Eeva-Liisa Oikarinen

PERSPECTIVES ON HUMOR IN RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING ON THE INTERNET
EEVA-LIISA OIKARINEN

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Academic dissertation to be presented with the assent of The Doctoral Training Committee of Human Sciences, University of Oulu for public defence in the Arina auditorium (TA105), Linnanmaa, on 27 April 2018, at 12 noon

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Abstract

This study explores the phenomenon of humor in advertising in the context of recruitment advertising and answers the research question: How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives? The study is positioned on humor in advertising literature, particularly incongruity theories of humor, and it approaches the context of recruitment advertising by utilizing employer brand message conceptualization. Motivation for the study was to understand poorly investigated phenomenon of humor in recruitment advertising; observations were collected in a small company’s Internet communication channel. Theoretical motivation was rooted in the lack of earlier studies on humor in recruitment advertising within the literature of humor in advertising.

Earlier studies on humor in advertising have been dominated by experimental quantitative studies, and this study provides methodological novelty by using a mixed methods research approach. The study had different data collection methods: A between-subject experimental design with a quantitative approach and case studies with content analysis and qualitative analysis methods. The phenomenon were investigated on different empirical levels (both recruitment ads and recruitment campaign) and collecting evidence from a setting of a small company’s Internet communication channel.

The dissertation is based on a compilation and published research papers, three journal articles and one book chapter, which are able to create new perspectives related to the phenomenon of humor in recruitment advertising. A framework on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet will be developed by focusing on different communication perspectives: investigating the use of humor in the employer brand message, the job seekers’ responses to humor, moderator (this study: congruence) effects of humor, and the managerial challenges and opportunities of humor. The potential of humor was identified as working as a device for a person-organization fit and offering the potential for social media marketing by increasing the sharing intentions of recruitment ads. The challenges of humor are related to negative intermediate advertising effects and negative word-of-mouth. This dissertation contributes to the advertising literature by developing new research approach on humor in recruitment advertising and extending the body of research on humor in advertising empirically in recruitment advertising on the Internet.

Keywords: employer brand message, humor in advertising, Internet, mixed methods research, recruitment advertising, small company
Oikarinen, Eeva-Liisa, Näkökulmia rekrytointimainonnan huumoriin Internetissä.
Oulun yliopiston tutkijakoulu; Oulun yliopisto, Oulun yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulu,
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Tiivistelmä
Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee huumorimainonnan ilmiötä rekrytointimainonnan kontekstissa ja vastaa kysymykseen, miten huumoria rekrytointimainonnassa voidaan lähestyä viestinnän näkökulmista Internetissä? Tutkimus on asemoitu huumorimainonnan kirjallisuuteen, erityisesti huumorin inkongruenssiteoriaan ja se tarkastelee rekrytointimainonnan kontekstia hyödyntäen työnantajan brändiviestin määrittelmää. Tutkimuksen lähtökohtana ovat yksittäiset havainnot olemassa olevasta muista tutkitaan ilmiöstä, huumorista rekrytointimainonnassa pienien yritysten Internet-viestintäkanavassa. Huumorimainonnan kirjallisuudesta puuttuvat toisaisielsä huumoria rekrytointimainonnassa käsittelevät tutkimukset.

Aikaisempia huumorimainonnan tutkimuksia ovat hallinneet kokeelliset kvantitatiiviset tutkimukset. Tämä väitöskirja on menetelmällisesti uutuusarvoinen, koska tutkimuksessa lähestyttiin ilmiötä monimenetelmätiin. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin erilaisia tiedonkeruumelementtejä: kokeellisia tutkimusasemellea kvantitatiivisella lähestymistavalla ja tapausmerkintä. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin sisällönanalyysiä sekä kvalitatiivisia analyysimenetelmiä. Ilmiötä tutkittiin sekä rekrytointimainonnoista että rekrytointikampanjoa empirisillä tasoilla ja aineistoa kerättiin pienien yritysten Internetin viestintäkanavanavasta.


Asiakirjat: huumori mainonnassa, Internet, monimenetelmätutkimus, pieni yhtiö, rekrytointimainonta, työnantajabrandiviesti
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odottaa tämän projektin päättymistä, ja tietenkin Tororolle, joka seurasi lähetä
syksyn 2017 työskentelyä.

*Hyvä on hiihtäjän hiihdellä,*
*kun hanki on hohtava alla,*
*kun taivas kirkasna kaareutuu –*  
*mut hauskempi hiihtää, kun ruskavi puu*  
*tuul’ulvovi, polku on ummessa*  
*ja tuisku on taivahalla*

-Eino Leino-

Madekoskella, 13.3.2018

Eeva-Liisa Oikarinen
List of original publications

This dissertation is based on the following publications, which are referred throughout the text by their Roman numerals:


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1 Introduction

“People don’t buy from clowns.” (Claude C. Hopkins, American Businessman 1866-1932)

1.1 Importance of the topic

Humor has been acknowledged as a common practice used by advertisers for a long time (Eisend 2009, Weinberger & Gulas 1992). Over the years, the prevalence of humor in advertising has been stated as globally high. For example, about 30% of TV commercials were observed to be humorous, both in the USA and the UK already in the early 2000s (Toncar 2001). Humor in award-winning ads has risen from 21% in the 1920s to 66% in the 2000s (Weinberger et al. 2015). Today, humor is used more frequently in advertising compared to the early years of advertising (Weinberger et al. 2015), and humor in advertising has also changed from playful and warm to more aggressive humor (Weinberger et al. 2015, Blackford et al. 2011).

Humor in advertising has been widely studied by researchers from multiple communication perspectives and different contexts (e.g., Eisend 2009, Madden & Weinberger 1984, Fugate 1998). This study focuses on humor in the recruitment advertising context, where earlier research seems to be lacking. Recruitment advertising can be defined as a way for companies to attract the best job seekers (Backhaus 2004). Attracting the job applicant is an early phase in the broader context of the recruitment process (e.g., Breaugh & Starke 2000, Ullah 2010, Uggerslev et al. 2012). It is an important phase of the recruitment process. There is some earlier knowledge on communication of fun values in the phase of attracting the applicant (Backhaus 2004, Owler 2010, Tews et al. 2012). As closely related to fun, humor might work in a similar role, yet so far there are few studies available.

Recruitment advertisements are a recruitment-specific source (Cable & Turban 2001) and the most typical example of a company-dependent recruitment source (Van Hoye & Lievens 2007). So far, advertising researchers have put little interest into recruitment advertising, which is generally an early recruitment-related marketing activity (Collins & Stevens 2002). (One exception is Feldman et al. 2006.) Despite the rising prevalence of humor in advertising, there are no publicly available statistics or studies about the informed prevalence of humor in recruitment advertising.

There is some indication of a low prevalence of humor in recruitment advertising. A preliminary study conducted by the author, from the Employment
and Economic Development Office’s vacancies portal (Aug 2012), reported that humor was mentioned in 1.07% of all recruitment ads (124/11536). In March 2018, the amount was similar: 1.27% (284/21793). The low incidence of the word “humor” probably indicates a low prevalence of humor in recruitment ads as well. However, real-life observations of humor in recruitment advertising can show that the phenomenon exists on the Internet, and case companies can provide useful examples of how humor has been used in social media recruitment campaigns and individual recruitment ads (papers I and IV).

Here is one example of observations of using humor in recruitment ads on the Internet. In 2012, a Finnish company operating in the mining industry published a humorous recruitment ad on the Internet to recruit an export manager. The main theme was to describe the applicant for this managerial position in terms opposite to what was really desired (e.g., “a lazy, good-for-nothing bum”). The specific humor type in this case seemed to be self-depreciating humor (Gulas & Weinberger 2006). This recruitment ad created over 12,000 clicks (the number of clicks for the average online job being 1,000 clicks), and it increased the number of visitors to the firm’s website from 600 to 3,000, and finally it generated more than 100 applications. (See also Paper II.)

Humor in advertising has been explored extensively during the last years. However, studies on humor in recruitment advertising are lacking. One exception is a notion of Ryan et al. (2000) related to the existence of thought-provoking or humorous headlines in printed recruitment ads, which opens the research gap for the dissertation.

Nowadays, the workforce values and expects to have fun at work (Romero & Pescosolido 2008, Tews et al. 2012). Describing or mentioning a fun working environment has been a relatively popular way of attracting job candidates (Backhaus 2004, Owler 2010), and communication of fun aspects in recruitment advertisements has been seen as useful (Tews et al. 2012). Humor in recruitment advertising seems to be a relevant and current topic for managers. However, managers need more understanding about the challenges and opportunities of humor in recruitment advertising (Paper IV, Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 115) and these issues are worth investigating in this dissertation.

Small companies are faced with the challenge of how to differentiate from other competitors and attract talented personnel (Tumasjan et al. 2011, Backhaus 2004, Lievens & Highhouse 2003). These small companies with limited resources are willing to employ low-budget approaches to brand communication (Boyle 2003, Dahlén et al. 2009), and employing humor offers one potential approach. Many
companies, including smaller ones, can create memorable, attractive or “provocative content” for the Internet, which is one of the critical elements of viral marketing tactics (Hinz et al. 2011). Provocative content in turn is connected to humor as the most commonly acknowledged advertising appeal and main driver creating arousal for viral advertising (Brown et al. 2010, Porter & Golan 2006, Nelson-Field et al. 2013). The Internet represents a new powerful medium in advertising, and it is (accessed from mobile devices and desktop computers) expected to be 41.8% of all distribution of global advertising expenditures in 2019 (Statista 2017).

Consequently, it is assumed that the following issues—the trend of rising prevalence of humor in consumer ads, the relevance of humor in working life in general, and a company’s willingness to use humor in the Internet for viral purposes—are possible antecedents for the phenomenon of humor in advertising to spill over into new advertising contexts such as recruitment advertisements. Thus, it can be assumed that the phenomenon of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet, will grow in the future, which makes it a more relevant issue to study.

1.1.1 Different perspectives on humor in advertising

In the marketing literature, humor research has been mainly limited to the area of advertising (Duncan 1979, Madden & Weinberger 1984, Eisend 2009) and customer service (Bergeron & Vachon 2008, van Dolen et al. 2004, Mathies et al. 2016, Söderlund et al. 2017). In the past, humor in advertising has been generally described as message appeal (Percy & Rossiter 1992). Later, following the emerging stream of Internet advertising, humor has been acknowledged as one of the most common appeals for viral adverts (Porter & Golan 2006).

Currently, academic research on humor in advertising has been dominated by three perspectives on humor in advertising: use of humor, responses to humor, and moderator effects (Eisend 2017). This dissertation follows this categorization by adopting different perspectives in individual research papers and sub-questions presented later in this chapter. These perspectives together help to get a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of humor in advertising in the context of recruitment advertising, where earlier research seems to be lacking. Different perspectives are described next.

The first perspective on humor in advertising in this dissertation is tackling the “use of humor” (see Eisend 2017). From the employer branding perspective, recruitment ads offer one way for companies to create successful employer brand
messages, although employer branding in recruitment ads (or job ads) is rarely investigated (e.g., Backhaus 2004, Elving et al. 2013, Nolan et al. 2013). For companies, creating and managing employer brand messages is important. Yet, to author’s best knowledge, there is a lack of earlier research discussing how humor is used in recruitment ads or how humor is part of the employer brand message.

The second perspective on humor in advertising is “responses to humor” (Eisend 2017). Many advertising scholars have reported positive consumer responses to humor: improving the level of attention to the ad (Duncan 1979, Madden & Weinberger 1984, Weinberger & Gulas 1992, Eisend 2009) and the attitude toward the ad (Weinberger & Gulas 1992, Eisend 2009) and toward the advertiser (Sternhal & Craig 1973, Weinberger & Gulas 1992, Eisend 2009). Some studies have earlier emphasized the risks and restrictions of using humor in advertising (e.g., Beard 2008, Madden & Weinberger 1984), but the traditional approach to responses to humor highlights its positive impact and tends to overlook possible negative effects. This dissertation explores the job seekers’ responses to humor in recruitment advertising, which to this author’s knowledge is the unexplored advertising context. Furthermore, the dissertation questions the positive approach to humor and acknowledges both the challenges and opportunities in humor in advertising.

The third perspective on humor in advertising is “moderator effects” (Eisend 2017). Advertising researchers have identified many different kinds of moderators on the effectiveness of humor, and much research has been devoted to that area in the 1990s and 2000s. For example, earlier studies have informed that in the case of no humorous products, humor creates more favorable attitudes among a low-involvement audience than in a high-involvement audience (Zhang & Zinkhan 2006), and product involvement (Chung & Zhao 2003, Weinberger & Gulas 1992) is also moderating the effects of humor in advertising. A special approach to moderators is conducted in this dissertation through congruence. The positive effects of congruence have been widely investigated among advertisers (Kamins 1990, Kamins & Gupta 1994), and there are interesting links to incongruent humor, which will be discussed in this dissertation in the previously unexplored recruitment advertising context. The concept of congruence is needed to shed more light on the effects of humor in recruitment advertising and investigating the potential moderating role of congruence between contemporary humor and the fun company climate.

Advertising is currently defined as a form of brand communication, and it is possible to classify based on key communication elements (sender, message, and
audience responses) (e.g., Stern 1994, Dahlén & Rosengren 2016, Al-Fedaghi 2012). This study utilizes this idea when it defines recruitment advertising as employer brand message communication. This dissertation approaches humor in recruitment advertising through different communication elements and earlier presented perspectives on humor in advertising.

1.2 Purpose of the study and research questions

The purpose of the dissertation is to develop different communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet.

To fulfill this purpose, the first aim of this study is to gain an understanding related to the use of humor in the employer brand message through the conceptualizing of humor in the employer brand message. The second aim of this study is to understanding responses to humor and moderator effects. This is done by investigating the intermediate advertising effects of humor on job seekers in a recruitment advertising context on the Internet, and by exploring the congruence between humor and the fun company climate as a potential moderator. The third aim of this study is to offer an understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to using humor in the recruitment advertising on the Internet.

The main research question is: How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives? The following sub-questions (RQ1-RQ4) are posed to meet the three aims and the purpose of the dissertation. Answering sub-questions builds up an empirically grounded framework on communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising, which in turn answers the main research question.

The first sub-question (RQ1)—How can humor in the employer brand message be conceptualized?—is answered based on the conclusions of Paper I. The first sub-question can be framed as seeking an answer to the “use of humor” perspective on humor in advertising studies (Eisend 2017).

The second sub-question (RQ2)—What kind of intermediate advertising effects does humor have in recruitment advertising on the Internet?—is answered through experimental studies in papers II and III. Paper II focuses on job seekers’ attitudes and intentional responses to humorous Internet recruitment ads, and Paper III replicates these findings. By investigating “responses to humor,” the paper follows the widely investigated perspective on humor in advertising studies (Eisend 2017).

