by that you can basically get your way into any company you're interested in.

(I): And did you call them? Or did you send them an email? Or how do you stay in contact and ask them?

(P): I would send a message on WhatsApp or LinkedIn asking for a call and what I want to do, and I was asking if they would be willing to help me.

(I): When you were approached about the job offers, do you remember how long you were looking at different positions, from starting to look for jobs or being approached by recruiters until you have started at your current position?

(P): Also, I signed my contract in August, and I started in December. But the whole application process took around four weeks.

(I): Oh, wow. So, within four weeks, you were looking for jobs and found a job already?

(P): Yeah.

(I): And what was the situation when you were looking for jobs: Was it during your thesis? Or was it during an exchange? What was going on besides your job search?

(P): I just returned from my exchange. So, I had been studying abroad, I came back, and I started working right away, I was working part-time at a company, part-time writing my thesis there. And during that time, I was doing the interviews.

(I): But it's not the same company you're working at right now. Right?

(P): Now. It's a different company.

(I): Why did you decide not to go with that company? If I may ask.

(P): The other offer was better.

(I): Okay, in what terms better?

(P): Well, just from the company itself, the products, the salary and the benefits. Just overall, it was a better deal. I guess, the main thing for me is that the job I would have been doing at that other company would have really been just be me doing my own thing. Now [in the current job], it's just a group of professionals where everyone is focused on their fields and thus requires some training, collaboration and support. I felt like, I'm still at the early stage of my career and therefore need someone to help me grow and actively participate in my meeting. Somebody to give me regular feedback. And this is what was missing with that [other] company which was also one of the reasons why I said I want to take the other job. A job that just gives me more opportunity to develop myself.

(I): Okay, so you feel like have the support now, that someone is guiding you?

(P): Yeah, exactly.

(I): Alright. And do you remember roughly how many jobs you were applying for?

(P): Three.

(I): And did you have any negative or maybe also very positive experiences during your job search?

(P): I had a negative experience, which was a bit odd. So, I applied for a job. And it seemed to be going quite well. At the last stage, we actually confirmed a date and time for our interview. I booked my flights, I flew in, to stay there a day earlier. And then the guy called me the day before, saying: "Why are you not here? Your interview was supposed to happen right now?" I'm like: "No, we confirmed the day for tomorrow." Yeah. And apparently, it didn't get through to me. Anyway, they didn't confirm it or anything. And he had the VP sitting there to meet me. The interview process was cancelled. So, they didn't reschedule the interview anymore. Because the senior executive said that they are not going to take another two hours of their schedule to meet me. It's just weird, because normally, you would send an email with the appointment change, and then confirm it before you just do it. And I just had the communication about the appointment we discussed, not on the change. I don't know what has happened. I mean, it could have been my email, maybe, but yeah.

(I): Has your perception of the company changed after that?

(P): Not necessarily the company, just the person I was dealing with.

(I): Okay, so would you still consider applying for that job or for the company again, if there's an interesting position?

(P): Yeah.

(I): If we talk about your current employer: How did you find out about the job or the employer?

(P): I was approached by a recruiter LinkedIn.

(I): Did you know anyone who was working there before?

(P): Yes, I have a lot of old colleagues that work there. Once I had the offer that I could speak to my old colleagues that I knew and with whom I was doing the same job before. I was asking them to tell me how it compares, whether they are happy, and whether they would recommend me to do the step. And this was really, really helpful.

(I): Okay, so you were mainly relying on the information you got from your previous colleagues and customer so far?

(P): Yeah.

(I): Okay. And besides asking your friends, where else did you look for further information about the company?

(P): Um, yeah, actually. When you work in that industry, you are quite familiar with certain sets of companies. So, I was already very familiar with what they do, and I've worked for some products before. Yeah, also did quite some intensive research online.

(I): And do you remember where and what kind of channels you used?

(P): They actually have an extensive online learning platform. I just use their own training resources to prepare myself for the conversations. And then also the financial statement because it is a traded company. So, there you can read a lot about their current strategies, the biggest exhibitions to stay up to date on the things that matter to them.

(I): Okay. How come that it is important to you to know the strategies?

(P): Why it's important. Well, it's important that to prepare for the interview. I want to be able to communicate: "Ah, I know, you did this, I know this was important." And, also just to understand how they're doing financially: if they overperform, which they do. It's nice to work for a company that is growing and growing more than expected.

(I): So, if I understand it right here, you are interested in growing? A safe job?

(P): Yeah.

(I): Was there anything besides preparing yourself for the interview that you were researching on the company, because you felt like you wanted to know some more information about something specific?

(P): Well, because it's a very big company, there's extensive resources on how the whole [recruitment] process works. Which questions are going to be asked, what the structure of the interview is going to be. And, if you apply through a recruiter, she actually took a whole hour to prepare me for the first interview, and two full hours to prepare me for my final interview. That was the most helpful resource in the process.

(I): Okay. You said, you like a company where you can develop yourself. Did you do any research on those things, like how the company is, and if you could feel like you could fit in? And if you have the right abilities to match the job?

(P): That's just talking to people, I feel like talking to people who have the experience is the most useful resource.

(I): Alright, so because some people, for example, use Glassdoor to inform themselves.

(P): Yeah, I also use Glassdoor to look for less factual information.

(I): You said you were considering three jobs in total. What made you decide against those jobs?

(P): It was the product. If you work in sales, it's important to have a product that's easy to sell and that has a market. Also, I wanted to go abroad. So, I was really tempted to try out working in a different country. But also, salary, benefits and all types of factors, really. You know, I like to do a nice Excel spreadsheet where I write down all the criteria. Then I score points. So then, I decided - not to say that mathematically -, but to get an indication.

(I): Ok, we were talking about all the processes before you started the job. Now, you are in this situation of performing the job itself. And if you reflect on your job search, could you tell which source made you feel most prepared and well informed about the entire organization now?

(P): I would say really speaking to people that work there. Probably, the most reliable, especially if they are people you trust. Yeah, that's the most reliable information.

(I): And can you say that the information you got beforehand are matching the reality you're in right now?

(P): Yeah, I would say so. Yeah.

(I): But was there anything that was not the way that they or the company stated? Nothing surprising?

(P): I do feel like I was informed. You know, you can always expect it to be a tiny bit different than you know. I wouldn't say I'm disappointed or unpleasantly surprised. Just matches with what I was thinking. Some things are a bit better, but some things are a bit worse. But overall, it's good and expected.

(I): And if you have to point out one specific thing that is especially better, and one specifically worse, could you tell?

(P): The really good thing is that I really like the people there. So, it's just a very, very young team. And I never had such a big young team before, it's really, really fun. It feels a bit like being at the university again, so that's fun. What's not so great is maybe that they do a lot of restructuring because the company is a billion dollar company growing at 30% every year. So there's a lot of restructuring. So a lot of the processes that were discussed previously, actually have changed, because they change every year, and not necessarily in a good way. It's kind of the nature of the business.

(I): What aspects of research on the internet was most helpful? And what was least helpful? Was there anything that you had an issue with, using the internet?

(P): Um, what was really, really good is I actually the information provided by the company that was helpful. And apart from that, I wouldn't say I was disappointed from any resource. I couldn't think of anything.

(I): And if you use resources, other than the company website, for example, glassdoor.com. How would you evaluate the information that you are reading about there?

(P): See, I feel like it's an important source as if you actually don't know anyone in the company. But I didn't really care too much about glassdoor. I had some former colleagues that worked with me that work there [the current company] now. And they could provide me with a way better picture than some strangers on the internet, half of which never got the job, could ever do. And I feel like for every person, and with every background, it's very different. I think, it's a good indication, but just from my case, it wasn't the most relevant.

(I): Would you say that you're enjoying the job and working for the company?

(P): Yes. Oh, yeah.

(I): Great. Would you recommend it to a friend?

(P): Yeah, I would.

(I): Do you use the internet a lot for any kind of research or information gathering that you would do?

(P): Yeah.

(I): And how comfortable do you feel? Do you feel like you have a certain strategy, or you feel like if you want to know something, you know how to look for that kind of information?

(P): Yeah, I think so. I feel like I'm happy with my internet research abilities.

(I): If you reflect on your entire job search, did the internet improve your job search? And in which way?

(P): You mean, during the job search?

(I): Before applying.

(P): To be quite honest, I wasn't really actively applying. I didn't really do an active search before. It kind of fell in my lap. It was a bit of a different situation for me.

(I): But you were mainly contacted via LinkedIn, right?

(P): Yes. LinkedIn is my main source during the job hunt

(I): So, if you haven't had your profile on LinkedIn, would you say your job search wouldn't have been the same?

(P): No. It wouldn't.

(I): Okay, so would you then say the internet improved your job search in that matter, if you said the job search wasn't active but passive?

(P): Yeah, definitely.

(I): My last question is a statement and I would like you to comment on it to the extent whether you agree or disagree: 'The internet has helped me to better identify whether the company or the job is the right one for me?'

(P): Yes, because you can do tons of comparisons. You can see and compare the salaries that you can expect, you can read reviews online, you can research the state of the company, the products, customer reviews. There is just tons of resources that you can use. You know, if there is something very alarming, that should stop you from applying or that should really encourage you. So yeah.

(I): So, the quantity of information available is very important?

(P): Yeah.

(I): Great. Thank you very much. Anything else you would like to share? We have time now?

(P): No. Okay, fine. Thank you.

(I): Okay. Thank you so much for your time. Thank you.

Participant 5

(I): To start up very casually: tell us when you have graduated and what was your studies about?

(P): So, I have graduated in 2016, so around two years ago. And my studies were about both Marketing and Sales. And yeah, I studied economics.

(I): Could you describe what would be the perfect employer for you.

(P): The perfect employer for me is a very social employer. So I think it's really important to have a very, very fair and very social atmosphere where you are working. And so for me it means something like having a great team atmosphere, being fairly treated in terms of holidays and money. So very high on equality, such as equal compensation and treatment of employees. Basically, fair in any kind.

(I): And what do you think about the working culture, for example, hierarchies, being able to work autonomously, or the possibility for doing home office?

(P): Yeah, I think, it's really important for me to have flat hierarchies. Because, I think it's better to have a nice atmosphere with your boss or with your team. And then yes, it's easier to work with flat hierarchies. And it's not this strong and strict situation, so you don't have to be scared of asking something. And you don't have to be scared of naming problems or also to create new ideas or something like that. So, it's more open. It's easier to work with this. Also, the employer should allow for doing home office. So, it's not this old strategy to have every employee being physically present in the company. So, it's more like: you can do home office, you have your free time. It's about the work life balance due to more freedom and flexibility in how I can work.

(I): When you have to think about what is most important to you in your working life, what do you value?

(P): I think the most important is to work for a company with products you also like. I really like personal care. So I think it's nice for me because I'm interested in those beauty products, and I think you are better at working when you are interesting in something. So it's easier for me not to work with machines or something like this. It's easier for me to work with beauty products but it's also the value of the company. So I think it's very important to have values like trust, fairness and the alike.

(I): We were talking about what would be the hypothetically best employer. And you're working right now. Of course, you had to start looking for your job at a certain point. So, how did you start your job search or internship search?

(P): Well, I started my job search by using the internet. So, I was just looking for interesting companies in Hamburg, since I planned to have a new job in Hamburg. Therefore, I was just looking for the region, Hamburg, and then looked in the internet for nice companies. Then I found the company, I am currently working for. And I was looking for the area Sales and Marketing. So it was easy to find really good and big companies in Hamburg for this area. Then I found my job. So it was my interest in Marketing and Sales and in a nice company that I found.

(I): And where did you find that job?

(P): Oh, well, that was on an event, the Hamburg Company Tour. That was a really, really nice event, because you spend one day at the company you want to go. And there [at the company], I get to know HR. So, I spend the whole day with each HR and in this company. We talked about the new job. That was easy for me then to get to know the HR.

(I): And how did you hear about this event?

(P): That was on the platform Facebook. Yeah, it was the internet. I looked for nice companies in the internet and then I looked on Facebook for this event. SO, I knew about this event beforehand, but not when it was supposed to happen.

(I): In general, you said that you were looking at the internet to find certain companies that are providing jobs in that/your area? Do you remember what kind of channels and platforms you were using to look for those jobs?

(P): I looked at *Stepstone* and *Indeed*. I think, *Stepstone* is the most important platform for looking for good jobs. Also, I think it is a great possibility in the internet to directly look on the company website.

(I): And why are you thinking that Stepstone is the best? And why the website?

(P): The searching at Stepstone is really easy, as well as to filter. That's really, really good. And there are quite new jobs. So when a company has a new job, it's always on Stepstone. So I think it's really really up-to-date. I think it's many of those companies post on Stepstone.

(I): How long you were looking for a job before you actually got your current position?

(P): Um, I think it was one month.

(I): For how many jobs were you applying in the end?

(P): Well, it was more like, there were a few jobs, which I was interested in at this particular company. And I was having three interviews at this company before one of the job fit.

(I): Okay. So you were having interviews, and the recruiters were kind of deciding for you, which would be the right fit?

(P): Yes, they identified which [job] was the best. So that was good for me.

(I): What situation were you in when you were looking for those jobs? Were you the bachelor thesis process?

(P): At this time. I worked, or rather interned, for another company. It was after having finished my bachelor thesis. So, it was during my internship before I searched for a new job.

(I): And when you looked for the open job positions, did you also talk to friends about possibilities at companies about the certain jobs to get an idea?

(P): Yes, I talked to a lot of friends. That was good and helpful, because I talked to a lot of friends in this region, so in Hamburg. I asked for good companies with nice values. I talked to them a lot.