The third sub-question (RQ3)—How does congruence moderate the intermediate effects of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?—is
answered through experimental study and Paper III, which gave a new perspective compared to Paper II by investigating congruence as a potential moderator. By investigating “moderator effects,” the paper follows the widely investigated perspective on humor in advertising studies (Eisend 2017).

The fourth sub-question (RQ4)—What kind of challenges and opportunities are related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet? is answered mainly based on the conclusions of Paper IV related to the social media recruitment campaign level. Papers I, II, and III produce additional findings regarding the recruitment ad level. New insights into the challenges and opportunities for contemporary humor in recruitment advertising in the specific empirical setting of a small company’s Internet communication channel were gathered. Empirical findings were collected on humor in advertising by focusing on different communication elements and perspectives and investigating the phenomenon on the levels of both recruitment ads and recruitment campaign.

The first sub-question focuses on conceptualizing the employer brand message and categorizing the humorous employer brand message in a small company’s Internet recruitment ads. The second and third sub-questions focus on the job seekers’ responses (intermediate advertising effects) to humorous Internet recruitment ads. The third sub-question also focuses on the moderator effects of congruence. The fourth sub-question approaches the phenomenon in the empirical setting of a small company’s Internet communication channel and mainly at the level of the social media recruitment campaign (Paper IV), which offers a broader managerial angle compared to sub-questions RQ1-RQ3, which investigate the phenomenon on the level of recruitment ads. The sub-questions represent different perspectives on humor in advertising studies: the "use of humor” (RQ1, RQ4), “responses to humor” (RQ2, RQ3, RQ4), and “moderator effects” (RQ3) (Eisend 2017). Beyond that, the fourth sub-question focused on the managerial challenges and opportunities of humor in the empirical setting of a small company’s Internet communication. To conclude, new perspectives are given into humor in recruitment advertising by focusing on different communication elements and perspectives.

Research papers with titles, authors, author contributions, paper outlets, and the papers’ connections to sub-questions are presented in Table 1.
Table 1. The research papers of the dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>I</th>
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<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Categorizing humorous employer brand message in a small company's online job ads</td>
<td>The effects of humour in online recruitment advertising</td>
<td>The moderating role of congruence between humor and fun climate of the company on the effects of humor in Internet job ads</td>
<td>Personality or skill: A qualitative study of humorous recruitment advertising campaign on social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Oikarinen E-L &amp; Saraniemi S</td>
<td>Oikarinen E-L &amp; Söderlund M</td>
<td>Oikarinen E-L</td>
<td>Oikarinen E-L &amp; Sinisalo J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author's contribution (evaluation</td>
<td>Responsible author. Oikarinen had the main responsibility for planning, collecting, analyzing data, and writing the manuscript. Co-author gave feedback on different manuscript versions, gave suggestions for key theoretical discussions, participated in the writing process, and assisted in content analysis (~85%).</td>
<td>Responsible author. Oikarinen had the main responsibility for planning, collecting, and analyzing data, and writing the manuscript. Co-author gave feedback on planning &amp; analyzing, and participated in revising the manuscript (~80%).</td>
<td>Single authored. Oikarinen had the main responsibility for planning, collecting, and analyzing data, and writing the manuscript. Planning the experiment part &amp; analysis was given feedback by a senior researcher (100%).</td>
<td>Co-authored equally. (Sinisalo was corresponding author) Oikarinen had responsibility for writing the research paper manuscript after the NFF2015 conference paper version. Oikarinen assisted in planning &amp; collecting empirical data (~50%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQs</td>
<td>RQ1, RQ4</td>
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The intended contribution of this dissertation is develop holistic approach on the phenomenon of humor in advertising in the context of recruitment advertising by focusing on different communication perspectives. The different perspectives on humor in advertising have been focused on the use of humor, responses to humor, and the moderator effects of humor as separate research perspectives (Eisend 2017).

As informed earlier in this chapter, advertising can be defined as a form of brand communication, based on various key communication elements (sender, message, and audience responses) (e.g., Stern 1994, Dahlén & Rosengren 2016, Al-Fedaghi 2012). This study adopts this idea and defines the recruitment advertising context as employer brand message communication. The intended contribution of this dissertation is provide a novel approach to the phenomenon through combining different perspectives on humor in advertising in the context of recruitment advertising. Sub-questions, and their more specific intended contributions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Sub-questions and intended contributions.

| Main research question: How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sub-questions | RQ1: How can humor in the employer brand message be conceptualized? | RQ2: What kind of intermediate effects does humor have in recruitment advertising on the Internet? | RQ3: How does congruence moderate the intermediate effects of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet? | RQ4: What kind of risks of humor in recruitment advertising are related to humor in advertising? |
| Intended contributions | Use of humor in advertising | Responses to humor in advertising | Moderator effects of humor in advertising | Risks of humor in advertising |
| | Employer branding | | |

1.3 Key concepts of the study

Next, the key concepts of the study are presented. Concepts have been discussed and defined in more detail in chapters 2 and 3.
Recruitment advertising is an early recruitment-related marketing activity (Collins & Stevens 2002) and a way for companies to attract the best job seekers (Backhaus 2004). It is defined in this dissertation as employer brand message communication intent on impacting job seekers, which is developed from a recent conceptualization of advertising (Dahlén & Rosengren 2016, Eisend 2016, Huh 2016).

Intermediate advertising effects are attitudes, intention to share, and intention to apply in this study. Two different behavioral intentions were investigated. “Intention to share” is important for the marketing perspective and when operating in the Internet environment. “Intention to apply for a job” is one of the key job seekers’ behavioral outcomes in the attraction phase of employer brand communication (Gomes & Neves 2011, Backhaus & Tikoo 2004).

Humor is an intended or unintended message that can be interpreted as funny by the individual (Lynch 2002). It is a message-appeal element in advertising (Percy & Rossiter 1992), and a distinction can be made between referring to humor either as stimulus (and humor attempt) or psychological response (perceived humor) (Warren & McGraw 2016b). Humor in the recruitment advertising context in this study will be defined as an intended stimulus and a communication style element in the employer brand message (see Paper I).

Congruence is defined as a match between stimulus element (e.g., the product, brand, or execution element in an ad) and one’s existing schema related to that stimulus (Lee & Schumann 2004). In this dissertation, congruence is empirically defined as congruence between humor and a fun company climate in the recruitment advertising context where high and low congruence situations are created through manipulation both in humor and company climate (Paper III).

The Employer brand message concept is developed in this dissertation as a two-dimensional concept including both the employer brand content and the communication style (including humor, informal, and formal styles). Employer brand content is approached through a symbolic-instrumental framework (Lievens & Highhouse 2003). Employer brand content is categorized into (1) symbolic attributes: staff, applicant, and other stakeholders, and (2) instrumental attributes: company and job. The thematic relatedness of the communication style to the employer brand content attributes was investigated to see the use of humor in the employer brand message (Paper I).
– Internet is defined in this dissertation as a digital communication channel for a firm’s own media (e.g., a web page or a Facebook recruitment campaign), where recruitment ads and the recruitment campaign is communicated. The Internet offers a communication channel where employers and job seekers meet each other through job-listing boards and web sites (Cober et al. 2000), and it works as a channel for viral advertising (Porter & Golan 2006).

1.4 Justification of the methodological choices

This section introduces and justifies the methodological choices of dissertation to study humor in recruitment advertising through mixed methods research. It also justifies why empirical evidence is collected in the empirical setting of a small company’s Internet communication channel.

1.4.1 Justification of mixed methods research

From a methodological point of view, studies on humor in advertising are dominated by quantitative and experimental studies (e.g., Eisend 2009, Crawford & Gregory 2015). Crawford and Gregory (2015) have shown the dominance of quantitative research in humorous advertising (in the years 1940-2012), when 59% of all studies have been experiments. A similar situation can be seen in studies devoted to Internet advertising (Cho & Khang 2006). Due the complexity and context-dependent nature of humor, Weinberger and Gulas (1992) have acknowledged that making generalizations related to the effects of humor in advertising is challenging. Thus, it seems that other than purely quantitative methodological approaches are needed.

Consequently, when methodological efforts related to case study approaches or qualitative approaches seem to be scarce in the humor in advertising literature, it will open a methodological research gap, justifying more explorative and multiple research methods to study humor in advertising. Thus, this dissertation investigates phenomenon through mixed methods research. Combining both quantitative and qualitative methods yields more understanding of the underlying research topic than a purely quantitative or qualitative method alone (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 18). The data are collected by suitable methods: an illustrative case study (Paper I), an instrumental case study (Paper IV) (see Stake 2005, Yin 2003) and between-subject experiments (papers II and III) (see Croson 2002). Empirical
findings are combined, and different methods address specific sub-questions (Wahyuni 2012). Methodological choices are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.4.2 Justification of empirical setting: A small company’s Internet communication channel

First, special features related to a small company’s recruitment advertising will be introduced from different perspectives. Second, Internet as a general communication channel facilitating contemporary humor in advertising and as a part of the empirical setting will be described.

Recruitment procedures in small companies are different from those in bigger companies. Small companies have limited possibilities to utilize psychological tests in recruiting. Small companies’ employers recruit a small number of people and favor more informal and more unstructured procedures than bigger companies. They value personality, such as integrity, honesty and interest in the job in young applicants (Bartram et al. 1995). When personality seems to be more valued than skills, it might offer a new potential for recruitment advertising for using humor for the purpose of testing the person-organization value match (Paper IV).

Compared to bigger and more mature companies, small companies face the challenge of attracting talented personnel (Tumasjan et al. 2011), and many of the specific challenges for a small company’s recruitment advertising originate from a lack of marketing budgets (Lassen et al. 2008), which make companies seek unconventional ways to support their branding (Boyle 2003, Dahlén et al. 2009).

One of the key issue for marketers is to understand how to target properly tailored messages to the right people in a social media environment (Wright et al. 2010). From an employee-recruiting perspective, social media has indeed developed a leading channel for recruiting the right people (Cappelli 2001, Laumer et al. 2010, Sivertzen et al. 2013, Tumasjan et al. 2011).

Viral marketing has been described as one of the hottest trends in marketing in this decade (see Ferguson 2008), and humor is acknowledged as one of the most common advertising appeals for viral advertisements (Porter & Golan 2006, Golan & Zaidner 2008). Viral effects can be based on the fact that people want to share emotional content on social media, and quite often the content is funny or humorous. The effectiveness of humor is based on surprising content that is able to evoke interest or able to violate expectations and is thereafter more likely to be shared in social media (Berger & Iyengar 2013). Advertisers have become more concerned
about the viral aspects of ads (Berger & Iyengar 2013, Swanepoel et al. 2009), and thus they are more concerned about the sharing of ads.

When advertisers try to catch the attention of an audience, advertisers try to be even sensationalist to achieve viral effects. Therefore they might risk being too sensationalist, which in turn triggers negative responses from the audience (Eckler & Rodgers 2010, in Eckler & Bolls 2011). Using humor in Internet recruitment advertising might be risky for small companies. First, it might be a threat for a credible company’s reputation (Veil et al. 2012). Second, it might yield a large number of unqualified applicants, which is not good for small companies because they often lack staffed human resources departments (Paper I). Third, the recruitment advertising context can be seen as a sensitive context for potential job seekers. It is possible to assume that issues related to recruitment can activate different thoughts about having a job and question the related fairness of recruitment procedures and the reasons for being unemployed and employed (see Paper II).

1.5 Positioning and exclusions of the study

This dissertation studies the phenomenon of humor in advertising in the context of recruitment advertising. The study is positioned at the intersection of several literatures. Humor in advertising literature is approached from different perspectives (use of humor, responses of humor and moderator effects). This study also takes managerial perspective though investigating challenges and opportunities related to humor in recruitment advertising. The main focus of theories of humor is especially incongruent theories (Warren & McGraw 2016a). The recruitment advertising context is defined through utilizing employer brand message conceptualization and knowledge of the different communication elements (sender, message, and job seekers’ responses) of advertising.

This study focuses on humor in recruitment advertising. Recruitment advertising is approached as a way of attracting the best job seekers (Backhaus 2004), and it belongs to early recruitment-related activities (Collins & Stevens 2002). Thus, this study does not focus on humor in the broader context of the recruitment process in the different phases of planning, attracting job seekers, selection, and decision (e.g., Breaugh & Starke 2000, Ullah 2010, Uggerslev et al. 2012). The attracting job seekers phase consists of publicity, sponsorships, personal word-of-mouth, and endorsements as well as recruitment advertising (Collins & Stevens 2002). Recruitment advertisements have been the focus because they are
the most typical example of a company-dependent recruitment source (Van Hoye & Lievens 2007) and as a specific type of advertising targeted to job seekers.

This study approaches recruitment ads as communicating employer brand messages and having job seekers as the target group. Thus, this study is not focusing on humor in employer branding. Employer branding can be seen as a strategic effort of both retaining existing staff and attracting staff (Moroko & Uncles 2008) and a process of building a unique identity (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004) which emphasizes current employees and prospective employees as target groups. However, this dissertation is focusing on prospective employees—job seekers, which represent the main target group of recruitment advertising. The target group difference clarifies the difference between recruitment advertising and employer branding.

This study is not focusing on or contributing to the corporate branding literature which is grounded around the concept of corporate identity—about the question of what are we, and corporate brand—what is the promise communicated by brand? (Balmer 2001). From the corporate branding perspective, advertising can be seen as being a central way to communicate corporate brands (Balmer & Gray 2003). Branding and advertising are different. Advertising does not discuss the brand identity, but it emphasizes more the external brand communication aspect (e.g., Dahlén & Rosengren 2016, Stewart 2016, Rust 2016, Eisend 2016, Huh 2016).

To further illustrate the distinction between recruitment advertising and employer branding, this dissertation develops the definition for recruitment advertising as “employer brand message communication intent on impacting job seekers” in Chapter 2.

This study focuses on job seekers and excludes consumer role as a receiver of recruitment ads, which might be considered a bit surprising from the consumer advertising perspective. However, the current understanding of advertising acknowledges audiences other than consumers as receivers of ads (Dahlén & Rosengren 2016).

This study has its main theoretical roots in the consumer advertising literature, where the use of humor has been acknowledged in earlier studies as one of the widely studied aspects of advertising appeal (Voss 2009). Earlier, humor in advertising has been generally described as message appeal (Percy & Rossiter 1992). Later, following the emerging Internet advertising era, humor has been acknowledged as one of the most common appeals for viral ads (e.g., Porter & Golan 2006).

There are several exclusions related to how to approach and define humor in this study. First, humor has been approached as an advertising message appeal
element (see Percy & Rossiter 1992), and as a humor attempt and stimulus (Warren & McGraw 2016b). Thus, humor is not investigated as a social phenomenon, which in turn considers humor as an amusing communication which is shared between people in social settings (Mesmer-Magnus et al. 2012). From a communication studies perspective, this study is classified regarding its humor aspect as (a) individual-level psychological and motivational related studies, and it excludes (b) societal-level studies, where the function and impact of humor are investigated in the broader social settings in society (see Lynch 2002). More specifically, the study adopts mainly the incongruent theory of humor, which has been considered the most popular and appealing humor theory in psychology, the social sciences, and business research (Warren & McGraw 2016a), and under that, different humor types can be classified. An additional exclusion is that this study is not discussing or measuring a sense of humor, which can be differentiated from humor and which is possible to consider and measure as a personality trait (Ruch 1996).

Finally, as the phenomenon of humor in advertising is investigated in the empirical setting of a small company’s Internet communication channel, the dissertation offers through case studies (papers I, IV) specific context-dependent empirical case evidence.

1.6 Outline of the dissertation

Overall, the dissertation is based on three published journal articles and one published book chapter to provide more understanding and new insights related to the phenomenon of humor in advertising in the context of recruitment advertising. The dissertation consists of two parts. The aim of the first part (Part I) is to make a synthesis based on four individual research papers and as a result create a framework on humor in recruitment advertising. Separate research papers are linked to sub-questions, which illuminate different communication elements and perspectives: investigating the use of humor in the employer brand message, the job seekers’ responses to humor, moderator (congruence in this study) effects, and the managerial challenges and opportunities related to humor. Mixed methods research is able to provide a coherent research approach on the emerging topic. Four original research papers are presented in the second part (Part II).
2 Recruitment advertising context

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the context of this study – recruitment advertising. Earlier definitions on recruitment advertising do not follow the recent definition of advertising, which acknowledges brand communication and audience aspects (see Dahlén & Rosengren 2016). Advertising researchers have also put very little interest in recruitment advertising in general (one exception is Feldman et al. 2006). Due to the lack of interest among advertising scholars to recruitment advertising, this study takes the employer branding perspective on recruitment ads regarding the employer brand message aspect and further develops definition for recruitment advertising.

2.1 Approach to recruitment advertising

This dissertation follows the definition of Backhaus (2004) of recruitment advertising as a way for companies to attract the best job seekers (Backhaus 2004). Recruitment advertising belongs to the early recruitment-related (marketing) activities such as sponsorship, word-of-mouth, publicity, and endorsements (Collins & Stevens 2002). For example, it has been concluded that recruitment advertising can be defined as “any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of an organization as an employer by the organization itself” (Van Hoye & Lievens 2007: 373).

2.1.1 Attracting the best job seekers

Foster et al. (2010) have reviewed the earlier employer branding literature and inform that a wide range of limited employer branding literature has focused on the communication aspect of person-organization value-matching during recruitment (Davies 2008, Knox & Freeman 2006, Mosley 2007). Messages of employer brands are differentiated by companies to attract those applicants whose values match the organization’s image (Backhaus 2004). The concepts of person-organization fit (P-O fit) and employer brand message represent two different communication perspectives of employer branding that have been discussed in this dissertation.

P-O fit is widely accepted and conceptualized as the value congruence between organization and people (Morley 2007, Kristof-Brown et al. 2005). It is said that a high P-O fit has several positive consequences. For example, Arthur et al. (2006) suggest that a high P-O fit can give more possibilities to individuals interacting
with others in the organization who are similar to them, which in turn can result in long-term positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In this dissertation, P-O fit will be discussed between potential job seekers and the organization, with the perspective being on the perceptions of potential job seekers. Thus, P-O fit is working as an audience (job seekers’) response.

According to Nolan et al. (2013), symbolic attributes are able to form perceptions of P-O fit and instrumental information can form person-job fit perceptions. When an applicant is able to make a more informed assessment of the person-organization fit before recruiting, it will cause short-term and long-term advantages for the organization. The short-term advantage is the exclusion of those applicants who do not feel they fit the organization, and the long-term advantage is having people who fit the organization’s culture and are able to become long-term and productive employees (Cober et al. 2000). It is a relevant issue to be discussed in this dissertation whether humor might work as an issue that helps job seekers to evaluate their P-O fit (Paper IV). Table 3 concludes with definitions of the key concepts related to employer branding that are used in this dissertation.

2.1.2 Employer brand message

In earlier studies, the concept “employer brand message” has been rarely used so far, and those studies have used the employer brand message concept differently (e.g., Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, Sutherland et al. 2002, Wilden et al. 2010). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) discuss how employer brand messages need to contain sufficient, accurate, and realistic information on how they have potential for conveying relevant pre-employment information. Similarly, Wilden et al. (2010) propose that brand clarity is also able to increase the credibility of the employer’s brand message, or the “employer brand signal”, as they describe it. Based on Sutherland et al. (2002), employer brand messages can be tailored through certain attributes to be appealing to the target audience. Different attributes in employer brand messages can be appealing to different cultural groups. However, the most desired attributes among the broad target group has been identified as being traditional, such as career growth and challenging work opportunities.
Instrumental and symbolic attributes of the employer brand message

The widely cited work of Keller (1993) has categorized symbolic, functional, and experiential as being of the benefits-type of brand associations in addition to the product or non-product related attributes and attitudes. Symbolic and functional properties of brands have been further discussed in marketing in empirical studies (e.g., Bhat & Reddy 1998, Mowle & Merrilees 2005). Mowle and Merrilees (2005) say that brands can have both symbolic and functional appeals, and they recommend developing symbolic values that are associated with brands.

This framework on the functional and symbolic attributes of brands (Bhat & Reddy 1998, Mowle & Merrilees 2005) has been applied to recruiting as a widely known instrumental-symbolic framework (Lievens & Highhouse 2003, Nolan et al. 2013). Presenting the employer branding perspective, Lievens and Slaughter (2016) use the term elementalistic framework, where the employer image can be categorized into instrumental and symbolic attributes, and job seekers associate an organization as a working place.

Instrumental attributes are related to a job seeker associating tangible attributes with utilitarian value (e.g., pay, location, advancement opportunities) (Lievens & Slaughter 2016). Instrumental attributes are also considered to be “facts” that are objectively seen and may be held by jobs and organizations (e.g., task requirements, location, and pay) (Lievens & Highhouse 2003, Nolan et al. 2013).

Symbolic attributes, on the other hand, are considered to be intangible and symbolic-value and personality traits of job seekers which have associations related to the employer (Lievens & Highhouse 2003, Nolan et al. 2013). One way to define symbolic attributes is to use the concept of Slaughter et al. (2004: 86) that the organization personality is a “set of human personality characteristics perceived to be associated with an organization.” Overall, the elementalistic approach is different from the holistic perspective, where the focus is on organizational attractiveness.

In this dissertation, the elementalistic framework is utilized when conceptualizing the employer brand message (Paper I). In this dissertation, job seekers’ attitudes toward a company were investigated (papers II and III) and general positive or negative evaluations related to the employer were investigated as well (Paper IV).
Recruitment ads communicating employer brand messages

In this study, it is stated that recruitment ads communicate employer brand messages. Companies use recruitment ads for two purposes: to attract job applicants to apply and to screen out those applicants with inadequate abilities, knowledge, or skills for the job (Gatewood & Field 1998, in Feldman et al. 2006).

Consumer ads have traditionally used creative marketing elements (such as humor), and recruitment advertisements have the opportunity to adopt creative features from consumer ads (Ryan et al. 2000). However, recruitment ads seem to lack different employer branding elements, including humor, which would be helpful for differentiating companies (Elving et al. 2013). Consequently, there is need for defining more closely employer brand message, as employer branding in recruitment advertisements is scarcely investigated (Backhaus 2004, Elving et al. 2013, and Nolan et al. 2013).

Indeed, research on humor in recruitment advertising is very limited. One exception is a notion of Ryan et al. (2000) related to the existence of thought-provoking or humorous headlines in printed recruitment ads. Kulik and Ambrose (1993) have suggested that messages which convey unexpected information are attractive. Thus, incongruent or humorous content based on unexpected information could create effective messages in recruitment ads.

Different sources have potential ways of affecting job seekers’ knowledge about the employer. Company producers, interviews, and recruitment ads present recruitment-specific sources (Cable & Turban 2001). Furthermore, sources can be categorized as organizational and non-organizational sources, and job advertisements (a more specific form of recruitment ads, which were investigated in this dissertation), web pages, and recruiter can be seen as organizational sources (Lievens & Slaughter 2016).
Table 3. Key concepts related to employer branding in this dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer brand message</td>
<td>Provider of relevant pre-employment information (Backhaus &amp; Tikoo, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand’s clarity is also able to increase credibility of the employer’s brand message or “employer brand signal” (Wilden et al., 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employer brand messages can be tailored through specific attributes to be appealing to the target audience (Sutherland et al., 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementalistic framework</td>
<td>The employer image can be categorized as instrumental and symbolic attributes, and the job seeker has associations towards an organization as a working place (Lievens &amp; Slaughter, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental attributes</td>
<td>Instrumental attributes are considered “facts,” such attributes that are objectively seen and which jobs and organizations may hold (e.g., task requirements, location, and pay) (Lievens &amp; Highhouse, 2003, Nolan et al., 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic attributes</td>
<td>Symbolic attributes are considered as intangible and symbolic, value and personality traits which have associations related to the employer (Lievens &amp; Highhouse, 2003, Nolan et al., 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-organization fit</td>
<td>A value congruence between organization and people (Morley, 2007, Kristof-Brown et al., 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment advertisement</td>
<td>A recruitment-specific source (Cable &amp; Turban, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The most typical example of company-dependent recruitment source (Van Hoye &amp; Lievens, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment advertisements communicates employer brand messages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Towards definition of recruitment advertising

This sub-chapter presents some of the key definitions on Internet advertising literature and advertising when developing definition of recruitment advertising. As the empirical setting of this dissertation is a small company’s Internet communication channel, introducing some of the key definitions of Internet advertising is justified.
2.2.1 Advertising goes onto the Internet

Advertising on the web was understood as creating great potential already in the 1990s (see Ducoffe 1996) and the need to understand and define the nature of interactive advertising emerged in the 2000s (e.g., Rodgers & Thorson 2000). For example Leckenby and Hairong (2000) defined interactive advertising as “the paid and unpaid presentation and promotion of products, services and ideas by an identified sponsor through mediated means involving mutual action between consumers and producers.”

In the 2000s, Internet-related advertising and the online advertising literature became more popular topics among advertising researchers, and several literature reviews reflected these emerging research interests (e.g., Cho & Khang 2006, Ha 2008). Advertising researchers were interested in studying effectiveness of advertising, perceptions and attitudes related to Internet usage and about Website perceptions and design of Websites among other topics. Thus, many of the Internet advertising research topics seemed to follow traditional advertising research topics (Edwards & La Ferle 2003, in Cho & Khang 2006).

Ha (2008) defines online advertising as “deliberate messages placed on third-party websites including search engines and directories available through Internet access.” Ha (2008) wants to simplify the key difference between interactive advertising and online advertising – interactivity is not needed in online advertising. This definition implies that online advertising was narrower and more practically oriented compared to interactive advertising.

One of the hot areas of online advertising tactics have been viral advertising (Porter & Golan 2006, Golan & Zaidner 2008). According to Porter and Golan’s (2006) definition, “Viral advertising is unpaid peer-to-peer communication of provocative content originating from an identified sponsor using the Internet to persuade or influence an audience to pass along the content to others.”

Next, contemporary definitions of advertising will be discussed shortly, and a contemporary definition of recruitment advertising will be described.

2.2.2 Definition of advertising

Advertising has made huge steps recently, and scholars are eager to strengthen the field. Dahlén and Rosengren (2016) have started a lively debate around the question of defining advertising (e.g., Stewart 2016, Rust 2016, Eisend 2016, Huh 2016). Dahlén and Rosengren (2016) identified three driving forces related to the need for
new definition of advertising: the extended effects of advertising, new forms of consumer behavior, and new media and formats. They end up by updating advertising as “brand-initiated communication intent on impacting people.”

Dahlén and Rosengren’s (2016) recent article discusses the changes in advertising such as digital and hybrid forms of advertising, and also the changed consumer. Consumers have more control towards advertising than before, and by not just being a passive receiver of ads, they can seek out, block, or co-create advertising. Dahlén and Rosengren (2016) talk about stakeholders as a broader target group of advertising rather than consumers. Regarding the extended effects of advertising, Dahlén and Rosengren (2016) find focusing only on persuasion intention of advertising at the individual level as too restrictive. They believe that dynamics of economic effects and especially social effects have the potential to develop more relevant topics to be studied in the future.

Many scholars responded encouragingly yet critically to the new definition (Stewart 2016, Rust 2016, Huh 2016, Eisend 2016). For example, Eisend (2016) is critical towards the “brand-initiated” part of the definition. Eisend sees advertising rather as communication that is “inspired by the brand but not initiated by it,” and he regards “brand-related communication” as describing advertising in a more potential way. Eisend (2016) clarifies how “communication in advertising always intends to trigger a specific effect, namely a brand-related reaction that is supposed to benefit the brand.”

In Table 4, the conceptualizations of viral advertising and advertising are presented based on communication elements: sender, message, intent of communication, audience, and audience responses. Viral advertising is the most relevant form of Internet advertising in this study as provocative content can be also humorous and as the audience is willing to pass along the content to others, which makes spreading of the message fast.
Table 4. Definitions of viral advertising and advertising presented through communication elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sender</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Intent of communication</th>
<th>Audience responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Porter and Golan (2006)</td>
<td>“Viral advertising is unpaid peer-to-peer communication of provocative content originating from an identified sponsor using the Internet to persuade or influence an audience to pass along the content to others.”</td>
<td>Identified sponsor</td>
<td>Peer-to-peer communication (provocative content)</td>
<td>To persuade or influence</td>
<td>To pass along the content to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahlén &amp; Rosengren (2016)</td>
<td>Brand-initiated communication intent on impacting people</td>
<td>Brand-initiated message</td>
<td>Brand-initiated message impacting</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.3 Definition of recruitment advertising

Table 4 indicates how the contemporary advertising definition can be classified into different communication elements: sender, message, intent of communication, audience and audience responses. This will give a broader framework for defining recruitment advertising.

As presented earlier, advertising is defined broadly by Dahlén and Rosengren (2016) as “brand-initiated communication intent on impacting people.” Based on their definition and being aware of the criticism towards “brand-initiated communication” in it (e.g., Eisend 2016, Huh 2016), in this study “employer brand-related” is used as a starting point for a definition of recruitment advertising.