(I): Based on that did you do some more research on companies? Or was it that you first saw the companies and then asked the friends?

(P): I first saw the company and after that, I talked to friends. Some were currently doing an internship in this company. So I asked: "What about this company? Do you like it? Or is it not that good?" And it was more like I found the company first and after that, I asked my friends: "Okay, what do you think about this?"

(I): During your entire research process before applying, was there anything very positive or negative?

(P): I think it was a little bit confusing, because I was really a starter for my first real job and it was communicated, or the job description stated that, they [the company] was looking for a starter after finishing his/her studies with good grades. But while having my interview with the recruiter, they said something like: "Okay, it would be really nice if you worked for maybe one or two years in another company. So it's better to have a little bit more experience.". That was a little bit confusing for me because there is a time when you have to start your first job. It's not that easy to have maybe two years of experience before. You have to start with one job. So, they said: "Okay, really nice. You have graduated well, but it would be MUCH better if you had two years of experience in another company.". So yeah, that was really confusing.

(I): Did you know anyone in that specific company that you could ask about anything that you wanted to know or were you mainly talking to the recruiter?

(P): I think, it's always better to talk to the recruiter when you want to know something about your job or the next step or something like this. But I think, it's also a good way to talk to your supervisor, because you can also challenge something or just present yourself.

(I): You said that it was nice to talk to the recruiter about very formal things like, what are your development steps and stuff like that? And if you had any questions about what's the work environment about, what's the values the company's pursuing? What's the culture like? Who would you ask then?

(P): Maybe also my boss. I think it's good to have a deeper talk with the boss. I think it's also an opinion. And maybe also to my prospective team. So there are some people who work really long for the company. And it's also good to talk to that team.

(I): So you were only talking to people from the company when you wanted to get more information?

(P): Yeah, I think so.

(I): Okay, so you were not looking for more information somewhere else?

(P): Yes, It's also a choice. Yeah, it's maybe a good choice to look on the website or talk to friends. But that's really normal for me. So I think I would always first look on the website and then talk to friends. For really specific themes about my job or about something about my company, I would talk to the recruiter or to my prospective supervisor.

(I): Was there any information that you thought were hard to get from them? Did you feel like the information you had from all those things were enough or satisfactory before you applied?

(P): I think yes. I think it's always good to have a first look on the website of the company. And you can also get good or deep information on websites, like *Glassdoor*, or also on *Stepstone*, and the company websites. Secondly, I would always talk to my friends and to my family. It's good to get some information from them. So yes, I think it was enough for me to apply at this company.

(I): When doing your job search, did you feel like you were the right fit for the company and the position itself?

(P): Yeah, I feel like I was the right fit for the company, because I share their values. Their values are the same as mine, so that fit. But I am also interested in the products, since I use the products in my every day life, so that also fits. My studies were also for marketing and for sales and the focus of the company is also marketing and sales. And so this job really, really fits me.

(I): So you had the feeling your skillset was matching what the company was looking for as well?

(P): Yes. It was just this issue of not having enough experience. So when I talked to the recruiter, I just feeling: "Okay, I'm not good enough for what they are looking for." Because the recruiter said, it would be really much better to have one or two years more experience on another job. That was the only reason why I was a little bit scared of this as a first job. But the job description and the core values were fitting me, so I tried it.

(I): If you have to choose what has been the most important or the main driver of why you chose the company, could you tell?

(P): The main reason is that I believe that the company can boost me. It's the development opportunities, since they offer a lot of trainings and those sorts of things. I started to work there, because I was sure that they can develop me in the right way. I think there are many chances for my career. I think that was the most important thing for me. They have many trainings and like this.

(I): So the opportunity for personal growth?

(P): Yeah, that's the reason why I decided for that company.

(I): But do you remember what, what made you decide against the other companies you were interested in as well?

(P): To have a certain job. There are many, many really interesting companies, but this company that I'm working for, is more certain and specific in the job. I have a really certain specific job there.

(I): Which channel or source in your job search has been helping you the most to get informed about the company?

(P): I think it was the company website. I think that was the most informative channel for me. And I think maybe it *Stepstone* as well, but I think the most important is a good website for a company.

(I): In your opinion, what defines a good website?

(P): To have a really, really good description about the company, and maybe history, values and the alike. Good company websites should also have a good description concerning in what they want to develop you. What are the chances and what kind of trainings do they offer? I think, this is really important. And also the really international way, the different areas they are offering products in. A thorough description of all these company.

(I): It seems, they put out a lot of information about hard facts, but what about soft facts?

(P): Hard and Soft facts and also about their brands. It was really important for me to read about the brands and to have more information, what they are standing for.

(I): Did you have any issues when you were researching the internet for the company?

(P): Not really, I think I found the most important information for me.

(I): If you are now in your position in your job, would you say what you've been told, is very close to the reality you're experiencing right now?

(P): Yes, I would say so. It's really close to it. The job description and the interview were really, really detailed. So, it's really close to what I'm doing now.

(I): And what about the company culture and the atmosphere in the company?

(P): First, I thought the atmosphere is not that good in this company. So, I was not that enthusaistic. But the atmosphere is fantastic. I was a little bit surprised. So it is better now to be working for this company than I thought before.

(I): Do you remember why you had this impression before?

(P): I thought the company is more conservative. That is why I thought, it's not that dynamic in this company. But that's bullshit. It's really flexible. It's really dynamic. And it's not that conservative than I thought before.

(I): But what made you think that it's conservative or non flexible in the first place?

(P): This company is really traditional. It is a really old company. It was founded 150 years ago. And it's a German company. So I thought: "Okay, maybe it's too traditional for me. It's too conservative.". But it isn't.

(I): So it's not that something influenced you during your job search that make you gave impression?

(P): Not really. Its more what I thought myself.

(I): You have information from the website and from the recruiters on one hand, and then you have information from friends that you were talking to on the other hand. What was more helpful?

(P): I think more helpful for me was to having detailed information provided by the recruiter about the job description. Especially, for getting to know what my daily tasks would look like and so forth. But it was also helpful to talk to friends in terms of what they are thinking about this company and the products and brands. So both was helpful. But regarding the job description and detailed information about the company, it was better for me to talk to the recruiter. Because they are normally closer to the company. But it was also good to share this with my friends and family.

(I): So you would say it depends on the type of information?

(P): Yeah, yeah, definitely.

(I): Would you say that you enjoy working for this organization?

(P): Yes, I would say that I'm enjoying this. But the most important thing is that my team is really, really dynamic and really young. They're nice people and I like them. And my line manager - my boss - is really friendly and fair. I think it is the most important thing to have a good feeling in your daily work. I think it's next to having a really interesting task. That's also really important. But I think the most important thing is to have a nice team and a really good boss who can develop you.

(I): Would you recommend this company to a friend?

(P): Yes, I would definitely recommend this company to a friend because it's really good to work there and I really like it.

(I): And so you might have already got the impression I was asking a lot about finding information on the internet. Do you use the internet a lot to do research or find information despite looking for jobs?

(P): Yes, I use the internet in my daily work for daily information. So I think it's a really, really good platform [way] to get information and also really detailed information. And I would recommend to search in the internet before you ask someone else, because I think it's really good platform [way to search for information].

(I): Is it easy for you to find certain information you're looking for? Is it sometimes very troublesome?

(P): No, I think it's easy for me to find the right information. Especially, it's the WAY of searching something that makes it so handy. You do have to filter on your own and it depends on what kind of information you want to get from the internet. But I think it's easy when you have a plan, and know what you are looking for. The internet is a wide space. So, when you just go there and you open it, maybe you are a bit overwhelmed because there are a lot of information. But then you filter it on your own, so that you just filtered it for companies you're really interested in. I think then it's easy to use when you have your own plan to use it.

(I): Would you say the internet improved your job search?

(P): Yeah, I think so, because I knew this company before, so I already had some information. The company was familiar and thus not new for me. So, but then, I searched the internet for more detailed information. I think in that situation, it was that the internet improved my search for this job, because I had more information available.

(I): This is going to be the last question, or it's more of a statement, and I would like you to comment on it. "The internet has helped me to better identify whether the job and the company is the right one for me."

(P): Yes, I think this is a really good statement. I believe, it's really true. I'm not sure where I would look for other and more information otherwise. In my opinion, the internet is the most important tool to search something nowadays. For example, all those really big and really important companies in the world have really detailed information on their websites. I think it's, it's the best way to look for information you want to get.

(I): Thank you so much. If there's anything else you'd like to share, you're more than welcome. Otherwise, thank you so much for your time. Have a good day.

Participant 6

(I): The interview is for the master thesis which is broadly about job search. It will take around 30 to 40 minutes. The interview will be recorded. Just to start, when have you graduated your studies?

(P): I graduated in August 2016

(I): Let's start with some really generic question about the time when you were looking for a job and you have an employer in mind. How would you describe the perfect employer?

(P): The perfect employer is a company where I can grow, so where you can grow a career, where you are not stuck in one certain job but you can develop certain or a variety of skills. The perfect

employee also gives you a lot of freedom so you are not micromanaged. What is also really important are the colleagues, of course. That is because, if you have the one good colleague in your company, then the job will be fine. If you don't have that one person then you're screwed, I would say. What is also important - so obviously money is important. Well, everyone says it's not important but it's actually very important because otherwise you can't really sustain your lifestyle. Then I also looked for employers which are in a good area. So depending on where you live that you don't have to travel too far. I usually live quite central in the cities so hence my employer should be centrally located as well. Then I also look up the company. I usually look them up. So in England it's companyhouse in Germany it's ... I can't remember what's the website is called - I'll find it out for you later. I also look them up on glassdoor, what's their rating is and what other people say about the company because I think that's quite important. And what kind of culture they have, so whether they have like an open culture, whether they are transparent as an employer. That kind of stuff - well, so I looked for everything. Whether there's a variety in the job - so how they advertise the jobs. I also like my employer to have a flat structure and be more socially-oriented and have an open-minded culture. That's pretty much it, I think. If I can think of anything else, I let you know.

(I): Is there something really important in your job/working-life? Specific to your job - what are you looking for?

(P): What I'm looking for in my job? That it has a variety of tasks. I don't like to have like a single-minded job, or whatever you want to call. So for me, it is very important that I have variety and that I'm super busy. Because if I'm not super busy, then I feel like I get unproductive. So for instance, if you have one email in your inbox you'd think like 'I can do this later on, whereas when you have 20 emails in your inbox, then you are like 'ok, I really need to work now', whereas if you have like a 100 emails in your inbox then you are like 'ok, I really need to get all of this done', so you get more work done and you'd be more productive. Then, I also find it important to have a variety of tasks because if I only do one task all the time, then I get really bored. For me it's also really important to have contact to other people. So I don't want to have a job I just sit in front of my computer - I mean I do this anyway - but for me it's also really important that I interact with other people during my job.

(I): So it's variety, being busy at work and working together with people.

(P): Yes, yeah.

(I): Great. So when you think back of your job search. Just very generically, not having the organization - you are working for right now - in your mind. Thinking about your job search, when you started your job search when you needed to find a job - how did you proceed? How did you start that search?

(P): So mainly via the Internet because nowadays everyone posts the job online. If I had a specific company in mind, then I usually look them up directly. So I like working for a start-up. So I look up all the start-up portals. So in Munich, it is startups-in-Munich and then there is founder... - I can send you all the links later, if you want them. So there are different start-up portals where start-ups specifically post their jobs so that's why I started ...

(I): So you knew you wanted to work in a start-up environment and you knew the portals, but you didn't know the specific companies. So you looked at those portals for open job positions...

(P): Well, when I came to Munich. I didn't know anything about those portals. So I just googled 'start-ups in Munich' and then I found the portals and if you then google 'start-up jobs in Munich' then you find all the job listings. So usually start-ups post on separate sites than big companies, just because, for them, they attract the right people if they advert at the right advertising platform – I would say. So in England, for example, there is a whole email distribution list which is called 'work in start-ups' where companies can post and the email will be send around to all subscribers of that list – so that is quite helpful. But it really depends. So when I came here, I looked them up online. I also looked them up via LinkedIn, because I am a big fan of LinkedIn. I am not a big fan of Xing, because Xing is just for German people – I think. I found, or I got lots of recruiters contacting me via Xing even though my profile was completely incomplete and looked very terrible, I think. I didn't have, or I still don't have any connections there because I don't really use it. But as soon as you are set on LinkedIn and as soon as you set your location – and you can also turn on the recruiting thing, so that you are also looking for a job so recruiters can detect you - you get quite a lot of recruiters contacting you. And on LinkedIn, there is 'LinkedIn jobs' which is super amazing, the function, where you can put the power meters of like where you want to work in the world, what kind of jobs you want to have. Then you can get a feed, always telling you 'there is a new job in your area' and then there are also other sites like Stepstone and Avant-Garde and they are you can also set yourself some reminders that they sent you your job postings every week or every day depending on how frequently you want to have them. So that's pretty much what I did. I Googled it, I used LinkedIn, I used the recruiting portals online like Stepstone or Avant-Garde and I talked to friends, but the thing is, when I came here I did not know that many people. So when I did my job search I always connected to people who have been also in the job search at the moment in Germany. Because job search in Germany is quite different from job search in England. In England you just call people and you get the job; in Germany you have to write a cover letter and all that stuff. So I connected to people who were in the same situation as I was, a couple of weeks back, and they helped me a lot. They were my sister's friends - she knows quite a lot of people in Munich and she said like 'oh, that person has been looking for a job recently, so maybe she can help you with a CV and cover letters – to help me with how they should be written.' So that was quite helpful, but it helped me to get quite a lot of offers from German companies - for bigger companies because that's what she targeted. So I obviously attracted the same people with my CV in the end. But for smaller startups, they always prefer the English CV, which I've written before. So it was helpful for German companies, if you want to have a big German company to work for.

(I): Back to the recruiters who contacted you, did you pursue on them further?

(P): So, yes. So in England I have quite a big network of recruiters I know. But in Germany I didn't know any recruiters. So I decided to meet them und they usually have a meeting in person. So, in Germany they want to get to know you as person so you meet up for a coffee or something. They tell you 'ok, we have these kinds of jobs', they want to get to know you a little bit further, so they want to talk about your background, they want to understand what you are looking for – that kind of stuff. So I met them, I went to a couple of interviews which they have put me on. Some of them were really well, some of them were really boring. So I think it was a good mix of both, I think. But

it's also a very good interview practice, to get some shabby ones, just to see what you don't like in a job.

(I): When you look for a job – I mean, you knew you wanted to work in a start-up – but were you also very specific in the job which you were looking for?

(P): So no, I was actually quite open-minded. I thought, well, I needed something that challenges me again. So I was quite open-minded to what they would have offered. So I actually looked at everything they offered currently and then I thought 'ok, so what kind of skills do I have' and 'what do I think could I do with these skills' and 'where do I see myself working' and 'where do I see myself exploring a little bit'. So right now, my official title is office manager, but I also do lots more. So I said like 'I want to start as office manager and then I want to explore more into HR and employer branding/employer experience'. And they said 'Yes, because it is a super-fast growing start-up, and there is so much to do and they are understaffed so they are growing in the moment. So they said like 'that's fine, you can start as office manager. And then we see how you develop within the company'. So they were absolutely open with this which also made it very attractive.

(I): Do you remember the situation you were in while you were how you felt while you were looking for a job?

(P): Yeah. I am very impatient. So, everyone tells me that in order to find a job, it has to or it takes up to 3 or 4 months. So I usually get super frustrated if I don't hear anything back and I don't have an offer after 2 weeks. So I feel very miserable. I feel like I'm back in school because when you are on the job search, you are looking for jobs, you are scanning through the internet, you are reading so many job adverts, you write so many cover letters and you feel like you never done with it. And especially because, everyone else has a job or has something else to do or studies or something. So everyone has this task for himself and you just sit there if you are unemployed - you just sit there and be like 'ok right, I need to find a job'. And then if people ask 'How's the job search going?' and you're like 'ok, well, it is not going so well because I have a couple of interviews, but ...'. And then you move from interview to interview, some companies are super fast in the interview process, so you know from the beginning that you applied and that you have three interviews and you are done with it. You either got an offer or a rejection. Other companies take for ages. So I think I did one company where I had ten interviews and they still couldn't make up their mind, so in the in the end I said 'look, this is getting ridiculous'. But yeah, I felt very frustrated because I am super impatient. And it's also super exhausting because the more interviews you have, you seem to repeat yourself a lot after a while. For the first interview, you are really nervous, whereas when you do more and more interviews, you feel like 'I have my story now, I know what to tell people, I know what they really want to hear', so you keep playing around. But, when you are looking for a job and you are not getting any results, the time between the interviews is really hard. For me it was really hard, because, I was like 'ok, how much time can I have to give someone until I annoy them, until they have to give me an answer – whether we move forward or not.'. So it is about learning not to be impatient, to distract yourself from anything and you shouldn't overthink anything in between – that's what I learned from it, I think.

(I): How long have you been looking for a job?

(P): Three weeks. But after two weeks I was already like ‘this is getting annoying’. So yes, I am very impatient. But also, I had nothing else to do so I spend all my time looking for jobs.

(I): So I just repeat: You were mainly looking for jobs in the Internet on different portals such as LinkedIn and so on. You didn’t have a friend you could ask nor did you go to events, to recruiting event or similar.

(P): No, I looked at them. The problem was also, I only looked for three weeks, so I was like ‘ok, let’s see what else is coming up’. There was a job fair coming up in like two months. I also went to the employment office. Because, obviously, when you are unemployed, you have to go there. You have to register. And they ask you whether I want help with the job search. So I was ‘ok, fine, why not’. They gave me an appointment – I think two weeks later – at a time where I had a couple of interviews. So, when they gave me the appointment, they actually put it on a time where I had interviews. So I had to cancel it. They were really shit about it and did some real terror. I had to prove that I actually had interviews. They offered some help, but it was a bit too late after two weeks of waiting. I don’t know what they have expected.

(I): So now you were already talking about that you attended a lot of interviews. But before you have applied to them, so in the time between finding the job position and applying, what did you do?

(P): You mean in terms of research?

(I): Yes.

(P): So usually when I apply somewhere I look at what the company does, I look at the job description. And then I see – well, I do two things. I look at ‘can I do the job?’, so I match my skills to the job description. I actually do this while I apply. So I highlight the job description, I get out all the keywords ‘what’s the job about’ and I transfer all these keywords into my CV. Because then, if the recruiter reads through your or my CV, then it's like check-check-check, this girl can do the job, we like her, she sounds good, we call her. So, this is the first thing you do, you check the job description and see how you fit in. Then you write down - ok, figure out what the company does, figure out whether you can do the job and how you do the job and how you add value and then figure out why you want to work there. So I have three to four points which says ok ‘this company is growing super fast, I want to be part of that company because I want to have a changing and a fast growing company with a quickly changing environment ...’

(I): But this is more when you knew that you want to get the job or when you could imagine working there. But before actually, when you found a job position, were you always sure right away that you are going to apply? I am sure you probably did not apply to everything, right?

(P): No, so, well, I probably looked at ‘does the job sound interesting’, ‘does it give you a prospect to be there for a bit longer in the company or does it sound super boring’. Then, obviously you look at the company, if the company is interesting, if the company has a future or you think if the company has a good future. For me it is important what the company does. So for me – my last company was a public company, so that one didn’t really have a mission or something or at least it wasn’t really public what the mission of that company is. So that was a bit shit. So for me, in that time now it was really important to find a company that has a strong mission to change the world

and make the world a little bit better and proof something and do something for people so that they have a better life in a way.

(I): So if you thought that the mission or what companies do is important to you, did you find the information you found regarding that in the Internet satisfying?

(P): Most of it, yes. When you look at Glassdoor – Glassdoor is an absolute amazing page – and there is another one for German companies, kununu.com. When you look at that, there are actual employees reviewing the company and they are reviewing the interview process and the company itself. They say something like ‘ok, this company has a great culture’ or ‘at this company the management is really terrible’ or ‘this company is growing too fast and they can’t keep up with the change’ – that kind of stuff. So, usually the stuff that is written on there is mostly very accurate and it is actually reviewed by employees, I would say. It gives you a picture of what it is like to work in the company. So if I found that the Glassdoor review was good and if I found that the product or service they provide is interesting and if I found that the job description sounded ok – then I thought ‘ok, let’s give it a try’. And often, even if the job description does not sound that great, usually in companies you make your own job, meaning you create your own job in that company. So the job description itself I wouldn’t take too personal, not too strict, because obviously it is a job description. Usually you end up doing 15 percent of what is in that job description and then 85 percent of what you actually do in companies.

(I): Ok, but of that you have been aware of already? That it will be like this. And it was ok for you?

(P): Yes.

(I): So you emphasize more the company and what the company does.

(P): Yes.

(I): So you were looking a lot in Glassdoor where employees or other outside people rated the organization. How much value or belief did you attribute to the company website itself?

(P): The company website? I usually always look at the company website. Most of them are absolutely terrible. There are not many companies where I can say ‘wow, you have an amazing website’. I also look at YouTube channels because on YouTube channels it is nice to watch the videos and there are often videos of the leaders as well, by the CEOs or CFOs or something like that and also about the products or service they offer which is usually better explained than when you just look at the company website. As I said, usually the company websites are just terrible. I still go through every website and every portal and that kind of stuff what they offer, just to get the information. This is something people really like in the interview process, I mean if you read about the company and if you know what they are doing, to see whether you understand what they are actually doing. So for me, that is really important in the interview preparation that I go through all of this. If you get a recruiter asking whether you want to apply for this or this job at this company, and you think that you have never heard about that company, then I obviously look it up, I ask my friends because my friends know quite a lot about companies which I don’t know. That’s pretty much it.

(I): Sounds very good. I think we are pretty much through the general part. You gave a lot of information about how you have searched for jobs and how you pursued the goal of finding one. When you look at your current job, do you remember how you found that one?

(P): Yes. I actually got contacted by a recruiter on LinkedIn and he sits in England. He wanted to offer me a job in Birmingham. However, I would never consider moving, especially not for the money he has offered me. So I told him ‘no, thank you. But if you have something in Munich, then I’ll be very interested in hearing about it’. And he said ‘yes, we actually recruit for a company in Munich right now, so I’ll connect you with my colleague’. So he connected me with his colleague and then we had a little chat – you usually have a telephone interview – she tells you about the job and you tell her from your previous experience. Well, we took it from there then.

I think it was three interviews in total. So it was one with the internal recruiter, one with two of my colleagues and one with my boss. That was pretty much it. It was quite straightforward.

(I): Did you know the organization before you have started working there or before the recruiter suggested that company?

(P): So actually because the company advertises on LinkedIn quite a lot, I have seen their name. I was actually about to apply but I hadn’t done the research into it. So when the recruiter came I thought that I might just do the easy way and use the recruiter. She told me a lot about it and I thought that it actually sounds quite interesting. So I didn’t know that much before – actually I didn’t know really much before I have applied or before I have heard about it. When I applied for it I knew quite a lot about it.

(I): Ok. So for now please try to not think about what you know about the organization right now. When you were applying for the job or when you were about to apply for it, how did you process the information you have found? So I mean what kind of ideas or expectations you had based on that information?

(P): So usually when you have a recruiter they send you over a package with information about what the company does, what their culture is and what is important to the company and also what is important in the interview, meaning what they look at. That is what a recruiter is for. And usually in the first talk with the recruiter they present the company as well. So they told me quite a lot about it and I also had the chance to ask some questions and then I went off and did my own research. The company has a lot of information online. There is so much, you can’t even look at it all. I had an information overload before I even started. To be sure – honestly, I did not really understand how crazy and amazing this company is and how cool their product is because it’s quite a difficult thing to understand. So they are doing robotic process automation. So they do actually sell or license software for robotic software to out map business processes. So yeah, not everyone can understand what it is so you need a little bit explanation. So once I started at the company and I have had my first presentation from our region leader I thought that this is amazing and that now I can understand what you can actually do with this.

(I): But that you didn’t know before?

(P): I had an idea of what they do but I didn't know how big this idea was. So I understood, let's say 15 percent. So I knew what it was and I could explain what it means but I couldn't really understand how amazing the idea is what they sell.

(I): In the very beginning you said that growth, freedom meaning that you are not micromanaged and that company values are important to you. What about that? Did you do further research on that? And did the research help you in getting the information and getting an idea of those points?

(P): Yes. There is the portal or web page where you look up the company. It shows you, for instance, that the company has that much funding. So growth for the company, for a start-up, is really important what kind of investors you have. So you look at the type of investors, if they are really huge investors – if a company has them, this is very amazing because it means that the company has a future. There is, for example, accel, sequoia, google, gcapital. So if you have any of these, so the big investors, if you have them, then you know that the company has potential. So this is one thing you can see in terms of growth. Then you can see the funding rounds. You can look at, what I said before, *Glassdoor*. There is also, and some companies even post this on their websites, *Comparably* – I think it is called. It shows you how the company's culture is, what their values are, how people are paid – that kind of stuff. So it actually shows you the company you are looking at and compares it to other companies in the industry and thus whether the company is competitive in that way. So yes, in that way you can look up whether a company grows and whether it grows well. Then, you can obviously look at *Glassdoor* and see what the reviews are there. Then, you can put in the company's name in google and also say 'growth' or something else – a keyword like this – and put it on Google News; then you can go through the latest press releases and see what they are saying there. Yes, that is pretty much it.

(I): That is a ton of research what you only did in a couple of weeks.

(P): So I usually research a company really only when I know that I have an interview, I have to say. So if I think that something is interesting, then I'll do a brief research. If they say that they want to hear from you, because when you send you CV and you get the information back 'yes, we want to talk to you', then I do my research - my proper deep research.

(I): But with your first research you already know that you have interest or can it actually also be that you just apply and then you figure out later when you are checking for the culture and all this that that's not what you are looking for?

(P): No. If I find a company interesting, I try to – well if you send off your CV or your Cover Letter or so it is going to be the first impression. So the better you prepare for that, the better your chances are that you actually get invited for an interview. In the beginning I was crazy because I spend so much time just researching a company and then I got really annoyed on the day when they rejected me. So I learned not to do this anymore and do the minimal research you need to know so you sound good. So go through the job description, put everything they have in there in your CV, because then they are interested in you because they think 'she is brilliant, she knows what she is on about, she can do the job and that kind of stuff'. And then once they accept you and they have interest in you, then you do all sorts of research and prepare so you blow them away in the first interview. That is the idea.

(I): From all the webpages or channels you mentioned, do you have one where you say that if this wasn't there it would have made a big change?

(P): Yeah. LinkedIn. I love LinkedIn. It is my favorite App in the world, I think.

(I): Only because of the recruiters or also because of the company websites and how they present themselves there?

(P): No. So I think for LinkedIn for job search it is super helpful because they show a variety of job and companies advertise directly on LinkedIn. So usually you have recruiters there as well who capture you. So the recruiter will put in a keyword and then they will get in touch with all the people who have a certain job title. For instance, if you look for a sales position, they will be like 'ok, contact all sales people in that region with this salary, interest and that kind of stuff'.