In this dissertation, the focus of recruitment advertising is on “employer brand message communication,” where a small company’s Internet communication channel is an empirical setting. Furthermore, as target audience of recruitment advertising are job seekers, they are included in the definition.

Finally, in addition to attitude variables (Ajzen 1991), two different behavioral intentions were chosen to be studied as audience responses (job seekers’ responses). First, “Intention to share” is important from a marketing perspective and when operating in the Internet environment. Second, “Intention to apply for a job” is one
of the key job seekers’ behavioral outcomes in the attraction phase of employer brand communication (Gomes & Neves 2011, Backhaus & Tikoo 2004).

Based on above, the definition of recruitment advertising in this dissertation is ”employer brand message communication intent on impacting job seekers.” In Table 5, this definition is mirrored towards key communication elements discussed in this dissertation.

Table 5. Definition of recruitment advertising in the light of different communication elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Intent of communication</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Audience responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer brand message communication intent on impacting job seekers</td>
<td>Employer brand message</td>
<td>Intent on impacting job seeker</td>
<td>E.g., attitudes, intentions to apply, intentions to share person-organization fit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Humor in advertising

This chapter will present a theoretical understanding of what humor is and classifications and different ways of approaching humor in advertising as discussed especially in this dissertation.

3.1 Multidisciplinary nature of humor

Research on humor is multidisciplinary in nature (Veatch 1998). The modern approach to humor in sociology, psychology, and linguistics evolved in the 1970s, and this has been followed by broadening and expansion phase in the late 1980s (Ritchie 2015). One part of this evolving and expanding trend was an emerging interest in humor among business researchers. Business researchers got inspired to study humor at the organizational level, in management, business communication, and marketing, and especially in advertising (Romero & Pescosolido 2008, Duncan 1982, Vuorela 2005, Weinberger & Gulas 1992).

There are several reasons why humor creates a challenging starting point for advertising researchers. First, humor is a context-dependent phenomenon. It is a \textit{time- and place-specific} issue (Gulas & Weinberger 2006). Second, humor is universal; it can be found in every country (Gulas & Weinberger 2006: 54). However, humor has \textit{culture-specific} features, which has been demonstrated in cross-cultural advertising studies (e.g., Biswas \textit{et al.} 1992, Laroche \textit{et al.} 2014). Third, consumers are different in how they perceive and understand the use of humor: personal temperament, gender, and age potentially have an influence on how jokes and humor are understood (Hasset & Houlihan 1979, Ruch \textit{et al.} 1990, Martin \textit{et al.} 2003) or used in daily lives (Heintz 2017).

Approaches to humor have been conducted differently in different research fields. In the marketing context, studies on humor have been focused mainly on advertising (e.g., Duncan 1979, Madden & Weinberger 1984, Eisend 2009) or on service encounters (e.g., Bergeron & Vachon 2008, Mathies \textit{et al.} 2016, Söderlund \textit{et al.} 2017, Söderlund & Oikarinen 2018). Although both are marketing contexts, these are very different when it comes to the forms of humorous communication. For example, differences exist in whether humor is approached as an advertising \textit{message appeal} element (see Percy & Rossiter 1992) or whether humor is seen as a social phenomenon and something which is communicated as a \textit{social setting}.

To give an example, a somewhat traditional approach among organization studies and management is that humor can be approached as an amusing
communication which is shared between people in social settings (Mesmer-Magnus et al. 2012). Based on the Martin et al. (2003) model on everyday humor, the focus of humor can be categorized as two-dimensional. The first dimension is that humor can be used as enchanting the self (intra-psychic) or one’s relationship as social (interpersonal). The second dimension is related to whether the nature of humor is positive or negative (see Mesmer-Magnus et al. 2012). This classification creates the well-known typology of different humor types (self-enhancing/coping, affiliative humor as positive types, self-defeating and aggressive humor types as negative types).

3.2 Different conceptualizations of humor in advertising

Humor in advertising in past advertising studies is defined as message appeal (see Percy & Rossiter 1992). However, in advertising, a distinction can be made between referring to a humor stimulus (and humor attempt) or a psychological response (perceived humor) (Warren & McGraw 2016b). This dissertation follows the traditional way of approaching humorous advertising as one-way communication where the company is the initiator of the humorous advertising message and the job seeker perceives the messages.

The broader understanding of humor in this dissertation is that it is “fundamentally a communicative activity,” which can be regarded as an intended or unintended message that is interpreted as being funny (Lynch 2002). Beard (2008) also discusses intentional humor as an advertiser’s intentional effort to be humorous.

Lynch (2002) divides research in humor from a communication studies perspective into two categories: (a) individual-level psychological and motivational related studies and (b) societal-level studies where the function and impact of humor are investigated in the broader social settings in society. Furthermore, this dissertation utilizes three widely accepted theories of humor, which Lynch (2002) calls as psychological motivational theories of humor. Next, these three most widely accepted humor theories in individual-oriented psychological and motivational-related studies are presented: relief, superiority, and incongruity.

3.2.1 Relief, superiority, and incongruity theories of humor

Over the years, three widely accepted theories of humor have been developed and accepted by scholars: relief, superiority, and incongruity theories (Meyer 2000,
Romero & Pescodolido 2008, Morreall 2014). Slightly different labels have been used by researchers, for example labeling incongruity theory as cognitive-perceptual (Gulas & Weinberger 2006, Vuorela 2005, Graham 1995). Terms such as affective (instead of relief), interpersonal (instead of superiority), and cognitive (instead of incongruity) (Wicker et al. 1980, in Spotts et al. 1997, McGhee 1974) have also been used to describe the nature of the theoretical background, approaching humor as an emotional, social, or cognitive process.

The roots of humor theories are old and can be attributed to early philosophers. In the early 1900s, Sigmund Freud discussed in his pioneering work on tension and aggression properties related to humor (Collinson 2002, Ritchie 2015). Superiority theories, also known as hostility theories, can be attributed to Aristotle and Hobbes. Incongruity theories have been discussed by Kant, Schopenhauer, and Bergson (Collinson 2002). Next, the main theories of humor are introduced more specifically through current understanding created by business scholars and especially advertising scholars, thus leaving behind the historical roots of the developments in theories of humor as such.

First, Relief theories of humor all have in common some kind of physiological arousal-release reaction to humor (Gulas & Weinberger 2006), and these are closely linked to Freud’s relief theory (Spotts et al. 1997). Arousal theories seem to be closely related to relief theories (see Wyer & Collins 1992). Speck (1990) describes arousal-safety (affective) as a “tension arousal released with a positive ‘feel good’ resolution.”

Second, Superiority theories of humor can be seen as the oldest and most widespread theory of humor, with roots traced back to the philosophers Aristotle and Hobbes (see Collinson 2002). The basic idea behind the superior theory is that in all humorous situations, there are presence of a winner and a loser (Gulas & Weinberger 2006). The term is closely related to disparagement. Speck (1990) defines disparagement as a “(social) interpersonal attack often couched in playfulness.”

Third, Incongruity theories (cognitive theories) focus on the incongruity (I) and incongruity resolution (IR) types of humor (Gulas & Weinberger 2006). The incongruent theory of humor has been considered as the most popular and appealing humor theory in psychology, social sciences, and business research (Warren & McGraw 2016a). Although incongruity theories are a very popular way to approach humor, there have been a wide range of definitions related to incongruity among scholars in different fields. Warren and McGraw (2016a) identify four ways of defining incongruity by researchers: surprise, which is
something unexpected”; juxtaposition, which means “The simultaneous perception of incompatible elements of perceptions”; atypicality, which is “something different than what is normally expected”; and a violation, which is “something that threatens your sense of how things should be.”

A similar kind of variety related to definitions of incongruity has been acknowledged by advertising researchers as well. The widely accepted categorization of Speck (1990) among advertising researchers defines incongruity (cognitive): “involves juxtaposition of discrepancies that require an ability to reconcile.” The universal and generally accepted approach to humor relies on the idea of incongruity theory, where humor is defined as the perception of a funny thing representing an immediate effect of humor, and emerging as a result of something that deviates from expectation (Alden & Hoyer 1993, Alden et al. 1993, Ritchie 2005). Theories of incongruity inform that surprise or inconsistency alone might be enough to achieve humor. However, incongruity-resolution demands processing and resolving discrepant information to drive humor (Spotts et al. 1997). Woltman Elpers et al. (2004) have shown that the dynamic nature of transformation of surprise into humor is related to incongruity-resolution theories of humor.

The introduced three main humor theories are not considered as separate theories and are not able to explain all functions of humor. As a result, new theories have been developed. As an example of developed views on incongruity theories, Warren and McGraw (2016a) noticed that the main three theories are not able to explain perceptions of humor with negative feelings, and they developed a benign violation theory that makes an effort to explain that (McGraw & Warren 2010, Warren & McGraw 2016a). Next, examples of different humor typologies will be presented; a few of these have been chosen and adopted in this dissertation.

3.2.2 Different humor taxonomies and types

Advertising researchers have made many attempts to create typologies of humor, (e.g., Catanescu & Tom 2001, Spotts et al. 1997, Weinberger & Spotts 1989).

Speck’s (1990) taxonomy is a widely known classification of humor in ads. In that taxonomy, humor types are formed as a combination of the earlier mentioned three main humor theory processes, which results in five humor types (comic wit, sentimental humor, satire, sentimental wit, and full comedy). This taxonomy also suggests humor relatedness: structural, semantic, and intentional characteristics, which is a challenging taxonomy and have been often partially utilized by scholars (see Spotts et al. 1997).
There is diversity among scholars related to humor classifications. Reick’s practitioner-oriented system classifies humor into five types: exaggeration, pun, put-down, silliness, and surprise (see Catanescu & Tom 2001). In earlier advertising studies, Kelly and Solomon (1975) for example have categorized humorous advertisements into puns, understatements, jokes, something ludicrous, satire, irony, and intent. Researchers have explored a wide spectrum of humor classifications in different contexts, which offered the freedom to choose different humor types, which are described next and will be explored in experiments in this dissertation.

The incongruent-resolution humor type has been widely used among advertisers (Alden et al. 1993). Under this humor category, it is possible to make more specific classifications. One example is the personification type of humor, which is defined as attributing human characters to objects that are non-living objects, animals, and plants (Catanescu & Tom 2001). This represents the human tendency to anthropomorphize inanimate objects by animating or humanizing products or brands, for example (Fournier 1998).

In the case of nonsense humor, incongruity is resolvable only partially or not at all. Incongruity can also result in another incongruity (Ruch et al. 1990). Advertisers have regarded nonsense as a favorable humor type in the past (Gulas & Weinberger 2006: 99–101, Madden & Weinberger 1982). Another concept close to nonsense is silliness, which Catanescu and Tom (2001) describe as a visual form of humor “making funny faces to ludicrous situations.”

Irony is based on the discrepancy between what is said and what is meant (Kelly & Solomon 1975, Stern 1990). Individuals might experience pleasure and feel special after solving an ironic puzzle (Stern 1990), yet everyone may not agree with the intended meaning of irony (Ritchie 2005), and accordingly those are not responding with pleasure. Irony is frequently used among advertisers (Kelly & Solomon 1975, Stern 1990), and it has been identified as being a relevant humor type in a Finnish company’s sales meeting (Vuorela 2005).

3.2.3 Congruence, incongruence, and humor

Congruence is possible to define in many ways in the advertising literature: fit, link, or “match-up effect” are concepts closely related to congruence (Fleck et al. 2012). For example, congruence can be defined as a match between a stimulus (e.g., a product, brand, or execution element in an ad) and the individual existing schema towards that stimulus (Lee & Schumann 2004). It is also possible to define thematic
congruence, which Janssens et al. (2012) have defined as being between the media context and the ad. “Schema” is “a kind of mental representation of a class of people, events, situations, or objects” (Fiske & Taylor 1991 in Törn 2009: 9). For example, consumers can form schemas for brands, and they need to use cognitive effort to be able to fit the information with the earlier schema. In that case, when information deviates from the schema, it results in incongruity (Törn 2009: 9).

Incongruent information is able to catch more attention compared to congruent information (Lee & Schumann 2004), and studies on humorous advertising similarly reveal that (incongruent) humor has a high ability to get attention (Eisend 2009, Kim & Kim 2015). Furthermore, some researchers favor the positive effects of incongruent brand communications in the special case of familiar brands (Dahlén et al. 2005, Lange & Dahlén 2003, Törn 2009: 9, Törn 2012). Generally speaking, earlier studies on congruency in advertising say that more congruent messages create more positive responses compared to incongruent messages (Kamins 1990, Kamins & Gupta 1994).

However, in advertising, the extent to which humor is “congruent” with something else in advertising can also be referred to as “relatedness” (Cline & Kellaris 2007). For example, thematic relatedness (one element of humor-relatedness) is based on Spotts et al.'s (1997) definition as the relation between message content and humor, and when humor is possibly unrelated or related thematically to an advertised product. In this dissertation, congruence is defined as the congruence between humor and fun company climate in recruitment advertising context.

3.3 Different literature streams of humor in advertising

Based on Eisend (2017), earlier research on humor in advertising can be categorized broadly as studies focusing different perspectives on humor in advertising: use of humor, responses to humor, and moderator effects of humor. In addition to these perspectives, this chapter pays attention to risks of humor in advertising, as a relevant managerial perspective.

3.3.1 Key studies developing humor in advertising research

There have been many pioneers in the field of humorous advertising who have written influential articles in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s (Sternhal & Craig 1973, Madden & Weinberger 1984, Weinberger & Gulas 1992). Sternhal and Craig’s
(1973) seminal article emphasized the risks of using humor and questioned humor’s persuasive effect by suggesting that humor is distracting and negatively influences comprehension. As positive effects, they acknowledged that humor is effective in creating attraction and liking, and humor was believed to have positive effects on source credibility. The perspective of Sternhal and Craig (1973) can be considered as representing on the responses to humor stream of literature.

Madden and Weinberger (1984) continued Sternhal and Craig’s (1973) work by collecting evidence from advertising practitioners. They concluded that humor’s most positive effects were creating awareness and attention, and they were able to find out many mixed results about the effectiveness of humor. In addition to giving suggestions on whether or not humor is effective related to individual output variables, they also suggested when humor should be used and to whom humor should be aimed at. Madden and Weinberger (1984) gave practical suggestions about media, product, and audience, which seems to be still current in ongoing debates. However, the knowledge was based on the practitioners’ views on the topic, and empirically strong evidence for the suggestions seemed to be lacking. The perspective of Madden and Weinberger (1984) can be considered as representing on the use of humor for practical meaning.

Weinberger and Gulas’s (1992) review of the impact of humor in advertising shed new light on the research area. They were able to produce a framework where they described the key elements that affect the effects of humor from a strategic point of view. These key elements are: background factors (the nature of the product and the audience), the advertiser’s goal as an intended impact, the message and placement, and all of these impacts on key output variables (e.g., attention, comprehension, persuasion, source credibility, etc.). This model seems to strongly follow the stimulus-response way of thinking typical for that period (Percy & Rossiter 1992). Their work offered a lens for future researchers to approach humor from the perspective of responses to humor and gave a preliminary insight about how to study the use of humor. They applied new knowledge about humor types and message categorizations created by Speck (1990) and identified audience-related moderator effects at least on some level. What was important, in addition to putting the different pieces together, was acknowledging the extreme complexity behind the phenomenon and discussing difficulties that researchers might have. Weinberger and Gulas (1992) concluded that in some situations humor works and in some others it does not work, which implies the context-dependent nature of humor studies.
Recent meta-analyses of Eisend (2009, 2011) have significantly helped the development of the research area in trying to find more consensus based on earlier findings and proposing further research areas. Eisend (2009) is able to show that earlier findings do not prove the effects of humor on negative or positive cognition, *nor does liking the advertiser*. Humor has *positive effects on affect, attitude toward brand as well as purchase intention*. As a meaningful negative consequence, Eisend (2009) concluded that *humor lowers source credibility*, which earlier scholars (e.g., Sternhal & Craig 1973) considered having the opposite effect. Also Weinberger and Gulas (1992) identified earlier studies as being controversial related to the effects of humor on source credibility. This also raises questions for employers when they communicate their employer brand messages in recruitment ads.

### 3.3.2 Different perspectives on humor in advertising

As mentioned earlier, advertising researchers have made many attempts to create typologies of humor, and there have been many different ways to classify different humor types (e.g., Catanescu & Tom 2001, Spotts et al. 1997, Weinberger & Spotts 1989). The more detailed taxonomy introduced earlier is Speck’s (1990) taxonomy, which is a widely known classification of humor in ads. These studies represent the use of humor perspective in advertising research. Investigations are usually focusing on message content of the ads and based on content analysis and cross-cultural advertising studies have been conducted (Laroche et al. 2014, Hatzithomas et al. 2009).

Despite the controversial findings, earlier research related to *responses to humor* have been able to report consistently that humor has a positive effect on *attention to the ad* (Duncan 1979, Eisend 2009, Madden & Weinberger 1984, Weinberger & Gulas 1992). They have also been able to show coherent findings on how humor creates more positive *attitudes towards the advertiser* (Eisend 2009, Sternhal & Craig 1973, Weinberger & Gulas 1992). Similar positive findings have also been reported to be related to *attitudes towards the ad* (e.g., Eisend 2009, Weinberger & Gulas 1992).

Gulas and Weinberger (2006) have listed many factors that have been investigated in the literature of *moderator effects* between humor and the outcomes: product type, context, media, and the individual and social audience. Next, examples of these studies will be given.

Humor has been more frequently used by advertisers for low-involvement products than for high-involvement products (Weinberger & Campbell 1990). The
advertised product influences the effectiveness of humor. According to earlier studies, humor is more effective in ads in low-involvement products, resulting in positive effects on attitudes toward the ad and on memory (Chung & Zhao 2003, Weinberger & Gulas 1992). Thus, it is likely that in high-involvement setting the effectiveness of humor will be reduced (Fugate 1998) and more arguments are needed. Job-seeking can be considered as high-involvement and a relevant situation for the job seeker, which might be one reason why humor might backfire in a recruitment advertising context.

Individuals differ in the kind of jokes they appreciate, and men and women laugh at different jokes while liking most jokes that are sexual, ethnic, hostile, based on puns, or absurd (Hassett & Houlihan 1979). Humor might work best on well-educated and younger males (Madden & Weinberger 1984). Moreover, some studies claim that females are more easily offended by humor compared to males (Beard 2008, Fugate et al. 2000). Audience involvement has a moderating role on the effects of humor; and especially in the case of no humorous products, humor created more favorable attitudes among a low-involvement audience than among a high-involvement audience (Zhang & Zinkhan 2006). Another individual characteristic of the consumer has also been described as moderating the effects of humor in advertising, such as product involvement (Chung & Zhao 2003, Weinberger & Gulas 1992) or prior brand evaluations (Chattopadhyay & Basu 1990), cultural orientation (Lee & Lim 2008) and sensation seeking (Galloway 2009). Moreover, need for cognition, NFC (Kim & Kim 2015, Zhang 1996, Chan 2011) and need for humor, NFH (Cline et al. 2003) have been identified as moderators.

The current trend in the last decades related to humor usage is that humor has become a more common practice in advertising, and the humor style has changed to be more aggressive and sexual in nature following sociocultural changes (Weinberger et al. 2015). It might be that today advertisers are willing to take more risks even if humor can be perceived negatively by the audience. Individuals’ preferences towards humor might have changed too. This is why the studies that have investigated risks can be seen as its own stream of literature, and this has been one perspective in this dissertation. Previous studies have identified some risks related to certain products regarding their suitability for advertising with humor. Humor might not be effective for example in a situation where service products are highly relevant personally (financial counseling, health care, or child care). For products with a high technology image, humor may not work well (Fugate 1998).
Consumers may also find it inappropriate to use humor in professional services (Fugate et al. 2000).

Table 6 describes the chosen articles, which illuminate different perspectives on humor in advertising.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspectives on humor in advertising</th>
<th>Key concept of study</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Key result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
<td>Attention to ad</td>
<td>Duncan (1979)</td>
<td>Humor has positive effect on attention to ad.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Madden &amp; Weinberger (1984)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weinberger &amp; Gulas (1992)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eisend (2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
<td>Attitude to advertiser</td>
<td>Weinberger &amp; Gulas (1992)</td>
<td>Humor has positive effect on attitude to advertiser.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eisend (2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sternhal &amp; Craig (1973)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
<td>Attitude to ad</td>
<td>Weinberger &amp; Gulas (1992)</td>
<td>Humor has positive effect on attitude to advertiser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eisend (2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
<td>Attitude to brand</td>
<td>Eisend (2009)</td>
<td>Humor has positive effect on brand attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>Eisend (2009)</td>
<td>Humor has positive effect on purchase intention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>Eisend (2009)</td>
<td>Humor has positive effect on affect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to humor/Risks of humor</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Sternhal &amp; Craig (1973)</td>
<td>Humor is distracting and negatively influences comprehension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to humor/Risks of humor</td>
<td>(Source) credibility</td>
<td>Eisend (2009)</td>
<td>Humor lowers credibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives on humor in advertising</td>
<td>Key concept of study</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Key result</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of humor Humorous message taxonomy</td>
<td>Speck (1990)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Humor types (comic wit, sentimental humor, satire, sentimental wit, and full comedy). Humor relatedness: structural, semantic, and intentional characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of humor Product</td>
<td>Madden &amp; Weinberger (1984)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Consumer nondurables are preferred over corporate advertising.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of humor Product involvement</td>
<td>Weinberger &amp; Campbell (1990)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Humor is used more frequently in low-involvement products.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of humor Audience</td>
<td>Madden &amp; Weinberger (1984)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Younger, more educated and male is preferred audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of humor Media</td>
<td>Madden &amp; Weinberger (1984)</td>
<td></td>
<td>TV and radio are preferred over print ads.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderator (media)</td>
<td>Eisend (2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Real ads have a stronger effect than fictive ads. Broadcast media is stronger than print media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator (product involvement)</td>
<td>Chung &amp; Zhao (2003)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Product involvement is moderating the effects of humor on memory and attitudes and humor seems to be more effective in the case of low-involvement products.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderator (product)</td>
<td>Weinberger &amp; Gulas (1992)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Humorous executions are more effective for low-involvement products.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderator (audience)</td>
<td>Zhang &amp; Zinkhan (2006)</td>
<td></td>
<td>In the case of no humorous products, humor created more favorable attitudes among low-involvement audience than high-involvement audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator (Context)</td>
<td>Fugate (1998)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Humor effects are likely to be reduced in a high-involvement setting.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3.3.3 Humor in recruitment advertising

Due to the lack of earlier research on humor in advertising in the context of recruitment advertising, it was important to offer many perspectives into the phenomenon and for answering the main research question: *How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives?* Furthermore, the sub-questions approach different communication elements and perspectives on humor in advertising: investigating the use of humor in the employer brand message, the job seekers’ responses to humor, moderator (congruence in this study) effects of humor, and the managerial challenges and opportunities related to humor.

The incongruent theory of humor has been considered the most popular and appealing humor theory in psychology, social sciences, and business research (Warren & McGraw 2016a). This dissertation has combined different theoretical views when defining humor in its separate papers. However, incongruent theory has been the main emphasis. This dissertation also takes an individual-level...
approach to humorous communication meaning that a job seeker’s individual responses to humorous stimulus were analyzed in papers II, III, and IV.

Congruency has also been discussed very recently in the recruitment advertising context. Baum et al. (2016) emphasize that high congruency between recruitment ads and organizational image is beneficially more attractive to the job seeker. They suggest that the underlying mechanism is that the highly congruent ads are more credible. As a starting point for utilizing congruence theories when investigating humor in recruitment advertising, job-seeking is a highly relevant and involving situation.

Table 7 summarizes different conceptualizations of humor categorized by perspectives on humor in advertising (use of humor, responses to humor, moderator effects, risks of humor) and utilized in the recruitment advertising context in this dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humor conceptualizations</th>
<th>Perspectives on humor in advertising</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Use of humor” (Paper I)</td>
<td>“Responses to humor” (Paper II)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Responses to humor”, “Moderator effects” (Paper III)</td>
<td>“Use of humor”, “Responses to humor”, “Risks of humor” (Paper IV)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humor is either a stimulus (humor attempt) or a psychological response (perceived humor) (Warren &amp; McGraw 2016b)</th>
<th>Intended humor Intended humor Intended humor Intended humor</th>
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<td>Intended humor</td>
<td>Intended humor</td>
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<td>Intentional humor (Beard 2008)</td>
<td>Intentional humor</td>
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<td>Humor conceptualizations</td>
<td>Perspectives on humor in advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Use of humor&quot; (Paper I)</td>
<td>&quot;Responses to humor&quot; (Paper II)</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Responses to humor&quot;, &quot;Moderator effects&quot; (Paper III)</td>
<td>&quot;Use of humor&quot;, &quot;Responses to humor&quot;, &quot;Risks of humor&quot; (Paper IV)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three main theories of humor (relief, superiority, and incongruent), parody

- Incongruity-resolution (Spotts et al. 1997), personification type of humor (Catanescu & Tom 2001)
- Nonsense (e.g., Ruch et al. 1990), Irony (Kelly & Solomon 1975, Stern 1990)
- Incongruity-resolution (Spotts et al. 1997), personification type of humor (Catanescu & Tom 2001)
- Arousal-safety, disparagement (Beard 2008)

Intentional relatedness, the ad is humor dominant/message dominant

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<tr>
<th>Intentional relatedness, the ad is humor dominant/message dominant</th>
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<tr>
<td>Humor dominant</td>
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<td>Message dominant</td>
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<td>Message dominant</td>
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<td>Humor dominant</td>
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Humor relatedness: thematic (Spotts et al. 1997)

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<th>Humor relatedness: thematic (Spotts et al. 1997)</th>
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<td>Thematic relatedness</td>
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Congruence

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<td>Congruence as potential moderator</td>
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Conceptualizing humor in recruitment advertising

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Conceptualizing humor in recruitment advertising</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humor is defined as a communication style and defining employer brand message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor is a stimulus (humor attempt), Responses (attitudes, intentions) to humor investigated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor is a stimulus (humor attempt), Moderator effects investigated Responses (attitudes, intentions) to humor investigated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor as a symbolic element in recruitment advertising campaign: Humor is potential to test person-organization fit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Humor is a stimulus (humor attempt), Moderator effects investigated Responses (attitudes, intentions) to humor investigated |
| Humor as a symbolic element in recruitment advertising campaign: Humor is potential to test person-organization fit |
3.4 A summary: Different communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising

As a summary, a theory-based understanding related to different communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising is presented.

Understanding of different communication perspectives were developed by first developing a definition of the context of recruitment advertising and identifying the different communication elements of recruitment advertising. As a result, a definition of an employer brand message communication intent on impacting job seekers was developed.

Next, different perspectives on humor in the advertising literature were identified, based on Eisend’s (2017) categorization of the literature on use of humor, responses to humor, and moderator effects of humor. In addition to these perspectives, in contrast to sub-question RQ4—What kind of challenges and opportunities are related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet? — the risks of humor perspective was acknowledged to be a relevant perspective.

These perspectives are focusing different communication elements of recruitment advertising and presented in sub-questions: investigating the use of humor in the employer brand message, job seekers’ responses to humor, moderator effects, and managerial challenges and opportunities related to humor. Different conceptualizations of humor utilized in this dissertation were presented and described, which are related to the studies (papers I-IV). Table 8 presents framework for analysis humor in recruitment advertising through different communication perspectives in this dissertation.
Table 8. Framework for analysis of humor in recruitment advertising through different communication perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication perspectives</th>
<th>Communication elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Message</td>
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<td>Intent of communication</td>
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<td>Audience</td>
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<td>Audience responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Definition of recruitment</td>
<td>Employer brand message</td>
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<tr>
<td>advertising context:</td>
<td>Intent on impacting</td>
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<td>Employer brand message</td>
<td>Job seeker</td>
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<td>communication intent on</td>
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<td>impacting job seekers</td>
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</table>

**Perspectives on humor in advertising**

- Use of humor------------------Employer brand message
- Responses to humor-------------------------Job seekers’ responses to humor
- Moderator effects (congruence)------------------Moderator effects of humor
- Risks of humor-------------------Managerial challenges and opportunities related to humor

**Conceptualizing humor in recruitment advertising**

- Humor is defined as a communication style
- and defining employer brand message
4 Methodology

“Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog. Few people are interested and the frog dies of it.” E.B. White

This chapter provides justifications for the methodological choices of the dissertation as guiding the overall research process related to creating a theoretical and practical understanding of the emerged phenomenon of humor in recruitment advertising. First, scientific paradigms with philosophical assumptions are discussed. Second, mixed methods research, which includes different methods (case study method and experimental method) to understand phenomenon, is presented. A case study method is presented as the chosen method in papers I and IV. Under a case study, the case selection, definition, data collection, and analysis will be described. Experiments as the main quantitative method in this dissertation (papers II and III) are presented in more detail. Analysis methods of empirical data are introduced. Finally, overall methodology with methods used in the individual papers are summarized.