Whereas, when you use LinkedIn, you can also put in LinkedIn jobs, you can put in what you are looking for, you can change your status so it says that you are looking for this and this job in the moment. There are so many functions on LinkedIn. You can look up so many companies on LinkedIn, you can look up the companies what they have in terms of job postings at the moment because once you click on a company and you can see it has these many job listings. You can also see who else is working in that company and whether you know someone in that company. Obviously you can use your network for that. So if you know someone in that company, that person might be able to refer you directly to a job. Then, your chances to get a job directly increase because if someone refers you that means first of all, you wouldn't refer someone who you don't like and second of all, you can sometimes skip some of the stages of the interview. That is obviously super helpful as well.

(I): When we are talking about that, have you ever contacted a current employee of the organization but you don't know the person personally?

(P): No. I haven't. I usually only connect with people once I know them. For instance, once I had the interview with the recruiter, so what I do that people remember me – after the call like a day later or something I find them – actually I usually look them up before I have an interview, I look them up on LinkedIn and see what they have been through and I also look up people who have applied for the same position as I do and look what their career path is and look what their experience is before so I can compare what they are looking for.

(I): How do you know the people who have applied for the job?

(P): Well, maybe not the people who have applied for it, but the people who already work in the organization in a similar job or similar role. So I look whether they have a degree, whether they have work experience, how much work experience do they have, so I kind of look that up. So if I have a certain position I look up the position in that company and then you find that. You can then compare yourself a little bit to them and see how you would rank in that. And then usually after I had the call with the recruiter or the internal person, whoever it is, I usually in the next day or a couple of days later I add them on LinkedIn and write them in a message that it was nice chatting with them and that if they have any further questions they should write me or call me - so not that needy but more in a nice way. The messages are really short, only a couple of sentences.

But usually, no, I don't connect with anyone in that company unless I think that I am really desperate to get a job there.

(I): I think the next question you might have answered probably already. So you don't have to elaborate long on it. So you didn't find it hard to find information about the job and the company? You had the recruiter, you had various webpages, so it wasn't a problem I guess.

(P): No, not really. So usually your job description is online. You find it somewhere. And the company information is obviously online as well somewhere. Sometimes you have to look a bit longer for it, but it is not that difficult.

(I): So before you have applied to your current job, what did you think of the organization or the job which you were applying for?

(P): Before I applied?

(I): Yes, or when you were in the process of applying. But I mean before you had contact with an organizational insider.

(P): I think I was very curious about what they do. I thought I really want to have a job right now, because I'm super bored of being at home. I was very motivated to start a new job. So I thought maybe I'm not going to look for a job which is my dream job forever. But I was like: 'Okay, I really, really need a job right now, because I haven't been working for nine months, because I have been traveling around. I can't be home and sit there and not do anything.' So for me, this was really important. [forgot the question and that's why Ella rephrased it]

(I): You had the job description and maybe some information about what other people did and what kind of experience other people in that job had. Did you think that you have the skills? Or do you think that this one fulfilled what you were seeking in a job?

(P): I saw a job description, I thought: 'Okay, I can easily do this job, because the company is growing.' I also know that this is just a starting position, and I can evolve myself within that company. Because usually Start-ups have this mentality: 'Yes, this your job description, but 95% extra. You do the work, which is not stated in your job description.' Also, in these small companies you can create your own job. So right now, I [or rather the job] actually don't have job description anymore. They kind of destroyed it. The recruiter herself said: "Yeah, you don't need a job description, you design your own job here." So, this was really important for me. This is why, I usually like to work in Start-ups because you have more of a freedom to create your own career in it. So even though when I saw the job descriptions, I didn't really know where and how I will develop myself in that role. I thought, I could use this as a starting point because I know I can do this job really well. And I know I can still learn from that job, because it's a new environment, it's a new company, and I have a new product, which I didn't know. Obviously, for me, it was new working in Germany in German. I still do a lot of things in English. So, that's absolutely amazing. But no [referring to the question again], when I saw it, I was like: 'Okay, this might not be the dream job, but it might be a good start and room for growth.'

(I): And about the organization? Did you see yourself fitting in this organization?

(P): Yeah, so this is quite a fast growing and fast changing company, I would say. So sometimes things that were right, last week, they're not actually anymore. So they changed - things change on a weekly basis. You have to be super, super fast-paced and super quick to adapt to changes. But it also means that you can suggest or not to improve processes and the work itself. It is also a company where they really value employees and really look after employees. For instance, we have an unlimited holiday policy. So even though in the contract it says 30 days, you can take as much holiday as you want to as long as you get your job done and the manager agrees to it. I thought this was really amazing. Because at any other company, for instance, you look at the holidays and be like: 'Okay, I need at least three days between Christmas and New Years and then I only have like 27 days left. And then I want to take some holiday here and then my child gets sick. I don't have a child, but some people think this and obviously they have to take off time. And so this is a very flexible company. They also offer working from home. They offer lots of benefits they pay for you: they pay for the gym, they pay for public transport to get into the office, they pay for lunch in the office and all that.

(I): Did you know all that before applying that they had all those kinds of benefits?

(P): That I knew from the recruiter that they have tons of benefits. So I knew, this is a really well-established Start-up, well, not really a startup anymore, actually. An I knew, that they are super supportive of the culture, supportive of the people and so on. Some of it is online, not much thou. But if you look through, like Glassdoor, and that kind of reviews, you figure out quite a lot about the culture. And you read the comments. And everyone said that this culture is super open and open-minded and that you can actually talk to the CEO, if you think this a good idea. You can connect to any senior level, and there's no big hierarchies. That's what you can read on Glassdoor, for instance. And usually, with Start-ups like this, you get also stocks even though they're not public yet, but you will get a Share. That was also quite a big incentive for me, to be honest.

(I): You applied for a couple, and you decided to go and you told them: "Sorry, guys, it's taking too long." But, if you decide to discontinue with others, for which other reasons did you stop the process?

(P): For some of them, I saw that I did not fit in or into the culture. So I applied at companies that were many bigger companies. But I thought: 'Okay, this is just not me regarding the culture and regarding the way they do things. For instance, if you have a bigger company, they usually have a lot more processes, meaning you have to get a lot more approvals. It's just all more tedious and everything. So I did not want to work for a public company, because if the company is public, then you have to get approval for every little thing you spend. Whereas if you have a private company, obviously that's nicer, because they are not bound to regulate everything. That was important for me. In the interview process itself, where I thought: 'Okay, some don't work for me, mainly due to the culture. Then you meet the people you would work with and if they are not that great, then I don't find the company very attractive. This is because, obviously, these people who interview you, are representing the company, and they [the company] chose them to interview you for a reason. If they can't convince you - an interview is more like: 'Yes, you sell yourself', but they also sell the company to you- and if you don't find interesting what they say about the company, then is not the right place to work. Then I also think in an interview process for me is very important, whether it's professional or not, and whether it takes long. So, with one company, I had around 10 interviews, where she [the interviewer/recruiter] asked me always the same questions. I was asking: "Should I

record myself and just let this play for the next 10 interviews? Or how do we continue with this?". Whereas the company where I started working now, I had a super fast interview process. I think, I had three interviews and I think one test or something. That was fine. Then, I had another interview with another company where it was even faster. I applied there, and then I send them my cover letter, then within 15 minutes, they came back to me and said they wanted to talk to me. Then I talked to them, then I realized, well, my salary expectations are actually a bit too low. Let me increase them. Then they said: "Okay, we really like you and we will talk to the CFO." Within 10 minutes, they made the decision to increase the salary I would have wanted. I've never seen anything that fast. That made it really, really difficult to say no to them because they were so flexible. They really wanted me to be there, which made it really attractive. Even when I said: "Oh, I can't take the offer, because I accepted another offer.", she said: "Oh, we can't accept a No. So, we will call you back on Monday and see whether you have changed your mind." It was November at that time and then they called me back around Christmas time to check how I was getting on and if I was still interested. But they really, really wanted me to work there, which was really amazing to see. And it made it really really difficult to say no to them. Because there [at that company], I know, I would have had an amazing boss who would have really really pushed me. The reason why I said no to them was because the company itself, it's a Start-up in a very, very beginning of the phase. The product itself was a travel Start-up. It sounds amazing. It's literally a website where - with AI and machine learning - they build your holiday. So you answer the questions and they will suggest a good holiday for you. I like the idea, but I know would never use the product because I like to plan my own holidays. I could not one hundred percent identify with it. Even though I thought the people are amazing. And they're super fast in making decisions. By they also knew this is not the right thing where I can really identify with. So in the end, I chose the other company work because I thought they are better, also in terms of career prospects. I have a better chance to grow - well, I probably had them in both [companies]. But the other one [current company] was just more attractive regarding the offer.

(I): Now, you are 'experiencing' the job first hand. Would you consider the information you found back than realistic?

(P): With this job? Yes. This is probably the first time I can say this about a job, where what I EXPECTED and what I actually HAVE [experience now] is a completely different world, in a positive sense. So because when I did research, I was like: 'Okay, this sounds good. That sounds actually not too bad. It sounds like it has a future. It has good potential. It sounds like the working culture is right.' My previous job was a bit like: 'Okay, this has been fun for a couple of months, but now I am bored because there's nothing else to do.' They overpromised and underdelivered. Whereas with this company, it's the other way around. They sell you something and it's actually there. Now, I actually have the chance to really develop and get involved in different things. Whereas for my previous company they first said: "Oh yeah, you can get involved in everything." And then later they said: "Oh, well, actually, no, you can't." But this [my actual] company is actually really nice, because what information I found, they actually tend to be true. That is what's making it actually really nice.

(I): Except for the job description?

(P): Yeah, well, it's just a list of things. But I never take job description seriously because they say something like: "Oh, I want to have someone with like 10 years of experience". They still hire you

if you only have three years of work experience, if you have the right attitude. For this [my] company, they mostly hire people with the right attitude. If you don't fit into the culture, you are not getting hired. Even if you are super skilled. But for them, it [the right fit] is super important. And that actually makes a huge difference, because everyone in the company is so so friendly, so cool, super smart, super ambitious and motivated. And that really keeps the company going, I think.

(I): Referring to the unlimited holiday, for example, you said, your employer is really employee-friendly.

(P): Yes, usually, we don't have that Germany. But this is amazing. I think for us, it's really nice, because they're super supportive. So if you say: "Oh, the technician is coming today, or like someone's coming to fix my shower, or that kind of stuff." They tell me not to worry and I could work from home. It's not like: "Oh, no, you can't work from home, you have to be in the office." Obviously, if there's something important in the office, you will be in the office. But if there is not, usually, in 99% of cases, someone will cover for you. So this is not a problem at all as long as you are available. And to be fair, even though there is an unlimited holiday policy, I think, on average, people will take less. And even though you have 40 hours of work on your contract per week, people will work a lot more just because the benefits are there. So they know, if they need it, they can take it. Kind of a trusting relationship, 'taking and giving back'.

(I): Would you say that the information you found were realistic? Or was there something that was really unexpected, or did really everything match?

(P): It really surprised me how cool the people are. My first day, when I turned up, we had this onboarding day. And I looked around the room and thought: 'Where did you end up?' because all the people are super different, they come from very different backgrounds. And you think: 'I have literally nothing with them in common.' But then you start talking to them. And you realize, I don't know HOW, but you find something to talk about with everyone and very easily. Even though they might be 20 years older than you or maybe three years younger. It doesn't really matter, you find something to talk about. And I think, this is what really surprised me. They actually recruit for cultural fit rather than for how good the person is. Of course, they will look whether the person can do the job. But they also look very, very closely whether the person will fit into the company. And this makes work a lot nicer. And it really surprised me. Because usually, if a company grows that fast, they will just get people in. Whether they fit or not. They can decide later on, if it does not work to just kick them out. But with that company, I was really surprised that they actually found some really incredible people who are super motivated. Right now, I onboard all the people and everyone writes me at least three weeks before the official start to ask: "Okay, when can I start? When can I get my email? When can I get in touch with everyone?" And I am just wondering where they find all these people, because everyone is super motivated and crazy about it. So yeah, that's what really surprised me, I think.

(I): Yeah, so it sounds like you really enjoy working there.?

(P): Yeah, I quite like it. There are some Ups and Downs. Sometimes I am thinking: 'Okay, this is insane. Oh, why did I get into this?' But with every job, there are some things which you really hate and some things that you like.

(I): What is it that you explicitly like?

(P): I like that the people are really cool. And I like that I actually have to challenge. That it is not just saying: 'Oh, yeah, you can help out here or help out there.' You can actually, if you're interested in something, then contact the person, and then be like: 'Okay, cool. Let's see how we can work together.' So, for me, I wanted to get more into the HR side of the business. Obviously, I'm now the HR person, but because they didn't have anyone else. Now we hired someone. We're not too happy with that person yet, but we'll find out how that works. And so they gave a talk to the HR manager in our region and she said: "Okay, that's cool. That's cool. Let's see how we can work together." And now you get included into calls and into their tasks and everything. So that's really, really nice. And then it feels really like, if you want to try something, and you have a good idea, you can get the most and pretty much everything.

(I): Would you recommend the company to a friend then?

(P): Yes, yes, definitely. I also forgot something what I like about a job: I like that it is what I looked for in a company. I looked that it is international, so that I can speak German and English, because that's, I think, that's really nice in a job. So you can make use of your skills.

(I): Did you know that before applying?

(P): Yeah, I wanted to have an international company. I want to have a company that has offices around the world, because my previous company was based in one city, which I was not quite satisfied with. With this company, well, if a company is based around the world, that means also you get the chance to travel to the other offices mainly. But you also get exchanged [interact?] with the other cultures and everything. So that was really important for me as well. I've forgotten to mention that earlier.

(I): After all the good things, is there still something you would say there's room for improvement? Regarding job or company?

(P): Yeah, there's always room for improvement. 'Practice what you preach.' Yeah, pretty much do what you tell other people to do. We sell robots. [HAB ICH NICHT VERSTEHEN KÖNNEN: And which helped what robotic process software.] So that helps hundreds of people to save time and energy, because they don't have to do boring and repetitive processes anymore. But for ourselves, we internally have so many boring and repetitive processes, which we can easily be replaced by these robots. So I think, there's lots of improvement to actually use our own product within our own company. And this has not been done yet. Or they start to do it now, slowly, step by step. The problem is that we don't have enough people to actually get the job done. And that's why we recruit like crazy. But that would be one thing to improve on. What else to improve on? Well, I don't know, it has some boring things and every job but if you have nice colleagues, it makes life better. What else could they improve on? I think communication is quite a big topic. And this company handles it quite well, I think, because we use SLACK for internal communications and people are super responsive on it. So even if you have a question to pull someone at 10pm in the evening, usually within a couple of minutes, you get a response, which is crazy, because you think you don't have any private life. 'Go and speak now or leave it alone. It can wait until tomorrow.' And what else can they improve on?

(I): Sort of improvements so that you are even happier in the company?

(P): My job actually involves to make employees happy. So, I used to do the service and be like: "Okay, what do you want to see in the office." I said, for instance, I really wanted to have a gym membership paid by the company. So I thought: 'Okay, I'm gonna sort this out. And there's obviously a benefit for everyone.' So I'm having quite a long project, which I'm still working on. So because the company is quite generous, I'm trying to figure out what they have in other offices so that we can have it too. My next project is getting language classes paid by the company. Then also, more team building set-ups, because we're spread out. Therefore, I look after the Central Europe region which includes Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Poland. So we are obviously quite spread out as a team. So what's really important to me is to get team building in place, so that the team gets to know each other a little bit better and spends a bit more time together. Not just talking about work, but getting to know what or who is the person behind that work, and how do we connect to each other. And that's really important for me. I think, it's not really in place right now, because we haven't really done it. I organized a couple of events, but they were more business-related rather than team building-related. But we got super good feedback from that. So this is something which we can definitely build on and make sure that people actually connect to each other and get to know each other. Not just: "Hey, you were that person who made that deal." But: "Hey, you're that person, and I don't know, you live there and then you really like ice hockey or that kind of stuff." More a personal approach, because I think that's super important. Because we spend so much time with the people at work. Especially in this company, we probably spend even more time at work than you would do with your family or that kind of stuff. So I think it's really important that you make the workplace a really good place where you like to come, where you can talk to people if you have a problem, and can be open about it. Or if you are not feeling well, that share something like this, or that you feel trusted and also respected - that's really important. And also that you can build on other people and rely on them, when you need them. So yes, that [the team building] is something they can improve on it, which I'm working on currently. Another thing is the office. We don't have enough office space, so we work on that so that people actually have enough space to work. We'll work on equipment. So yes, it's small things. And it's a lot of small things. But it's nothing that's not achievable. And I think within a couple of years, I, as far as I've seen the company so far, and I've only been on three and a half months now. And it's been really, really amazing and what they're doing. There are not many boundaries. So if you think: 'Oh, this is a great idea, and I think people will benefit from it.' They would be super supportive and say: "Okay. Let's figure out how we do it." And then we find a way. So yeah, it's pretty amazing.

(I): How frequently you use the internet, e.g. like looking for other information?

(P): I do everything. I can tell you my screen time if that helps you? I google a lot. I google everything. It's very broad. Google, LinkedIn, are my go to places. I love them. And also, we have points at work, when we save all the documents online, so on Google Drive or Microsoft drive, whatever it's called. So everything for us, when we work, we usually work online. Then it is usually connected to things we Google. So yes, I look up a lot. So, I have 10 out of 10, of how often I google things.

(I): Did you find that the online information improved your job search? If yes, why?

(P): Yes, because it gave you an overview of what the company is doing. Because you had the first gut feeling in a way about how you would fit in there. So you have an idea what the company does, and whether this is something for you. Obviously, this is still being confirmed when you do the

interviews or when you actually start working there. But it gives you the first inside of what it would be like working there, I think. Especially, if you watch YouTube videos from the company leaders, and you get a lot to know about the culture and you see whether you would be a cultural fit for it. If you read on Glassdoor, you find out what other people think about the company and what they considered as a great company or bad company to work for. Also, if the companies is listed on 'best places to work for', this is also good sign. so YES, I find it really helpful because obviously you want to get to know the company but you also get an inside where you might want to work there.

(I): Okay, I think that was it from my side. So I don't know if you have any questions or are good for now?

(P): No. If I want to add something later on, which I couldn't think of right now. I'll message you.

(I): Great, then I'll stop the recording again. Yes.

Participant 7

(I): When did you graduate?

(P): In 2016.

(I): What is your general idea of a perfect employer?

(P): Good question. I guess a perfect employer should care about his employees. I think an employer is responsible for his workers. So he should offer a good job, for example offer good tasks, activities, the company should offer possibilities to make a career and to develop yourself, to work in a team, not just use the employees but work with them together and find a solution for the tasks. Maybe offer a good work-life balance, for example some sport activities, or good food in the canteen, the possibility to do home office or take a day off to make the work environment more flexible. So if you want you could, for example, work during the weekend – if you feel like you need to do it – and have then another day off in between or during the week – to be more flexible

(I): How do you stand towards hierarchy?

(P): It depends. It is a quite interesting question. It is actually a big topic at my company at the moment. So for example, I work in a quite old company with a lot of history. In former times there were a lot of different levels. But it really changes and now we have, or they try to have, a more flat hierarchy. For example, now it's more useful not to say 'you' in the formal and very polite way. I think that makes a lot of things much easier. For example, when you have a problem, you can go to your boss and talk more easily to him and it's faster to solve problems and to find a solution and to work together. So I prefer lower hierarchies. There is an advantage in lower hierarchies.

(I): And when you consider what is important to you in a job or working life? You have mentioned already teamwork and collaboration. You have also mentioned work-life balance. But are there other aspects, specific to the job, that are particularly important to you.

(P): So yeah. I spend a lot of time at work, so I prefer tasks that I like. I think you spend so much time at work so you need to like your work and the tasks or activities and also your colleagues.

Because otherwise I think you get sick. You need to have some challenges, to grow in your personality and also grow with your tasks. I think you need good but also realistic task to reach a goal and to feel more comfortable. Not like 'ok, this is your goal for the day' but actually you know that you cannot reach it. So it is important to be more motivated.

(I): So now we know what you are looking for in an employer and also in a job specifically. So when you remember back to your job search. So when you started your job search, after you had the need to find a job, how did you do that? So what did you do?

(P): Honestly, I think I was a little bit naïve. I was told that when you are looking for a job that you should not go to the unemployment office, what we have in Germany, because they probably cannot help you. And I was like 'ok, I have just graduated and now I want to try all the possibilities that are offered', so for example also the unemployment office. So I went there and I was telling them that I just graduated, that I have these experiences and that I am looking for a job in this and that area. They did not know how to help me, really. They did not know about the certificate I had. Yeah, so actually they did not know what to do because they focus on people who have not been studying. They were more focused on people who may have an apprenticeship. They tried to fill out a profile of myself and there was one part asking 'What is your highest degree?' and then she said 'hmm, I do not know what to fill in because it is not a really professional graduation because you are just having a Bachelor – so it is not a university degree'. I said 'I am sorry. But actually it is. There is a difference between Bachelor and Master but they are both university degrees'. So they did not know that and I actually had to tell them how to do their job. After a few months I said 'ok, I think we do not fit together. You do know what to do with me.' And that is what they told me. They really said 'ok, we are sorry but we don't know how to help you.' And I thought 'are you kidding me?' because they are the official office for this kind of work and they don't know what to do. So that was what I was really annoyed of.

(I): But that was the first thing what you did when you started to look for a job? So first you went to the unemployment office?

(P): Yes, this was the first but at the same time I was looking online. So I was looking at the usual platforms and websites in the Internet, for example, stepstone, LinkedIn and Xing and so on. Actually, I was using a lot of different platforms in the Internet.

(I): And did you know what you were looking for specifically?

(P): So you mean like what kind of job I wanted to do?

(I): Yes.

(P): For example, I was looking for jobs like Marketing Specialist or something like that. Actually I was not looking for a specific title. I was thinking like 'ok, what have I studied', that was Business Administration so this is quite broad. So then I was thinking 'ok, what do I like – what kind of tasks would I like to do – and what can I do quite good'. So I thought that I am communicative, I have a general knowledge about Business Administration, I am good at organizing and I am actually self-confident. So with this 'what kind of activities or tasks am I able to do?'. I actually found quite different things like working in a marketing environment or project management or product

development. So actually I was looking not for a specific position or a specific title but I thought more of what I can offer and to what kind of title or job that would fit.

(I): And you were also not restricted on a special industry or something? Or, for example, did you have a company in mind you wanted to work for?

(P): No. No. Actually I was quite interested in mid-size companies because I had the experience that in huge companies or in a DAX noted company the tasks are divided into small activities. So you always do the same thing every day. And for me it was clear that I wanted to have a position in which I can do different things every day. Not booking the same invoices every day or something like that. So in the beginning I thought that maybe I would go to a mid-size company because I think that it is more interesting but actually I was quite open. So I was more looking for the tasks and the competences which I have.

(I): So you were looking at the tasks that were offered and whether they were matching with your competences.

(P): Yes exactly. That is it.

(I): When you think back to the situation when you were looking for a job. Can you describe it? With regards to how it was and how you felt?

(P): At first I was positive and had a positive feeling because I was still enrolled in my studies. And, I was working as a hostess at some fairs. So I was quite relaxed because I had my own salary. And I told myself 'ok, if it is not the first job you are applying for, I mean you don't need to take the first offer.' So you want to have a job that you like to do for maybe two years or something. So you should not accept the first offer, and especially not if you are not ok with that offer. So for me it was clear that it takes like three month or maybe half a year to find a good offer, to find a good job. So at first I was quite positive, but during the whole process and after receiving some denials, the feeling had changed a bit. So sometimes, after I received some refusals, of course my feeling changed and sometimes I felt like less like a person. I felt like low graded. But then, during my experience at the fairs, for example, I worked for a lot of companies – companies that maybe have been interested in me. And I was actually talking to people who could have offered me some jobs and I received a lot of positive feedback from them but it did not fit for me. That is because I was actually not so flexible, I wanted to stay at my place and I did not want to move for a job. So I wanted to find a job in my region. So during the fairs, I received some offers but these companies were located maybe in the South of Germany or in other countries. But so I received some good feedbacks and I guess that helped me to not develop too many negative feelings. But sometimes, yeah, it feels like you are low-graded and sometimes you doubt. You doubt either on yourself or on your plans or maybe that you might have to big expectations. And sometimes you could not understand that you did not get an invitation to an interview or something, although you thought that you are actually perfect for that. Sometimes you don't know.

Now, as I am working for two years and we are looking for a lot of new colleagues at the moment, I see that sometimes it is a lot about the relations you have. It depends a lot on where you are, who you know – to be at the right place at the right time.

(I): You said that you didn't plan on taking or accepting the first offer?

(P): Yes.

(I): So you were looking for a ‘good’ offer and a ‘good’ job?

(P): Yes.

(I): So what made you decide that so for that job you are going to apply? Was it simply that when the task matched your competences or was it also something else that made the ‘good’ job good which you were looking for?

(P): So yes, at first it was the competences because otherwise, I thought, it would not make that much sense to apply for the job if the competencies would not match. But on the other hand, it was also about what kind of company is it. Is it graded, for example, as a good company in Germany – like ‘best working place’ or something. So it mattered whether it is a good company, if it has a good reputation, if the employees are ok with the company, meaning do they like to work there.

(I): How did you know whether the employees liked to work there or not?

(P): So yes, I did some research. There are some platforms in the Internet, for example. Or, whether the company is ranked at an official site?

(I): And you did that before you applied for the job?

(P): Yes, yes sometimes. So yes, before I apply for a job I was doing some research on the company, for example. Well, sometimes you know the company because it is a huge one or because it is well-known in Germany. Or maybe, sometimes you knew somebody who was working there or somebody told you that you should look for a job offer at that company. So you know that the employee is actually ok with the company at the moment. So for me it was important that the reputation is not that bad that they can offer some development within the company. Or, that they offer you to participate in courses to develop yourself, or something like that.

(I): So you asked friends for help. How helpful was that or how would you rate the information you got there?

(P): Actually it was good. They told me sometimes that they were looking for new employees in this or that department. But in the end, it didn’t help that much because in the end you need match to the position and you need to fit in the team. So that’s a thing which I think is really really important because you spend that much time at work. So first of all you should have a good boss, you should have a good team – a good team that fits to you and you fit to the team.

(I): So did your friends give you that information?

(P): Well yes, sometimes they could give me some information, for example the name of the head of the department. That way you could address the head of directly. But actually in the end – I am actually not so sure if it helps that much.

(I): So you still applied due to the information but then figured for yourself you got the job or position doesn’t fit.

(P): Yes, I figured that the position is nothing after the interview. That is when you figure ‘that it is maybe not the right environment for me’. So I think sometimes it is helpful just to know that they are looking for someone new, so maybe you get some information earlier compared to the official platforms in the Internet. But in the end, you need to convince the company.

(I): Just to get an idea, how long were you approximately looking for a job?