4.1 Scientific paradigms and philosophical assumptions

4.1.1 Researcher’s choices for paradigms and empirical setting

Scientific paradigms can be defined as basic belief systems (Guba & Lincoln 1994). They can be regarded as different shared and approved research priorities, perspectives, terminologies, and methodologies, which influence scientific progress and are adopted by the research communities (Kuhn 1970, Foxall 1984). These, in turn, guide an individual researcher’s paradigmatic choices. Therefore, paradigms can also be seen as received inquiries which are either dominating in the broader scientific community or alternative inquiries, which are challenging the mainstream paradigms (Guba & Lincoln 1994).

Social scientists and consumer behavior researchers in the marketing area have earlier regarded positivism and interpretive approaches as two leading paradigms that have wide diversity within both approaches (Hudson & Ozanne 1988). Reflections on the consumer behavior field is justified because this dissertation relies on the literature of consumer advertising and having individuals – job seekers – as a target group comparable to consumers, whose responses to humorous advertising have been investigated. Positivism has also been dominant in
advertising studies concentrating on humor (Gulas & Weinberger 2006: 140). Given these aspects, it was a justified paradigmatic choice in this dissertation to follow a positivistic paradigm in the individual experimental studies where the effects of humor advertising were investigated (papers II and III).

To be able to develop a researcher’s philosophical stance, it means making key assumptions both on the nature of society and science (Burrell & Morgan 1979, Holden & Lynch 2004). Here, the assumptions are made according to the nature of science, which can be approached through subjective and objective dimensions. Daymon and Holloway (2011: 16) clarify that a researcher’s worldview, research questions, and research design (including data collecting and analyzing), are all related to each other and they all influence the paradigmatic choices.

Therefore, I will start by reflecting on my own earlier adopted worldview as a researcher. Before my doctoral studies in marketing, I received my Master’s degree in biophysics, where I have adopted (without any need to criticize) a positivistic worldview, or objectivist approach to the nature of science, which is the dominant scientific paradigm among the natural sciences. The key aspects of positivism are the following. First, a positivist knowledge of the world is achieved by applying scientific methods to the empirical world or experiences. Second, experiment is considered as a key method. Third, the aim of knowledge creation is to understand causal regularities and explanations, and science should be value-free (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 18). Experiments were chosen in this dissertation to give one perspective on the phenomenon.

The dissertation process of constructing the actual research topic on marketing started with an idea based on observations of individual humorous job ads in the Internet by a small company. This is reflected by the first efforts in identifying a unique case for this study in its empirical real-life settings. Step by step, empirical observations when combined with theoretical knowledge created a preliminary understanding of a research phenomenon. The decision of collecting empirical evidence from the setting of small companies and Internet was rooted to some compromises for practical reasons. This empirical setting offered real-life cases to be studied and the empirical setting was not changed when exploring the phenomenon experimentally.

The main research question in this dissertation developed during the research process into How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives? To be able to answer this question, new perspectives into humor in advertising were given by focusing on different communication elements of recruitment advertising: investigating the use of humor
in the message, the job seekers’ responses to humor, and moderator effects. Moreover, managerial challenges and opportunities related to humor in recruitment advertising were investigated. Consequently, different sub-questions were needed with different scientific paradigms and different methods.

Earlier qualitative and quantitative methods in marketing have been discussed as two separate paradigms, with both having their different characteristics (Desphande 1983). Both qualitative and quantitative methods were needed and used to be able to answer the main research question in this dissertation. This means that methodological triangulation was utilized as *a between-method triangulation*, which means using different methods measuring *the same phenomenon or unit with different perspectives* (Denzin 1970, Lloyd 2011). In this dissertation, it means using both experiments and case studies. The aim was to follow different paradigms in each of the four individual studies in this dissertation because they have been published and positioned as independent studies. This dissertation follows the paradigmatic stance of mixed methods research by choosing the “dialectical” stance where *multiple paradigms* can be used in mixed methods research (Greene & Caracelli 1997, in Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 27).

**4.1.2 Philosophical assumptions**

Scientific paradigms are based on different fundamental beliefs or philosophical assumptions related to **ontology**, **epistemology**, **methodology**, **axiology** (Hudson & Ozanne 1988, Wahyuni 2012, Perry *et al.* 1999), and **human nature** (Holden & Lynch 2004) which are reflected towards the dissertation’s research paradigms. This dissertation takes an approach to the nature of science through objectivist and subjectivist approaches as the main opposing paradigms (see Holden & Lynch 2004).

**Ontological and epistemological assumptions**

Ontology is defined as one’s view of perceiving reality (Wahyuni 2012), which asks “*What is the nature of reality?*” (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 24). The main ontological assumption in this study is **objectivism**, which *assumes that social reality exists independently outside the researcher* (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 13–14). The objectivistic approach views reality as a concrete structure or process compared to the more subjective approach, which sees reality more as a social construction or projection of human imagination (Holden & Lynch 2004: 6). When
ontology is looked at in the (post)positivism paradigm, it follows the idea of singular reality, which also means the scientific logic of hypothesis testing (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 24). Hypothesis testing is a relevant approach in the experimental studies of the dissertation (papers II and III), which investigated the effects of humor in recruitment advertising. In the experiments, certain parts of reality are possible to separate from the normal context and investigate in a controlled setting (Hudson & Ozanne 1988).

On the other hand, an illustrative case study (Paper I) and an instrumental case study (Paper IV) were conducted. In Paper I, a case study inquiry with a content analysis of job ads was used to answer sub-question RQ1—*How can humor in the employer brand message be conceptualized?* The ontological assumption of objectivism perceives social reality as objective, external, and independent of social actors. Although two researchers were interpreting data, the empirical data (reality) itself was observable and considered as objective text, and researchers were not interacting with the data in a similar way, which would be the case if analyzing individual actor’s perceptions or analyzing interview data. However, in Paper IV, a more subjectivist approach was taken. The paper answered RQ4—*What kind of challenges and opportunities are related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?* Reality was seen as a contextualized field of information (Holden & Lynch 2004: 6). However, reality was partly interpreted with social conditioning, which was visible when empirical data was also collected through individual interviews. Qualitative individual perceptions were collected through a questionnaire and were interpreted by two researchers.

As similarly compared to ontology, there are objective and subjective epistemological views (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 14) which are related to how to generate, understand, and use acceptable and valid knowledge (Wahyuni 2012). One aspect of objectivistic epistemology assumes that findings are true, contrary to the more subjective paradigm which argues that findings are probably true (Perry et al. 1999). Here, the objectivistic epistemological assumption says that findings are true related to experiments (papers II and III) and in the case of the illustrative case study (Paper I). However, a relatively rich empirical and contextualized instrumental case study (Paper IV) offers findings that are probably true.

Experiments in this dissertation (papers II and III) investigate observable phenomena and seek both causality and generalizations following the positivism paradigm (see Wahyuni 2012). Observable phenomena can be found in the case studies as well (papers I and IV). However, the case studies took a more subjective approach and were not seeking causality and generalization; rather they were about
understanding a phenomenon in its context (see Wahyuni 2012), because causal links are impossible to differentiate in a complex holistic world (Hudson & Ozanne 1988).

The epistemological question about the relationship between a researcher and what is being researched also considers distance and closeness (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 24). High distance was typical in the experiments (papers II and III) and in the illustrative case study with content analysis in Paper I. More closeness was prevalent in Paper IV, which also has interview data.

Methodological assumptions

Wahyuni (2012) describes methodology as a kind of a model for guiding the research process in the context of a certain paradigm. In this dissertation, the mixed methods research is a methodology, a map for the researcher and experiments, as well as case studies are methods. The process view of understanding methodology is visible in the approaches of deduction and induction (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 24). Positivism typically relies on the deductive approach (Perry 1998), which starts with theories and continues with testing theories, whereas in the inductive approach, the empirical data is the starting point for building theories (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 24).

The main research question in the dissertation was helpful in understanding contemporary phenomenon: How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives? Thus, the logic of mixing both the inductive and deductive approaches was needed, and this was executed on many levels. First, within the individual case studies (papers I and IV), the inductive and deductive approaches were both used during the research process. There are many reasons for inductive logic in the case studies; one of the key reasons is that the approached phenomena are usually contemporary, which typically need more inductive theory-building because of the lack of earlier theories (Boing 1994, in Perry 1998). In the case studies, inductive theory building is considered to be more prominent compared to the deductive approach. However, the most preferred approach in the case studies is mixing both induction and deduction (Perry 1998). Mixing inductive and deductive was also executed between the studies when the experimental studies (papers II and III) used deductive logic and the case studies mixed inductive and deductive logic.

Methods include specific tools, techniques, and procedures. Methods are a more specific practical application, and they are also described as atheoretical (see
Sarantakos 2005, in Wahyuni 2012), which means that they can be used independently of methodologies (Wahyuni 2012). Methods can be further divided into data collection (e.g., interviews) and data analysis (e.g., thematic analysis) (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 16). Related to data collections, multiple data were collected. The empirical data were humorous job ads in the case company (Paper I), data was collected through quantitative questionnaires related to the experiments (papers II and III) and through qualitative questionnaires related to the humorous social media recruitment campaign (Paper IV). A content analysis was used to understand and define the employer brand message (Paper I), and a qualitative theme analysis was used in Paper IV. Statistical analysis was used in the experimental studies. These will be described more specifically later in this chapter.

**Axiological assumptions and human nature**

Axiological assumptions deal with the overall goal of research. A traditional categorization is informing that a positivistic approach has the goal of explanation and prediction, whereas related to the more subjective (interpretivist) approach, the ultimate idea is to understand the process, not the output (Hudson & Ozanne 1988). The purpose of the dissertation was to develop different communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet and answer the main research question: How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives? This kind of purpose and research question reveals that explanation and prediction, which is typical for the positivistic approach, did not seem to be the overall goal of the dissertation. However, the goal was not to understand the process in detail, which would have been the interpretivist approach (see Hudson & Ozanne 1988).

Wahyuni (2012), on the other hand, emphasizes researchers’ values and defines axiology as “The role of values and the researcher’s stance.” This means under the positivism paradigm that research is value-free and the researcher has an independent and objective stance to the data. In contrast, under the more subjective stance (critical realism stance), research is seen as value-laden and biased by different cultural worldviews and experiences. In this experiment, the experimental research (papers II and III) is value-free, with an objective researcher stance. In the case studies (papers I and IV), the research is not fully value-free or objective, as it involves subjective interpretations of empirical data by researchers.

Human nature is related to the assumptions of the researcher’s perceptions on a human being as voluntarist way: as autonomous and free-willed controller or
deterministic: controlled where environment or situation determines actions of human (Burrell & Morgan 1979, Holden & Lynch 2004). The positivist approach sees social beings as deterministic and reactive in nature, while the interpretive approach considers human nature as voluntarist and proactive (Hudson & Ozanne 1988). In this dissertation in the experiments (papers II, III), human nature is considered as a cognitive man, who processes information in a rational way and forms attitudes and intentions, which further works as determinants of behavior (Anderson 1986). A similar understanding of a human as an information processor was considered in the case study (Paper IV). The understanding of human nature as a cognitive man is also in line with how humor has been approached in this study through incongruity theories, which can also be labeled as cognitive theories (Gulas & Weinberger 2006, Speck 1990). The illustrative case study (Paper I) focused on conceptualizing the employer brand message, and thus human behavior was not in the focus and human nature could be seen as “invisible.” Thus, assumptions of human nature in this dissertation were between the objectivistic and subjectivist approaches and determinism and voluntarism (Holden & Lynch 2004: 6).

4.2 Mixed methods research

The underlying premise of mixed methods research is that combining quantitative and qualitative methods yields more understanding of the underlying research topic than a purely quantitative or qualitative method alone (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 18). In this dissertation, mixed methods is a research design that links together methodology, mixed methods research inquiry, and suitable methods: illustrative case study (Paper I), instrumental case study (Paper IV) (see Stake 2005, Yin 2003), and between-subject experiments (papers II and III) (see Croson 2002) and has a goal of addressing specific research questions (Wahyuni 2012).

The mixed methods research has developed among social scientists up to the phase of acknowledged research design (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 14), and this research approach is considered as relevant today when research problems can be complex (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 18). There are two acknowledged major types of mixed method research, namely mixed model designs and mixed method designs. Mixed model means mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches across (or within) the research process. On the other hand, mixed method design means including quantitative and qualitative phases in the overall research, which can be categorized based on the paradigm emphasis decision (equal or dominant status) and time-order decision (concurrent or sequential) (Johnson & Onwueguzie 2004).
Mixed method designs were utilized at the whole dissertation research process. Qualitative and quantitative studies had equal status in overall study. Findings of both qualitative studies (case studies, papers I and IV) and quantitative studies (experiments, papers II and III) were merged together, helping to create a new framework for understanding the phenomenon. In this dissertation, mixing qualitative and quantitative data will be conducted as merging qualitative and quantitative data to achieve results (see Creswell & Plano Clark 2007:7). This can be argued because each of the papers (I-IV) are published as a separate study, and each study has its dominant methodological focus – either quantitative (II, III) or qualitative (I, IV). However, as an overall output of this dissertation, individual findings of the papers are merged in the compiling section in the way that they will provide more understanding related to the investigated research phenomenon. Thus, multiple studies are merged together.

In addition to this, as later will be described (see Table 11), in papers I and IV, mixed methods were also utilized within the studies (mixed model design). Indeed, in this dissertation, mixed model designs were utilized in an illustrative case study (Paper I) and an instrumental case study (Paper IV). Both of these studies had qualitative research objectives behind them. In Paper I, qualitative data was collected, and qualitative data analysis (mono-method design) as well as simple quantitative data analysis (mixed model design) were performed. In Paper IV, similarly, qualitative data was collected, and qualitative data analysis (mono-method design) as well as quantitative data analysis (mixed model design) were performed. In addition, a small amount of quantitative data was collected and presented quantitatively.

Triangulation (concurrent) design is considered one of the most common design types of mixed methods (see Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 59); it was chosen as a design of this dissertation, in which the order of presentation can be described as concurrent (QUAL (Paper I) + QUAN (Paper II) + QUAN (Paper III) + QUAL (Paper IV)). The quantitative experiments (papers II, III) shared similarities, and Paper III was partly a replication of Paper II, and thus they were in sequential order. Other studies worked independently. The results from a previous study were not utilized directly in the next study during the research process between qualitative and quantitative parts. This indicates more concurrent order. The key rationales for the concurrent research design of the dissertation are several. First, combining quantitative and qualitative data to be able to triangulate findings so they can support each other. Second, qualitative and quantitative methods are able to complete a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Third,
quantitative and qualitative questions are each able to answer different research questions (Harrison & Reilly 2011).

More specifically, this dissertation follows the multilevel triangulation method (Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998: 48, Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 65). This means that different methods are focusing on different levels of the phenomenon. Individual findings are merged into the final interpretation. This will be described in the form of an overall framework, which is constructed based on findings collected from different empirical levels (recruitment ads and recruitment campaign levels).

Next, a case study method will be introduced and reflected with two different cases that had a role in providing qualitative-dominated and case-specific empirical insights into the phenomenon in the broader mixed methods research inquiry.

4.2.1 A Case study method

There are several ways of classifying case studies. One classification defines case studies as either an intensive case study or an extensive case study (see Stoecker 1991, Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 118). One aspect of an extensive case study is to differentiate it from an intensive case and explain that the goal is not to create a rich detailed description of “real-life” cases but rather the case can work in the role of an instrument (see Paper IV). This specific form of a case study in this dissertation (Paper IV) is called as an instrumental case study (Stake 2005).

Case studies can also be positioned based on their stance related to theory development and more specifically being exploratory or confirmatory in nature (Perry 1998). When there are few cases, it often follows inductive, exploratory logic, and confirmatory logic is related to the deductive approach with more cases. In this dissertation, mixed methods research with two case studies and two experiments stand in the middle of both achieving rich and contextualized knowledge and seeking generalizations. More specifically, cases 1 and 2 followed exploratory logic as individual single case studies.

An illustrative case study (Paper I) was a suitable method when investigating rarely investigated phenomena (Spence & Essoussi 2010) and when making an effort to understand single setting dynamics (Eisenhardt 1989). The nature of an illustrative case study is descriptive, and it tries to add information to a broader project (Morra & Friendlander 1999).

Another key issue related to case study research is the construction of a case or many cases where research questions are related to “solving the case” through
defining and learning from the case (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 115). In this dissertation, solving the case can be considered related to understanding the challenges and opportunities of humor in recruitment advertising through the instrumental case study (Paper IV).

Case selection, definition, data collection, and analysis

The selection of the case plays important role in case studies (Perry 1998) and also a key role from a theory development perspective (Eisenhardt 1989). Ragin and Becker (1992: 9–10) identify four different ways how researchers can approach a case: Cases can be (1) found, (2) objects, (3) made, or (4) conventions. The cases in this dissertation (cases 1 & 2) were selected by finding the cases in their empirical real-life contexts by researchers during the dissertation process.

Quite often, case studies are informed to be practical and criticized as being normative, which means that the case is chosen based on its success or failure (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 116). Here in this dissertation, cases were not chosen because of their success or failure. This is because cases represented a relatively unique, specific, and previously underexplored phenomenon. The overall dissertation and especially the instrumental case study (Paper IV) was able to create a discussion on the challenges and opportunities of humor for companies.

In case studies, evidence can be gathered through different data collection methods, as a form of qualitative or quantitative data, or both (Yin 1981). However, quite often case studies have been seen as equivalent to qualitative research (see e.g., Yin 1981, Ragin & Becker 1992: 2). Eisenhardt (1989) has also described the nature of evidence from case studies as either “qualitative (e.g., words), quantitative (e.g., numbers), or both.” The case studies had a qualitative focus in this dissertation, yet they utilized either quantitative analysis or had a small amount of quantitative data. Jick (1979) has also emphasized bringing the triangulation of data types as a key part of theory building based on case studies.

In addition to classifying different data collection methods in the case studies, it is possible to define the level of analysis on many levels, for example the employee, manager, or firm levels (Eisenhardt 1989, Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 115). In this dissertation, the cases approached phenomenon from different levels. Both cases focused on a different communication elements and perspectives of the framework to be able to approach humor in recruitment advertising. Case1 (Paper I) had the focus on individual Internet recruitment ads with sentence-level content analysis and conceptualized an employer brand message. Case 2 (Paper IV)
approached the phenomenon at the social media recruitment campaign level with the focus on the job seekers’ responses to job ads and the campaign. In addition to the case studies, experiments (papers II and III) focused on the job seekers’ responses (intermediate advertising effects) to humorous Internet recruitment ads. Next, cases and related data collection and analysis are described.

**Case 1: Use of humor in employer brand message of a small company’s online job ads**

Case 1 (Paper I) was selected by identifying a small start-up company which had used humor continuously in their online job ads. The small company was located in Northern Europe and was operating in the gaming industry. It was founded in August 2009. The underlying goal of the illustrative case study was to understand the seldom-investigated phenomenon (e.g., Spence & Essousi 2010) of the use of humor in employer brand message in company online job ads.

The empirical data consists of six humorous online job ads (published during an 18-month period) of the case company, which were identified and collected for empirical content analysis. A preliminary understanding of the phenomenon was gathered through an interview with company’s manager.

**Content analysis of the illustrative case study (Case 1)**

Content analysis has been a widely accepted method in consumer research (Kassarjian 1977), and it has been used both for investigating humorous adverts (e.g., Spotts *et al.* 1997) and for studies on job adverts (e.g., Nolan *et al.* 2013, Elving *et al.* 2013). These give an additional justification for using content analysis as an appropriate analysis method for Paper I. In Study I, content analysis was utilized for analyzing a small company’s job ads to be able to describe use of humor in employer message of small company’s online job ads. Case 1 provides a starting point for further research by generating an understanding of how an employer brand message can be conceptualized. As the end result of the content analysis process, the employer brand message concept was developed as a two-dimensional concept: including both employer brand content and communication style (including humor). The study offered illustrative case example evidence about how small companies use humor in online job ads, which is a rarely explored phenomenon. The aim of Paper I was to answer the first RQ1—*How can humor in the employer brand message be conceptualized?*
A content analysis was conducted at the level of analyzing individual sentences in the job ads. The content analysis process had different phases, which followed both inductive and deductive logic. The analysis of communication style followed inductive logic, which was justified because there was no method to classify language in job ads (Backhaus 2004). Then the concept of employer brand content was developed by modifying the instrumental-symbolic framework, which has been applied in recruitment research (Lievens & Highhouse 2003, Nolan et al. 2013). The symbolic attribute categories of “staff”, “applicant”, and “other stakeholders”, and “company” and “job” were defined as instrumental attributes, and these categories were emerged deductively from theory, which can be also labeled as directed content analysis where the goal is to extend or refine the existing theory (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). As an end result of analysis, the coding agenda was specified and the category “other attributes” was added.

The third analysis phase was related to describing the employer brand message, and that meant combining employer brand content and communication style categorization information. First, combining was done at the sentence level. Then all of the analyzed sentences (198 sentences) were quantitatively summarized into one of the employer brand content categories to see the percentile distribution of different communication styles in each category. The empirical analysis ended up by presenting in this way the employer brand message in online job ads of the small case company.

Finally, the content analysis from the perspective of the overall dissertation and mixed methods research inquiry is reflected upon. Mixed model designs were utilized within the illustrative case study (Paper I) (Spence & Essoussi 2010), where the content analysis was conducted through collecting qualitative data and analyzing it further quantitatively (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). However, a qualitative analysis was conducted as well. Actually, it was embedded as a key element of the creation of the coding agenda in both the inductive and theory-driven analysis phases. This qualitative analysis of qualitative data is called a mono-method design. Qualitative research objectives guided the illustrative case study, labeled in the overall dissertation as Case 1, and the overall emphasis of Paper I was methodologically more qualitative in nature.

Case 2: Humorous recruitment advertising campaign on social media

In Paper IV, the aim of the study was to understand the opportunities and challenges of humorous recruitment advertising campaign on social media. Given this as a
starting point, it clearly showed that Case 2 could be considered as an instrumental case study, where the focus is not understanding the case itself, but rather the case functions as an instrument to understand the opportunities and challenges (see Stake 2005). The case was first found by the co-author. Case 2 was defined as a social media recruitment advertising campaign where the recruitment goal was to seek the person, not the skills, by using humor in recruiting ads. The case functioned as an instrument to answer sub-question RQ4—What kind of challenges and opportunities are related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet? Thus, the instrumental case generated broader knowledge compared to the situation where only the case is explained.

The aim of the data collection was to gather rich primary qualitative data related to the phenomenon under investigation. The main empirical data was the qualitative questionnaire data: perceptions of 28 potential job seekers (architecture students) about a humorous social media recruitment campaign with five recruitment ads of a high-profile architecture firm (see Appendix 1).

Preliminary empirical data was also gathered through individual office manager interviews to gain an understanding about the goals of the recruitment advertising campaign (see Appendix 2). Statistics from Google analytics and social media (Facebook) were gathered for the preliminary evaluation related to the success of the campaign. Case 2 was richer and gave a more holistic understanding of case itself than Case 1 (Paper I).

**Qualitative focused analysis of the instrumental case study (Case 2)**

A qualitative analysis was conducted in the instrumental case study (Paper IV). The main empirical qualitative data consists of the responding architecture student’s perceptions on the humorous social media recruitment campaign and on individual ads. Data was collected through a questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Open-ended questions were related to individual job ads (e.g., What do you think about the ad? What type of employee do you think the advertisement is seeking?) or to the campaign (e.g., Best and worst recruitment ads, How do you perceive the architect firm as an employer based on this campaign?). Moreover, an intention to apply for a job based on the recruitment campaign was asked.

Data analysis consists of several phases and was conducted by two researchers. The co-author was responsible for the main qualitative analysis of the empirical data. There, the potential job seekers’ perspectives on each recruiting ad were categorized based on their valence as positive, negative, or neutral to understand
perceptions of individual job ads. The analysis followed inductive logic and focused on job seekers’ perceptions of worst and best recruitment ads and perceptions of the overall recruitment campaign. The co-author also calculated quantitatively the number of ratings for the ads that were perceived as the worst and the best in order to identify which job ads were perceived as the most suitable and most unsuitable. In addition to these, particular emphasis was given to the job seekers’ intention to apply for a job based on this recruitment campaign. Perceptions of willingness to apply were categorized as positive, neutral, or negative and calculated quantitatively to evaluate the willingness to apply based on the campaign. In addition, Facebook and Google Analytics data were collected and presented quantitatively.

In the second phase of analysis, the author’s role was focused on understanding the challenges and opportunities related to the overall campaign. A simple descriptive qualitative analysis was conducted separately by the author; it was related to the description of the types of humor in the five recruitment ads. This helped to give a preliminary understanding of the workability of different humor types in a social media recruitment campaign. The main analysis focused on job seekers’ perceptions of worst and best recruitment ads and perceptions of the overall recruitment campaign. The idea was to combine individual-level qualitative findings with the findings gathered from interview and Google Analytics data.

The analysis from the perspective of the overall dissertation and mixed methods research inquiry is discussed. Mixed model designs were utilized within the instrumental case study (Paper IV) (Stake 2005). As with Case 1, qualitative data was collected, and qualitative data analysis (mono-method design) as well as quantitative data analysis (mixed model design) were performed.

4.2.2 Experimental methods

The study approaches its research aims related to sub-questions RQ2 and RQ3 related to the intermediate advertising effects of humor by applying a between-subject experimental design method (Croson 2002, Söderlund & Dahlén 2010). Experiments have been identified earlier as being one of the most popular research methods in marketing and advertising studies in Internet-related studies (Cho & Khang 2006). Moreover, experiments have been used extensively in studies related to humor in advertising (Gulas & Weinberger 2006: 148). Experimentation allows the researcher to make conclusions about cause-effect relationships (Lynn & Lynn 2003).
Due to these arguments, experiments conducted in the dissertation were suitable to answer sub-questions RQ2 and RQ3 (see Table 1), and they helped to make conclusions about humor as a cause in Internet recruitment ads, and the job seekers’ behavioral responses (attitudes and intentions) were investigated as effects.

It is assumed that using humor in Internet recruitment ads is not yet a typical practice among companies. Thus, when the aim is to test experimentally the effects of humor content in Internet recruitment ads, the study is also “asking whether something can happen, rather than whether it typically does happen” (Mook 1983).

A relatively simple experimental design was used in the experiments with the aim of trying to avoid the basic mistake of the novice researcher of making the experiment too complicated (Croson 2002). Experiment logic will usually start with a theory to be tested, and a pilot experiment is needed in complex experiments (Croson 2002). In this dissertation, Paper II worked as a role of pilot experiment (Paper II). A pilot experiment with a simple design was justified because humor is unexplored in the recruitment advertising context, and thus theories of humor in consumer advertising is tested in a new context.

One categorization-related experiment is between quasi-experiments and true experiments. In true experiments, participants are randomly assigned to treatments, but this is not the case in quasi-experiments. Another characteristic of a true experiment is related to using at least one treatment and one comparison group and having at least one outcome measure. Moreover, true experiments can be further categorized as either laboratory or field experiments (Lynn & Lynn 2003).

Experiments conducted in this dissertation (papers II and III) can be categorized as true experiments, where participants were randomly allocated to different treatments. Moreover, the experiments had at least one treatment group (e.g., humor treatments in job ads in Paper II), one comparison group (e.g., without humor treatment in job ad, Paper II) and several outcome measures (behavioral responses of job seekers, papers II and III). More specifically, experiments in this dissertation can be classified as being closest to true laboratory experiments. True laboratory experiments are modeling the real world, and they are useful as basic consumer behavior studies. True field experiments, on the other hand, are conducted in the real world, where participants are randomly assigned, but all external factors are not controlled (Lynn & Lynn 2003). Tharenou et al. (2007) has crystalized these differences between true experiments and quasi-experiments related to differences in the level of control and the degree of confidence in describing causal effects (see Table 9).
True laboratory experiments have a high internal validity and low external validity (Lynn & Lynn 2003). When experiments need a high internal validity, it also means that a high theoretical knowledge is needed before the design (Croson 2002: 928). This aspect was visible in this dissertation’s experiments as well, when the hypothesis generation and careful development of the stimulus material are well described (papers II, III). However, instead of conducting studies in a “real laboratory,” experiments were conducted in classroom situations.

In this dissertation, a between-subject design was used, which means one treatment for each subject attending an experiment. A bit more complicated experimental version would have been a within-subject design, where each subject is faced with multiple treatments. This would offer possibilities to compare behavior within an individual and to use stronger (e.g., paired) statistical tests (Croson 2002: 939). More specifically, such studies, where it is possible to create message variance by altering the same message are more suitable for between-subject designs because in within-subject design, there would potentially be more contamination between altered treatments (Reeves & Geiger 1994: 174). A between-subject design with altered messages was used in Paper II and partly (when altering the job ad regarding humor stimulus) in Paper III. However, between-subject design has been criticized for potential errors associated with individual differences among participants. Many individual differences in the participants result in confounding the treatments and the participants. Randomly assigning participants to different conditions can help (Reeves & Geiger 1994: 174).