(P): So I graduated in February. I started to look for a job end of March or beginning of April because after I graduated I first went on vacation. I accepted my first job offer in December, so it was like half a year or nine months.

(I): I guess completely normal. But I am sure it feels much longer at the time while you are searching for a job.

(P): Totally, of course. Well, actually before I have received this job offer, I was quite upset. Because I received some offers but I wasn’t satisfied with them.

(I): What made you not accept these offers?

(P): They were disrespectful sometimes, I thought. Or, sometimes in the end it was like ‘I don’t like the task or I don’t like the team’. But sometimes it was the offer which was really not that respectful. So, for example, I was offered a traineeship from a really big media company in Germany. But actually I thought ‘I am not sure if I like the working environment because working in agencies means that you need to work a lot, you need to work hard – it is a really busy place and the expectations are quite high’. But on the other hand, the salary is not that reasonable. I got this offer quite early, I think it was in April or something. I had to do an assessment center the whole day and actually I was quite relaxed when I did this. Because I thought ‘I was still in the beginning of my search, and I was doing this and get some experiences – but actually I was not quite sure if I wanted to do it – but just do it’. So I did that and it was quite good and directly received the offer. So at first I could accept it because the traineeship you could choose started only in three months or after half a year. I told them that I had some duties at the fairs and that I am self-employed at the moment and that I have some contracts that I need to fulfill, so because I wanted to be a little bit more flexible I told them that I want to start in autumn to have six more months – because I wasn’t that sure. So I received the contract. It was ok – it was a traineeship – so I thought ‘ok, it’s more like an internship or apprenticeship’, because it was a mix between working and training at the same time. So you had some weeks you were trained next to the job and do some courses and so on. So I thought ‘ok, for this I can learn a lot – they teach me – so it is ok if the salary is not that high’.

So I was looking for some other job. After three months I received the message that they are sorry but the traineeship will be closed because they lost a customer so that they cannot spend the money into this traineeship any longer. But, on the other hand, they wanted to offer me another position. It was not a traineeship; it was a fulltime position in product management – so developing advertising for a specific customer. So then I had another interview and it was ok because they told me that before I can have the contract I need to have another interview. So I have been there and we were talking and it was ok, but the people in the interview weren’t so sympathetic. Then they send me the offer and I was like ‘ok, if I would do this I would earn less than after my apprenticeship, so before I started to study’. And at the same time they were saying ‘your working conditions are as follows: you have no fixed working hours and there are no extra hours’. At the same time they told me that

they are having a lot of events that you have to join because it is part of your job. So a lot of events means that you have to work at night – in the evening – next to your official job. I thought that the salary is quite low, I have to work a lot, and the company is located in Düsseldorf which is not so close to my place. So it would take me one hour to get there, so two hours in a train, and I would work 50 hours a week and would get paid quite a low salary. So I said that this is really not a respectful offer and that was the time when I rejected the offer and said ‘no’. So I think that I was studying and they offered me that and I even told them that the salary is lower than the salary I earned when I finished my apprenticeship. So I said ‘I am so sorry but this is really not a good offer’.

However, actually I think it is quite important that companies are offering this because you spend a lot of money for your education and then you get such a salary and such an offer. So if you are not that confident in your situation, you will accept that and it is quite hard. So it was by the way good because it was this time when I got a really good advice by a former worker from the company. Because she told me – she had left the company already – that it was quite hard to find a good job outside an agency. Because, although you work really hard and you get a lot of experience on the job, it is not that accepted by other big companies where you could for example do a really really good job, for example in the Marketing department. So yes, she told me that it was quite hard to get accepted, that your experience got accepted in another big company that wasn’t an agency so that you earn a higher salary. So that was also the time when I thought ‘ok, actually, I don’t want to do it’ because it’s not that good for your future direction.

(I): So probably we are going to move a bit back again. But you said that you found the open job positions mainly on job portals in the Internet and also a bit through the information given by your friends. But when you decided that something sounded interesting and that competencies match my skills and you wanted to apply – what did you do? So when you found something you were interested in – and you wanted to apply – did you apply right away?

(P): No, actually I did the conservative approach – I just applied. So I heard from some friends of mine that they did some funny things like a video to apply but I was more conservative. I was pushing my CV, took a nice picture of myself – like the conservative approach. I applied directly on the website, on the website of the company.

(I): But did you look at the website in more detail before?

(P): Yes, of course. I spend a lot of time to write the Cover Letter. For every company I wrote a new Cover Letter. And for this I was looking at the job information and tried to do it quite individual. So like ‘ok, these are my competencies and I know that you are looking for a person who is having these competencies’ and I was underlining with giving examples for why I am really good candidate for this position. I was also telling them that ‘I was looking for a company that can offer this and this’ and ‘I know that you are such a company, so I think we could fit together quite good’. So that’s what I actually did. I spend a lot of time on writing a good Cover Letter.

(I): When you did that and you were looking for more information, how important was the organization as such? So because it seems that the job is pretty much important to you but how about the organization?

(P): The organization as well. I did my apprenticeship at an energy company and for me it was always as follows ‘I like my job, and the company was caring a lot for its employees’ but it was always in my mind that the company is selling gas. So what is gas? You can’t touch it, you can’t see it, or breathe it or whatever, so it is hard to get a relationship to your product. So I was always interested in companies that have a real product. It could have been anything, a car or some furniture or something else. Because if you have a product that you can see or touch or something else, I guess you have a bigger relationship, you can better identify with it. And even when you are talking to your family or friends and you are telling them that you are working for a specific company, and if they don’t know the company they are going to ask ‘what kind of product do you offer?’. And then you can say ‘well, we are selling candles’. So the point is that then you have a product and people are thinking about, they know it, and I guess then you better identify with the company. I guess then you are also more motivated because you say ‘ok, this is my product and I am checking the invoices for the product we are selling and I know what it is’. The product makes the company more touchable and I think then you are more willing to do more extra hours and you are more motivated. So I was actually looking for a company which I would be able to identify with.

(I): Did you find the information you needed about that quite easy or did you have negative experiences with it?

(P): Actually, that is the funny thing because the job offer I accepted – actually when I started the job I haven’t known what the company was doing. It was a new company – it was a part of a holding – and it was really hard to find some information. That was also what I told them in the interview ‘actually I wanted to inform myself about the company but I couldn’t find anything’. One task in the interview was that you received some information about the company concerning what it offers – its products – and you had to hold a speech about the company and its products to customers who did not know what the company does. So you had 20 minutes when you received a lot of information on slides about the company and you had to go through it and think about how to explain it. In the interview you are nervous and it is also the first time when you see all this information, so I was just telling them something, but actually in the end of the interview I couldn’t remember what I was saying. However, in the end I could not have been that bad because I got the job offer. Because I knew the holding, I have accepted the offer because the framework was ok. I thought that since I know the holding which has a really good reputation, the job description was quite general but I could identify with the tasks and I thought that they fit with my competencies, I give it a try. And in the end it was not that easy to work within the company but it was the step to get a much better job offer and if I haven’t accepted it I wouldn’t get the really good job offer. So in the end everything turned out good. It’s actually funny because I was just telling you that I think that you should be able to relate to the product and the company. In the end, the first job offer I accepted, I haven’t had any relationship with the company I was then working for. However, that was the possibility to get a better job. I had been working for the company for one year and the identification with the company was around zero and I could more relate to my customers. These customers are now my new company I am working for.

(I): How did you find the job which you found during your job search?

(P): I found it on stepstone. I saw the company and I knew the company and I also knew a lot of people who have been working for this company, but in different departments. A lot of my friends

are working for the company because it is a huge company. So they were working in the company but in a different business area.

(I): So they couldn't give you any information?

(P): No, they couldn't give me any information about the part of the company I was applying for.

(I): When you found the position, did you try to find more information about that part of the company?

(P): Yes, of course. I was trying to find some more information but, as I told you, it was not easy to get more information. There was a lot of information about the holding but not about the small part of the company.

(I): And what channels did you use or where did you look for the information?

(P): So first of all I was looking at the job description because it is always written what they are looking for, what they are offering and what kind of company they are. So there I got the first information. But it was not that much, just very general information, for instance saying that they are offering consulting services, but also services for repetitive processes and administrative processes. So it wasn't really relatable – it was not clear really what they were doing. It was quite general what they were doing and not that specific.

Then, I had the name of the company so I was doing some research in the Internet but there you couldn't get that much information. You could only get information about the holding but not about the specific company.

(I): Did you do something then or did you just apply then?

(P): No. I was doing some research on the job title, for example. I was looking for some other job descriptions, what they expect and or what the position, as described, is responsible for. So I tried to prepare myself for the interview somehow – but with really little information. I wasn't able to prepare myself properly.

(I): So I know that you had very limited information about the job and also about the specific part of the organization, but did you have any expectations or special thoughts about the job or the organization, beforehand?

(P): I guess I have never heard about the part of the organization, and actually neither about the job position itself. So it was quite new for me. It was the first time that I was applying for a project manager or for this kind of position, so it was quite new. In the ad it was written that they were looking for somebody who is communicative, good at organizing, willing to work longer if it is needed and confident. So I thought that this actually fits and so I thought if this fits I would just give it a try

(I): So you thought based on the job description that your personality or skills fit. What about the organization, did you think that you fit into the organization based on the information?

(P): First, I thought I would fit in the organization, maybe. Before the interview, I thought ‘I guess I could work for this company because it is a part of the holding and the company where I had done my apprenticeship was a huge company, as well’. So I knew that I as a person actually fit to such an organization, with my personality and way of working.

In the interview, I knew what to say and how to answer the question which they were asking me. But actually I wasn’t sure after I have met the people, for example the HR person and also a person from the board of the company. I didn’t get a positive relation to these people because the atmosphere was a little bit weird in the interview. So after the interview I wasn’t that sure if I wanted to do that job.

(I): So your thoughts that you would fit in the organization, that was mostly because you knew the parent holding.

(P): Yes, exactly. I thought that I could transfer it to the part of the organization because huge companies always have a culture and they want the culture to be lived through all the hierarchies. So I thought that if I fit to the holding, probably I would also fit to the smaller company.

(I): Did you look into the culture of the holding?

(P): Yes, yes. I did that always because I wanted to know how they are working, what is important to the company. So I always looked it up. That was what I was saying in the beginning, for instance in the agency I knew that the culture wouldn’t fit to my expectations. So it would have not been such a good employer.

(I): When you reflect on your job search, which channel or source of information was most helpful to you?

(P): Stepstone was the best channel for me to find job offers and job descriptions.

(I): And when you were looking for further information?

(P): Then I used the Internet in general, the company websites or the reports on other platforms like Glassdoor where employees can talk about their experiences with the organization. These channels I used.

(I): Where there any issues with the information you found online or with your search online in general?

(P): Yes, as I said, for this one company it was quite hard to get some information because it was a new company and you didn’t have an own website and only few people had experiences with this company. So it was really hard to find some information about this company.

(I): Did you enjoy working in the organization after being hired?

(P): It is hard to answer because I was working like a consultant. So I spend a lot of time with my customer. When I was with my customer, then I was enjoying my work. When I had to join official meeting at my own company, then I didn't like to do it, I was not interested and I didn't care. So, when I was doing the actual job, then I was enjoying it, but I hated those official appointments.

(I): How frequently do you use the Internet to search for information?

(P): Very frequently.

(I): If you have to answer to whether or not the use of the Internet has improved your job search, can you say something about that?

(P): Actually I think that the Internet improves the job search because you get much better informed about companies and about different positions or job descriptions. You can also learn a lot from the experiences of other people and also get more real information – probably, I don't know – but probably if you know how to read the experiences then you get some real and honest information. So I think the Internet helps you a lot to find the right job and also to get prepared for the interviews and it also helps you to figure out what exactly you want to do in the future.

(I): How would you rate the statement: “The internet has helped me to better identify whether the job or the organization is the right one for me.” Do you agree?

(P): I definitely agree.

Participant 9

(I): Was this the first job search after your graduation?

(P): No, it is not my first job search after graduation. But I didn't have a paid job before that.

(I): Before we start talking about the job search, I would like to know what I'm interested in how you described the perfect employer?

(P): That is a difficult so question. I would say somebody who is flexible, interested in employees, who is open-minded, who allows people a certain flexibility - not just in terms of when to work - , but also a certain freedom in how they work. So on one hand, I like to have support, a backup, and somebody to engage with and to ask questions to. But also on the other hand, I think, that should not limit an employee's possibility of doing things for themselves, to have responsibility, exploring new paths, getting more training - all of this. So somebody who was also interests in the employees' careers, basically, and professional outlook. And somebody who is fun. I think, these are the main points. Somebody who is professional as well. That's very important - professionalism. The way one handles not only the clients, but also the employees.

(I): How do you stand towards hierarchies?

(P): It depends on the work and the work environment and everything. So I think sometimes hierarchies can be very, very useful as long as it still allows for a certain amount of flexibility. But

then, on the other hand, there are points where I think hierarchy is not necessary. And in those points, it is absolutely legitimate to remove hierarchies. It really depends on the organizational company or what it is.

(I): For you, as long as it allows for freedom and flexibility, but has all the support and balance, right?

(P): Yeah, I don't have a problem with overly structures in a company. But I have a problem with them in itself, as soon as they become unnecessary. It depends - sometimes, they are NGOs, where there is a flat hierarchy, there's no one above anyone else. And that works sometimes really, really well. And they have way more productivity in whatever they do. And in this point, I think, it's really, really good. I think if you would work for government, a flat hierarchy would be a bit of a disaster. There is so much to decide, there is so much to do. Some people need a certain role and need to have an overview. So there are going to be structures.

(I): Okay, that I think answers my question. And so when we move to the job search: How did you start the process? What did you do?

(P): Generally, I was interested in three different sectors. I definitely had my very clear preferences in them. On the other hand, I was thinking: 'Okay, what about the far future? If I would find work in one sector would it allow me to work in another sector a bit later, which would be maybe more profitable?' I looked at the different sectors and had tried to figure out: What do I need to get into the sectors? What are different ways? And how can these sectors interrelate?

(I): It seems like you were really clear about the industry or sector you want you want to work in? Did you also have a clear idea of how your job should look like?

(P): No, that was my problem. First of all, these three different sectors are very, very different. For me, it was, that I know what I'm really, really interested in, and in which direction it is. I just had to see in how far I could get to that point, and work with my specific personal ideas and topics more closely together. How I would get there within the sector and how I could go there. So I tried to have a long term plan and how I could go about in each of these sectors, and why I need to do for that, and how they could also interrelate each other.

(I): After mapping, how did you start the specific job search when you took action?

(P): So, I had a more intensive search. Well, okay, to be fair, in two of the sectors, as soon as I work in one of them, I can't work in the other one. So, I chose to obviously do my search in that one sector, I preferred. And I did the search very intensively in that sector. What I did is: I looked at very obvious parts, like structures within organizations within that sector. I needed to dig into them [the organization], or read about the requirements. The problem is in those, that they have requirements that are not really achievable at the moment for me. So, I looked at what other parts are there as well. So I have friends who themselves are operating within the sectors. So I asked them for advice. While I was doing my internship, for instance, in New York, I met somebody who also had long standing work experience in that sector. And he advised me [???]. Then - once you have one organization or a few - you see with whom are they working, what are similar

organizations, who is working within these organizations, for instance on LinkedIn, and who has been working there before. If I really like an organization, I would go and see what employees who seems very interesting, and try looking up the past organization they worked for. And then you find more organizations. So I did a lot of that kind of work.

(I): You had probably the bigger, popular organizations of the sectors you were interested in in mind, you look those up and looked at their ecosystem around those organizations. You always went from the organization, and then looking at if those have job positions, and then look further.

(P): Yeah, that's one example how I did it. So I did different things. I looked at the big popular organizations, with whom are they working with or people who work for them, and then look up for whom these people had worked beforehand. What I did as well is, sometimes, I would find a website where they were listing. For instance, some universities have specific websites for if you want to make a career in a specific sector, here are maybe good starting options, or 'these are organizations that operate in these countries, or they are specialized in these areas,...'. I would go for these kind of things. And then again, I would look at every organization I could look at. Even on Google, you could search for an organization, they will tell you which other organizations are similar. So that is always really helpful. But then I also looked at what are the partner organization. Always looked at the reputation of an organization. What I did as well, was to look at career websites. I use Prospects - It's a UK based website, and everyone basically puts up job openings there. And you can see, maybe, which sector is profitable for you. You can do these tests. I don't know if they're true, but it [the tests/the result] seems interesting. So I would go through them and search on their website, that's for free as well. That's what I did in one of the sectors. That kind of was my approach.

(I): And so I just assume all your search was online? Also the job listings through the organization directly, or also through Prospect?

(P): Yeah, so yeah, basically, pretty much all of my research was online. What I did as well is I met up with people I knew in the sectors. I went to one career fair. And I also, when I arrived to Germany, I went to an employment agency. And they put me up in a system and then they start searching for you as well.

(I): When you read all the job openings, or postings, did you pretty much apply right away? Or did you do a lot of research beforehand?

(P): It depended a bit on the position and on the organization. Over time, I have written several CVs and improved them for different countries and for different sections I was interested in. It has to be different, because they are looking for different things. And then also the same for my cover letters. I have five thousands of different versions, basically. Because you have to make a certain version. And then that certain version is good for one sector, another one is good for another. Because they are looking for different things. And sometimes it's hard to decide. But in general, that was very important for me, and I had loads of people look over these materials. So if I found an organization, I read through the job description. It was very clear that my CV and my cover letter would not fit on either one of them. Then I had to dig deeper into the position itself, and rewrite or change my cover

letter to quite a large extent. For that, I did like in-depth research. If it was very clear: 'Okay, this is the 10th position, which is just another organization offering almost the same job. I'm not going to write a new cover letter. I'm not going to research the job position immensely. About the organization: For some cases, I just know them. I don't need to research. I kind of know what I'm getting into. For others, I did try to research quite well. Especially in one of the sectors I was interested in, one has to be careful that one doesn't get into the wrong organization.

(I): You pointed out flexibility and freedom and support. Was that something you researched? Or was it already visible from the descriptions? Or did you just apply and looked into that later?

(P): I applied for organizations, where I'm quite happy to assume that there is going to be more authority, and there's going to be less flexibility and own responsibility. I applied for others were, again, there was a lot of authority, but then a lot of responsibility as well. For some it was very little. Once you know about organizations and once you know business, the more research you do about a sector, the more you get about that kind of position. 'Okay, that's kind of this position and the organization is that big. So how much is that going to impact me?'. Then you HEAR a lot about the different sectors as well. And sometimes it's just visible throughout the job description as well - it becomes very apparent. It's not clearly stated, necessarily, but it is in the margins of the lines - you just need to read between the lines. So I applied for various ones. As I said, like, I don't have a problem with it, as long as I don't do anything completely stupid. I was quite flexible with that.

(I): It seems like you were aware of those [the organizations?]?

(P): Yeah, I was definitely aware of it.

(I): If not you, you did look them up, because otherwise you wouldn't have known them. For your current job: on which platform or how did you find that job?

(P): Of course, actually, I didn't apply for my job in the traditional sense. All of my friends started getting jobs and I didn't. Some of those friends were actually active in certain sectors, I really wanted to get into. So I told them: "Okay, you gotta job now. Look out for me. I need a job." So I asked my friends - that were working in the sector, I really wanted to get into but also in other sectors I was also interested in - to look out for me and basically, see if there's an opening. Sometimes it's just easier. Sometimes you have connections. Because it doesn't matter really where, but for most places you need networks, and you need people who are gonna see that there is a job opening coming up and say: "Hey, do you wanna maybe look at this person?" And that's actually what happened to me. And I knew that it's almost everywhere like that. So yes, I was lucky: a friend of mine heard that there was an opening and he suggested me. So, he just asked me for my CV. So I sent him my CV, and he gave it to one of the people in that organization and they wanted to have an interview immediately. So I asked them for the next day, because I didn't actually know what exact organization my friend was working on, and which position this was for.

(I): Did you then do research on the organization and on the job? If you said, you didn't know that that well?

(P): No, no. So actually, my friend just asked me to send over my CV, that there might be something or he could maybe forward the CV. I didn't know the organization my friend was working for. So I forwarded my CV and then I got an email from one of my bosses now saying that he's interested in interviewing me, if I could do it on the same day. I saw the email bit later. But also, I didn't know anything about them. And I've never heard of them. So, I suggested to have a phone call the day after. And when a person from a company sends an email, they have the logo of the company. So I saw that one. And then I did the research just before my interview. I didn't know which position I was applying for.

(I): Which channels did you use for researching the organization? Or where did you look?

(P): I just looked at their website. I saw the organization has lots of different projects, with different topics and I decided to read through several of them. And I could guess which projects my friend might work on.

(I): So, it was not hard to find information? You found enough information on the website?

(P): Yes, on the website of the company. You can't find anywhere else information about them. But then I didn't know about the opening, so no information about that.

(I): Do you think: was the information helpful you found about the organization?

(P): Yes, as soon as you have a bit of knowledge of different sectors and industries - it's not necessarily only one, because it might overlap with another one - then it's easy to understand. And they do quite well, when it comes to job descriptions. They are quite transparent as well. So it's not like, you don't know what they do.

(I): Based on the information you found about the organization: Did you develop new thoughts and expectations regarding their organizations BEFORE you knew them? Or was it just the same as with the sector you were talking about? (E.g. due to the fact that often organizations advertise their mission and values)

(P): No, not really that much. I think after I found out what the job position was, maybe a bit more. I found them [the company] really interesting. I mean, obviously - I am working there now. So I found them interesting. I was excited, it should be something nice and I think they have very interesting ideas and strategy. In that way, that was definitely something which attracted me. But I don't know if I could say that I had - for jobs specifically - any aspirations in that sense. I mean, yeah, I had some: 'Okay, it's gonna be a nice office. It's going to be young. At least, it seemed very young when I looked at their website - just makes it feel very young. And it IS indeed quite young. I mean, I had some ideas, some inclinations.

(I): If you reflect on your job search and which source or channels you think was most helpful in either finding information but also in your job search overall?

(P): Definitely the discussion with friends of mine who had knowledge of the sector's. That was definitely very, very helpful for me. Just in the way of: 'How am I gonna approach the search in the first place.' They knew already a few names - sometimes of things I wouldn't have heard of or

thought of. In that respect, that was unbelievably helpful. For example, things like: 'How should I formulate a cover letter? That really helps because when they already know: 'Okay, for that sector you shouldn't use this word, because it's problematic or that would be weird to have that new cover letter.'. In these small all very different respects, it was very good.

(I): For you, it was mostly the friends then?

(P): No, my internet research was the biggest bunch.

(I): When you reflect on the information you had BEFORE starting: was it realistic and accurate to what you experience now?

(P): In relation to my job now, I would say - in comparison to the sector itself - I think I had a pretty good inclination - to some extent. There are things that are not necessarily like that but - in general - it is. Then specifically to the job and to the company itself: As you know, most things I found out during the interview. I had a test afterwards as well but the most things I found out during the interview. A few things also through the test because that just prepared me [provided insights] on the topic I would work on. But just from just that job description and the way it was explained and everything, I had a very very good idea what I would get into. And even though, I just started on Monday, so far it seems to be very much as described.

(I): But when you saw the job description and you what they are looking for, did you see a fit to your capabilities and skills or did you think there was something, you still had to learn?

(P): Definitely something I have to learn! Not only the topic I'm working on but also the work itself is nothing I've done so far ever - really most of it. So, it is going to be very new, but they are very much aware that I don't have that experience. So these are aspects which are definitely something I have to learn and grow into and it's going to be a challenge. There are smaller aspects which I haven't done exactly before but I have done very similar things already. But these are smaller parts of the whole process of what I have to do daily. Once in a while, I will do something which is very similar to what I've done before but most of it is completely new. 'Learning by doing', I would say.

(I): Basically, there was nothing unexpected?

(P): I also applied for jobs where I was like: 'Yeah, okay, in general, I've done these things before. I know I'm capable of doing them.' When I heard the job description, it's not like: 'I'm ticking all the boxes.' I AM NOT ticking all the boxes, which would be normally maybe the exact requirements for a lot of jobs. But that's what I always liked about the companies: that they actually take a chance on me and that they don't necessarily have to have somebody who's definitely going to be 100% perfect in everything and who knows already everything. Or would be able to do to job 100% because they have had the exact same kind of task over 45 years in the past and they will do the same exact tasks again. For me, it's going to be that there could be a lot of boxes, I'm not ticking. But I think, it's nice because I believe in myself that I will be able to do it and that I will be able to take responsibility.

(I): How would you comment on the following statement: 'The internet has helped me to better identify whether the job or company is the right one for me.'

(P): After the interview, I also looked for the job position information. I did a test. It's not like I was done with everything. So far, the information have been helpful. Definitely. And I would identify with that statement. In as far as I can say, as I'm only in my first week. So I don't know. Maybe you can ask me in a month again, I might be saying: 'Oh, good. Okay, maybe I don't know.' But, so far, so good, I would say.

Participant 10

(I): So just in general, the thesis is about your job search and also later about your employment. And yeah, and before we start with the with the general questions could you say when you graduated?

(P): So I graduated about one and a half years ago. So I finished my bachelor's thesis one and half years ago.

(I): So, I know that you are working right now. But when you think back, before you actually also started your job search, you probably already had some ideas, but can you describe how a perfect employer looks to you?

(P): Within an organization, there is a great team, great fun to work together, but also challenging tasks, which are sometimes different - day by day. Contact with different departments in the company - so that you meet different people and also connect with them. And that's how I think a great place to work should look like.

(I): What do you like, when you think of an organization? Do you have special opinions or ideas of how collaboration, hierarchies, work-life balance or something like this should look like?

(P): The company should give young people, especially young people, the chance to move further than they are at the moment. So, in terms of learning and developing, maybe gaining new responsibility or even higher position. That should always be an aspect of a new position: That it's possible for young people also to gain additional responsibility. And I think this aspect when young people start in company, that also motivates them to bring their own opinions into the company.

(I): So actually, the opportunity to grow and develop is, you would say, most important to you?

(P): Yeah, next to the points I said.

(I): Is there something job-specific, which is really important to you? Do you have an idea how it should be?

(P): I'm working on a big production site. Since the start of my studies, this was one of my goals for a company. I think, the production site is giving the possibility to develop and also the variety of tasks. So that was one thing.

(I): What do you mean by protection site, so that the companies actually producing something?

(P): Yes, exactly. The company I'm working at, we are producing the goods and are shipping them into the whole world.

(I): When you think back and not having your company right now in mind, but when you started your job search? How did you start? And what did you do?

(P): I already had this goal to start working in a specific economy [industry?]. In my case, the pharmaceuticals. That is why I started specifically looking for jobs in those kinds of companies or companies that are close to that [pharmaceuticals].

(I): How did you do that? Where did you look?

(P): Different internet sites, like LinkedIn, or German sites. So, at the beginning of my job search, I was specifically looking for internships. Because I already knew, that bigger companies are looking for people who already have job experience and working experience. And I try to gain that through an internship. There are internet sites, like Internship.com point or just LinkedIn or the German version of LinkedIn [Xing]. So that's where some of the possibilities were, I was looking.

(I): When did you search for jobs? Where you still writing your thesis or still in the middle of your studies? Or was it afterwards?

(P): I looked for jobs after my thesis, because in the first half of the last semester, we wrote our thesis, and in the second half, we still had courses. And so then I had a lot of time for looking for possible job positions.

(I): You said that you, you, you knew already the industry, it was pharma, and then that you looked for open positions on LinkedIn and internship.com and so on. When you saw the job description, or job posting, about a position? What did you usually do?

(P): I first checked the job position, if it fits my profile, looked for the expectations of the company, which they had towards the new employees. But also read through the information the company gave for how the position looks like and what kind of tasks are waiting for a new employee. So those were the specific things I was looking for.

(I): All this information you usually got from the job description or from the job posting?

(P): Yes, mainly, I was searching on those sites for open positions near - at that time - Frankfurt or Freiburg and then just clicked through all of them and checked the description.

(I): You were kind of checking whether it matches to the profile they are looking for, and whether you are interested in the tasks they offer?

(P): Yes, exactly.

(I): Okay. And did you get help from any friends? Did you ask any friends for information?

(P): For example, for my bachelor thesis, I also did some interviews with managers from pharmaceutical companies. So, I already had a contact to those people. And what I did, is just ask them. After the interviews and after I sent them the results of the interviews, I asked them, if there's maybe open positions in their company that fit my profile. I've sent them my CV. And through this, I got the internship position, I was working at after my bachelor thesis. But for the job I'm working at right now, that was just an open position in the internet, where I was looking the normal way. So, no Vitamin B [referral] or something like that.

(I): Okay. And so basically, when you saw the job offer, did you then apply right away? Or did you look for more information on the organization?

(P): Yes. What I'm doing is, if I see an open position, I'm, of course checking the internet for additional information about the company, about the sites [production site] and where it's located, and what they're actually doing at that site. So, I can also specify that in my CV. Yes, that's how I do it. So, if I see an open position that I would like to apply for, I'm checking for additional information.

(I): And what websites do you usually use for that? Or where do you find that information? Then also on LinkedIn?

(P): Yes, sometimes on LinkedIn, but also on the company website, of course, and on other websites with company information, that are having specific information, but mainly the company websites.

(I): For example, whether it's a fun environment to work in, do you pay attention to that stuff when you're looking through webpage of the organization?

(P): Um, it's kind of hard to see those points through a webpage of a company because they can write whatever they want on those webpages. And that doesn't tell you much about the people, you are working within the team in the future. So, I think that's kind of hard to see if the team fits your personality or the other way around. And that's also, I think, a problem for hiring managers if they are looking through profiles.

(I): So that they actually don't know the team they're working with. Okay, when searching organizations, were you pretty much open to every organization within that industry?

(P): Yes, so as far as it's near the cities, I wanted to.

(I): Can you think of any positive or super negative experiences you had during the job search process before applying? Something more exceptional, where you think that was really annoying, or it should not be that way to automate something really good?

(P): Yes, it's also sometimes frustrating if you don't get invited for an interview. But what's more frustrating, I think, if you are invited to an interview, and you have the feeling, it was a great conversation you had with the people you're talking to. And you think: 'God, I did kind of great and maybe I will get job', and then you don't get it to. So that's sometimes frustrating. I had that situation a few times, not only for when applying for the internship, but also for the actual job I'm working at now.

(I): By the way, when you say you were also using LinkedIn a lot, did you only use it as a tool that you were looking for job postings, or for organizations? Or were you also contacted by a recruiter and follow that way?

(P): Before I had the job I'm working at now, I didn't get contacted by recruiter. In the meantime, I was already contacted, by three recruiters from different locations in Munich, and in Switzerland. Now, since I have been working. That went really fast: I was working a few months in that position and I already got contacted by one recruiter. It is kind of interesting to see, that it's going really fast.

(I): I guess it's, once you are in and you have experience, they become interested in you.

(P): Yes, exactly. And that's another point, which is kind of frustrating, when going through open job positions. Because most of the time, the requirements are having already work experience in [that field] or already, that you have a few years of work experience or something like that. And that's kind of frustrating, because you always think: 'How should I get this work experience if I can't get into the job, right?' That's one of the points, which are really frustrating. And the other hand, I'm really happy that I got that job now. So that was one of the positive points, because I had a really good conversation in this last one. And yeah, so that was one of the positive things.

(I): We're actually talking about how you found the shop you are in: where did you see the position?

(P): Yep. So the actual position in the moment was also through LinkedIn. I just applied for it and that worked out.

(I): Did you know The organization before?

(P): Yes, I knew the organization before and I was already familiar with most of the companies in my industry.

(I): Okay. And did you know anybody else working in the company?

(P): No, no, nobody, no.

(I): What people apparently do is to contact other employees who are currently or have been working in the company, and actively contact them and ask them how it is. Did you do that?

(P): No, I didn't do that. I just went the normal way over the HR of the company and writing my CV or sending my CV to them. I didn't go the way, that I contacted any people over LinkedIn. And I would personally find it kind of strange to be contacted if someone wrote me on LinkedIn and asked if there are any open positions in the company. Because I would just tell them: "Yeah, look at our website, there are enough open positions there."

(I): And so when you found the position, did you also go on the company website and look for more information? Or did you go somewhere else, and look for more information before you apply?

(P): Yes, I had to look on the company's website, of course. Specifically, the site, here in Freiburg [part of webpage for location/production site], what they are producing here. I had a look into different articles of German newspapers about the company: how they're related to social responsibility, what are they doing for the nature preservation, for example.

(I): Was it something important to you - not only but they produce, but also how the organization stands towards social responsibility and what they take responsibility for?

(P): No, not exactly, but some information that's good to know. Also information, which looks good if you put it inside of your CV, or when telling the hiring manager that you saw some articles about that. So, it was mainly because for [interview] preparation and showing the hiring people that I'm interested in those kinds of things as well.

(I): When you were looking for more information, or when you were on the company's web page, was there anything that you were actually looking for? Not to prepare yourself but what is important to you job-wise or organization-wise?

(P): I always prepare myself for the job interviews with questions they could ask and information that is good to know about the [production] site. I was always preparing for those interviews - very specific: wrote down: what the site is doing? And was looking especially for possible answers, or for questions they could ask. So those were the things, I was checking the internet for.

(I): Okay. So you mainly did it on the internet? And I guess, digital newspapers, you said, reading articles? And was it hard to find information?

(P): No, not at all, because most of the information is on the website of the company. So they give a lot of information on those website, on our own websites to present themselves to possible employees, and also to customers etc. It wasn't hard at all. Even if I couldn't find anything, it was just two minutes of googling, and I had the answer I was looking for.

(I): Okay, did you also use a portals such as Glassdoor or some ratings to get another perspective on the organization? Information not provided by the organization itself?

(P): I'm not familiar with that website.

(I): When you were looking for more information: Was still before your application or after your application when you were invited for the interview?

(P): Before I applied, I was just looking at the website in order to check what this production side is doing. So I had some specific points, I could write in the CV. But the main information I gathered and the questions I was thinking about, they could ask and which answers I should give, that was after I got the invitation to the telephone interview and to the actual interview at the site.

(I): Okay, and so with all the information and whether or not you just collected for preparation reason, you develop to have certain thoughts or expectations towards work, the job or the organization, you were applying for?

(P): Yes, kind of. I knew, it was a big company. Expectations are therefore high in terms of to be able to develop in that position. And so I was always asking for the possibility to maybe do my Master Thesis after a few years or visiting other departments or even other [production] sites. Those are specific questions I always ask at the end of the interviews, and those are kind of also the expectations. And what I'm also always asking is: "How does a normal workday look like?" So I already have expectations then.

(I): How did they [the expectations] look like based on the input, before you went into the interview? What was your idea of the job or the organization? Before you got invited from them?

(P): The expectations: I knew, it was a big production side. So, my actual job position at the moment is called 'Site planner' - it's production planning. So I knew, I would have a lot of contact with colleagues from the production side, which are working inside of the production. And so I knew, I didn't only have contact with people or colleagues which are working in the buildings [offices] or in front of their PCs and laptops. So, I already had the expectation, that I would have a lot of contact with colleagues from the production side, or from the production.

(I): Did you have any idea specific to the organization or how it would be working there? Except that it's big.

(P): Yes, I knew it was mainly a desk job. That I would be - most of the time - in front of the PC and working with SAP and Excel. Those are the programs most companies are working with. And I was already familiar with those programs from my studies and from my internship.

(I): Based on the expectation you had towards the job and the organization: Did you think, you have the skills that are needed for the job and that you fit in?

(P): Yes, sure, sure. Yes, I knew, that I'm qualified and that I would fit in in that position, because the job description was perfectly written for my profile. So yes, so that was a good start to also know, that it was almost perfectly describing my profile. So that makes it a lot easier to apply for the job.

(I): Except for the skills or that the profile matched, was there something else that was the reason for applying? (e.g. salary, ...)

(P): It was mainly the job description about the tasks and the contact to production employees. But also that it's a big company, a worldwide acting company, and there's a lot of opportunities to

develop and also gain higher positions or more responsibility inside of the company. And the other hand, I was just looking for a job at that moment. And I was applying for almost every job I found that was fitting my profile.

(I): So now when we move forward: When you reflect on your job search, which source or channel, specifically, would you rate most helpful in your job search?

(P): So at the beginning - when you're fresh out of school, you've finished your bachelor thesis, or your Master thesis - I would say, the best way to get into a job is, if you already have the contact, such as you know somebody who's inside of that business or you met someone on events or stuff like that, and already had those contacts. So that's, I think, one of the most important points when you're fresh out of university, when you have your bachelor's and master's degree. But if you already have experiences, such as working during your studies or you already did some internships, - most of the time - you apply inside the company, you're doing your internship. But if you don't have that, it's just checking the web and looking for positions that fits your profile.

(I): Was it mostly LinkedIn you use to find information regarding the job you're in right now? and what they stated on the website and the job description - do you think, it was realistic?

(P): For some jobs, that I was checking on the web, I found it sometimes unrealistic because it sounded - with regards to the tasks - like a job for fresh bachelor students, who finished just their exams or master student. Those were one of the specific points they were looking for. But on the other hand, as I already said, they were looking for people with job experience of multiple years or in the exact same position. And that's kind of unrealistic. That was one of the points, which was not mentioned on the job I'm working at right now. The job description of my job was really realistic.

(I): Concerning the tasks you're doing and also how the organization works - where the information also realistic?

(P): Yes. They quite summed up the task pretty well and also how the position looks like.

(I): After you got hired, was there anything - maybe - unexpected that you didn't have an idea of before from the information you've got and you also read about the organization?

(P): The most unexpected thing: Right after my studies in my internship, and also in the job, I'm working now. And I think that's one of the things most students will recognize after they begin working: that the job - most of the time - doesn't reflect the specific information you gathered around in the studies or you learned in your studies. Most of the things I learned during my bachelor, I don't use in my current job now. That what was one of the things I found very interesting. But I think also during school, it's sometimes also stuff you learn, and you already think in the moment you are learning that, but you never will use that again in your life. That's most of the time true. This was really interesting.

(I): Okay. And do you enjoy working in the organization you're working right now?

(P): Yes, I enjoy it really a lot. I have a great manager, he is a really nice guy. We're really young team, comparing to other companies of that size, or just other teams. We work together very well. And we're also doing a lot of things besides work. For example, playing soccer sometimes or drinking a beer or two after work or have lunch together and stuff like that.

(I): Great teamwork and the fun part that was so important to you in the beginning you found or that's why you so satisfied, I guess?

(P): Yes, exactly. Yes, I found a great team I like working with. I see also the possibilities that I can develop and that I have a lot of responsibilities inside of the company. That's those things that make it sometimes interesting. But sometimes, also frustrating, but in a good way: If something doesn't work out quite well, you need to find a solution for that. And that's your responsibility to find a solution for that. So that's also parts, which make that job kind of interesting.

(I): And how do you stand towards the bigger overall organization? If you look beyond your team? Would you recommend the organization? If yes, why?

(P): I can recommend it. So we have still a lot of open positions., If I meet somebody who is fitting or could possibly apply for those positions, I would recommend it, or him or her, and that he should apply. And that's also a way: that people know somebody who's inside that position and telling them that there is a job they can apply for.

(I): How used are you with the internet in searching for information?

(P): I grew up with the internet. I'm the so-called pioneers of internet - Generation Y. That is why I'm kind of familiar with searching the internet and finding the information I need. Yep.

(I): And would you say that the internet, also the information, you found, improved your job search?

(P): Definitely. There are a lot of possibilities to find open jobs and gather information around the job or the company. So, yes, the internet helps a lot.

(I): Also to help you to find the right job and organization: "Okay, that's the right job and organization for me." So you could make a better choice, you would?

(P): Yes, sure. Because they just write the information down there. And you can check if it fits your expectations and your profile. And that makes it a lot easier to find the right job, you want to have.

(I): Thank you. That's it already unless you have something you would like to add or would like to know from me.

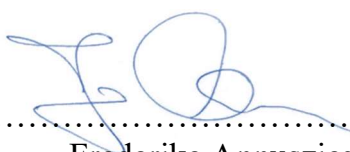
10 Statutory Declaration

We declare that we have authored this thesis independently, that we have not used other than the declared sources / resources, and that we have explicitly marked all material which has been quoted either literally or by content from the used sources.

Copenhagen *12.05.2019*

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Place

Date



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Frederike Annuszies

Copenhagen *12.05.2019*

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Place

Date



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Ella Kramer