When implementing experiments, the randomness is indeed an important issue (Croson 2002: 939). That was achieved practically during the experiments by allocating individuals randomly to different groups by shuffling the different treatments, including the answer sheets. The decision of subject pool is another important issue (Croson 2002: 928), and in this study, it meant choosing university students from the population of potential (young) job seekers.

One general advantage of using a controlled experiment is the high degree of control and replicability (Croson 2002). For example, attitude change in advertising (attitudes are one of the key output measures in this dissertation) has been acknowledged as an especially suitable construct for investigations through highly controlled experiments (Winter 1973). Also in this dissertation, Paper III replicates the experimental study of Paper II, in addition to investigating congruence as moderator. It can be argued that replication studies are important in developing marketing science. Replication studies have been frequently used among natural scientists, who based on Madden et al. (1995) do not separate replication studies
from the research process and see the research process as a continuous process where “scientists come and go.” In contrast, many social scientists prefer to see research as a more discrete way consisting of many individual studies.

It is true that in the social sciences, the value of reproducibility is not understood properly, partly because of prioritizing novelty over replication (Science 2015). However, in this study, when Paper III also conformed the researcher’s earlier findings in Paper II (which was to the author’s knowledge novel in the specific advertising context), the aim was to also strengthen the value of the novel findings.

Table 9 presents classifications of experiments and their key characteristics collected from key articles. This crystallizes the characteristics of the dissertation’s experiment as true experiments: laboratory experiment and how it is different from field experiments and quasi-experiments.
Table 9. Classification of experiments with key characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of experiments</th>
<th>True experiment: A laboratory experiment (used in this dissertation)</th>
<th>True experiment: A Field experiment</th>
<th>Quasi-experiment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Randomization: participants are randomly allocated to treatments.</td>
<td>Randomized (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
<td>Randomized (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
<td>Non-randomized (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment/groups</td>
<td>At least one treatment and one comparison groups (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
<td>At least one treatment and one comparison groups (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
<td>At least one treatment is manipulated and at least one comparison exists (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003) Manipulation is possible to occur (Tharenou et al. 2007: 35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome measures</td>
<td>Having outcome measures, at least one (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
<td>Having outcome measures, at least one (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
<td>Having outcome measures, at least one (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real world vs. modeling the real world</td>
<td>Modeling the real world (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
<td>Conducted in the real world (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
<td>More real world-context (e.g., surveys) (Goldberg 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity, control</td>
<td>High internal validity, low external validity (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
<td>High internal validity, high external validity (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003)</td>
<td>Manipulation is possible to occur Level of control is not as high as in true experiment, not controlled experimental environment (Tharenou et al. 2007: 35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal relationships</td>
<td>True experiment: Experiments are generally causal research methods (Lynn &amp; Lynn 2003) Strong ability making causal inferences (Tharenou et al. 2007: 35)</td>
<td>Causal relationships can be described but with lower degree of confidence compared to true experiment (Tharenou et al. 2007: 35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data collection, sampling, stimulus generation

This dissertation considers by definition consumers as a specific role as job seekers. The reason for this definition is because in the experiments the hypothesis formulation was created based on the consumer advertising literature, and thus recruitment advertising is seen as a specific advertising context. Experiments were conducted as class-room experiments having students as participants (N=71, Paper II, N=121, Paper III). Actually, students in this case represented the potential target group of recruitment ads relatively well. However, students represent a convenience sample and Pham (2013) has lately criticized that research by convenience, including using students, is one of the seven sins in the consumer psychology area. The rationale for using homogenous student samples in theory testing is discussed by Calder et al. (1981).

This study (papers II and III) considers the potential job seekers in the situation where recruitment ads were targeted to a trainee. Thus, it was justified to use mostly undergraduates as participants because they are soon entering the job market (Berthon et al. 2005). However, it has to be acknowledged that based on Rynes et al. (1980), students lack relevant employment experience and are not representative of the broader population of job seekers.

The stimuli development of the experiments is described in detail in papers II and III. Basic features are presented next. In Paper II, related to general design, four different job ad versions were created as different stimuli. Three versions represented different humor types (incongruity resolution, nonsense, and irony) and one version was a job ad without humor. The company was the fictional “HealthVision” company, a small high-tech start-up company operating in the e-health area. Paper III was a 2x2 between-subject experimental design (Croson 2002, Söderlund & Dahlén 2010). The first factor was the presence or absence of humor, and the second factor was the perceived level of company climate, either funny or boring related to a job. There were four different stimuli: (1) no humor in the job ad with a fun company climate, (2) humor in the job ad with a boring company climate, (3) humor in the job ad with a fun company climate, and (4) no humor in the job ad with a boring company climate. Thus, the first two presented a low congruence situation and the last two a high congruence situation. The “boring company” was the fictional company “TelConnect,” operating in the telemarketing area. The “fun company” was “HealthVision” (the same company as in Paper II). The humor type was chosen to be incongruent resolution humor (see Appendix 3 A stimulus material, Paper III).
However, in the experiments that were conducted, the recruitment adverts with humorous content were fictive. Using fictive materials was justified for many reasons. First, due the potential negative effects of humor on job seekers behavioral responses, perhaps not many firms are willing to take a risk of intentionally testing the effects of humor. Second, because of the relatively low prevalence of the phenomenon, there is a scarcity of available, naturally occurring stimulus material. Third, when the empirical setting in the dissertation was targeted to small startup companies without a previously established reputation, using a fictitious company was justified and also avoided the confounding effects of potential prior attitudes (Söderlund & Dahlén 2010).

Relatively often, experiments use small samples of stimuli, and this methodological challenge was also present in the dissertation because using large samples of stimuli are considered impractical as they would demand a large number of participants (see Berg 2015: 31). As to a relevant number of independent observations per treatment group, Croson (2002: 939) considers that the aim should be from twenty to thirty. This practically described goal was achieved in both experiments when after aggregating different humor types into one group in Paper II, the observations varied from 20 to 51 (Paper II) to 27 to 35 (Paper III) in the treatment groups.

The questionnaire

Self-administered questionnaires were used in the experiments (papers II and III). Example of the questionnaire of the experiment (Paper III) is presented in Appendix 4. Peterson (2005) has made the criticism that consumers’ answers through self-administered questionnaires are labile and lack the strength of predicting or explaining consumer behavior. Strick et al. (2013) have also made the criticism that the majority of studies on humorous advertising have been based on self-report assessments when measuring attitudes and purchase intentions, and thus lack the realism of real world advertising situations where consumers are bombarded with advertisements. However, self-reported data seems to have a dominating and established position in consumer behavior research (Peterson 2005), and thus it was a relevant choice to use in the dissertation’s earlier established self-administered questionnaires. Multi-item question designs were used in the questionnaires of experiments. Multi-item questions should not be taken for granted. Söderlund (2006) has warned, by using the loyalty construct as an example, that multi-item scales need caution regarding individual items to be used
when the idea is to measure the same construct. However, in this dissertation, the attitude and intention variables can be considered as established constructs measuring intermediate advertising effects. Attitudes and intentions as intermediate advertising outputs will be opened next.

**Attitudes and intentions**

First, intermediate advertising effects are key audience responses of stimulus-response models. Second, attitudes have for a while been highly investigated as consumer responses to different advertising stimuli (see Percy & Rossiter 1992). Third, attitudes have been one of the most studied consumer responses to humor among researchers of humorous advertising (e.g., Eisend 2009).

Therefore, attitudes and intentional responses have been chosen as the output variables in this dissertation’s experimental studies (papers II and III). To understand the job seekers’ responses to humor in recruitment ads, several intermediate advertising effects have been investigated in this dissertation through experiments (papers II and III) and measuring attitudes and intentions (intentions to share the ad, intentions to apply).

Strick et al. (2009) have explained that earlier models on attitude changes have investigated attitudes as explicit attitudes, which means a more deliberate effort in processing, and implicit attitudes, which means automatically activated associations; and they have explored how humor could be processed through an implicit route of attitude change. Halkias and Kokkinaki (2014), on the other hand, have made distinctions between stimulus and schema-driven attitudes. Consequently, attitudes toward identifiable objects, for example toward the job ad, the company, and the project manager depicted in the ad, can be formed differently than attitudes toward the job and the industry. For example, Bressler and Balshine (2006) have said that those people who are using humor can be evaluated as less trustworthy and potentially less intelligent.

**Behavioral intentions**

There is a known positive relationship between attitudes and behavioral intentions (Ajzen 1991, Cooke & Sheeran 2004), and this idea has been adopted in papers II and III. Next, two different behavioral intentions are presented. “Intention to share” is important from a marketing perspective and when operating in a social media
environment from a viral advertising perspective, and “Intention to apply for a job” is significant intention from a recruitment perspective.

**Intention to share a recruitment ad**

This is an important output variable to measure responses to humorous advertising and for companies increasing sharing intentions for achieving viral effects. It is closely connected to the definition of viral advertising related to pass-along content to others (Porter & Golan 2006). Viral advertising has noted “provocative content” as a key element of viral advertising, and humor could take a role of provocative content as well, as it is acknowledged to be one of the main drivers creating arousal for viral advertising (Brown *et al.* 2010, Porter & Golan 2006, Nelson-Field *et al.* 2013).

**Intention to apply for a job**

Intention to apply for a job is one of the key job seeker’s behavioral outcomes in the attraction phase of employer branding (Gomes & Neves 2011, Backhaus & Tikoo 2004). A job seeker’s intentions to apply were measured as a response variable to humorous recruitment ads in the experimental studies of the dissertation (papers II and III), and intention to apply as a general response to a humorous social media recruitment campaign (Paper IV).

**Items, scales, and manipulation checks**

Items were generated based mainly on established measurement *scales* (attitudes, intentions) that have been validated in the earlier literature (see papers II and III). 10-point scales were used in the experiments. It is a much-used scale (Loken *et al.* 1987, in Dawes 2008), as the most typically used scale is a 5- or 7-point scale (Malhotra & Peterson 2006, in Dawes 2008). Regarding the discussion of potential differences between 5-point, 7-point, and 10-point scales, Dawes (2008) has actually shown that 5-point and 7-point scales possibly create higher mean scores compared to 10-point scales.

The *Semantic differential scale* (see Dawes 2008) was used when different forms of attitudes were measured. Several *attitude variables* (attitudes towards the job ad and the company and the project manager) were measured by using *adjective pairs* (bad-good, dislike-like, negative impression-positive impression, and
uncomfortable-comfortable). These were typically adopted among marketing researchers (Mitchell & Olson 1981, Shimp 1981, Söderlund & Dahlén 2010). *The intention to apply* was measured with using three adjective-pairs: unlikely-likely, not probable-probable, and impossible-possible.

In addition to the semantic differential scale, the Likert-response scale (see Dawes 2008) was used as well. *Intention to share the job ad* was measured through the following items: pass-along probability through social media, probability of telling others about the job ad, and probability of talking about the job ad. Unlike other measures that were based on individual adjective-pairs and a one-dimensional 10-point scale, this scale ranged from 1 (very unlikely) to 10 (very likely). Items were adopted from Huang *et al.* (2013) and Brown *et al.* (2010).

The unweighted average of the item responses were used for all the multi-item measures. *Cronbach's coefficient alpha* is a widely accepted measure related to scale reliability (Peterson 1994), and it was measured in the experiments. Generally speaking, reliability was on a satisfying level in both experimental studies (Paper II: 0.86-0.97, Paper III: 0.87-0.98). However, there is some variety in what is considered to be an adequate reliability value. For example, the acknowledged scholar Nunnally (see Peterson 1994) has proposed that for applied research, *Cronbach's coefficient alpha* should be over 0.90.

*Manipulation check* is a key element of successful experiments. Humor was manipulated in both experiments. Consequently, *perceived humorousness* was measured in both experiments (papers II and III) with adjective pairs (not humorous-humorous, not funny-funny, not playful-playful, not amusing-amusing, dull-not dull, and boring-not boring), and items were adapted from Voss (2009) and Zhang (1996). In addition to humor, “Funniness of job” was manipulated in the second experimental study (Paper III). Consequently, *perceived funniness of the job* was measured with adjective pairs (not funny-funny, not playful-playful, not amusing-amusing, dull-not dull, and boring-not boring) adapted from Voss (2009) and Zhang (1996).

The questionnaire was *pretested* on a small convenience sample of three respondents in the case of the first pilot experiment (Paper II) and reviewed by an experienced researcher (papers II and III). *Qualitative and quantitative prestudies* were used before the main experiment in Paper III to help develop the stimulus material for the main experimental setting of the study. *A qualitative prestudy* had ten undergraduates who gave literal answers to open-ended questions. “Imagine that you are looking for a job. You would like to find a position as a trainee. Describe what kind of company is the most fun place to work?” (see Appendix 5).
A quantitative prestudy had 22 undergraduate respondents who answered the questionnaire. The question was “Imagine that you are seeking a job. You would like to find a job for a trainee. How fun do you think it would be to work as a trainee”...Examples of the items were ...in a company making toys for children, ...in a company making computer games. The Likert-response scale (see Dawes 2008) was used and the scale ranged from 1 (not fun at all) to 10 (very much fun) (see Appendix 6).

Empirical data analysis: a quantitative data analysis

In both experiments (papers II and III), raw empirical data was collected through the questionnaire blankets from students who were participants attending the experiment. The data was transferred to the SPSS statistical program for statistical data analysis.

A quantitative analysis related to the between-subject design offers a way to measure and get knowledge about cause and effect relationships. The analysis traditionally can be described as having two key analysis phases: a manipulation check-phase and a hypotheses testing phase.

In Paper II, four job ad versions were created as different stimuli. Three versions represented different humor types (incongruity resolution, nonsense, and irony), and one version represented a job ad without humor. To be able to check the success of humor manipulation, the means were calculated in the different treatment groups related to perceived humorousness. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) as a statistical test was conducted to evaluate the impact on perceived humorousness. The Omnibus test was used and it indicated that all the means in the groups were not equal ($F = 10.4, p < 0.01$). The Sheffe post-hoc test further showed that all the humorous ad versions provided higher levels of perceived humorousness (all $p < 0.01$), and there were no significant differences of perceived humorousness between humorous versions.

Related to the hypotheses testing phase, a similar logic of statistical analysis was used in the manipulation check. One-way ANOVA with four factors was used on each output variables. The Sheffe post-hoc comparison test showed that no significant differences were between different humor types in their impact on output variables. To gain economy in the analysis, it was justified to aggregate different humorous groups into one group. Consequently, the non-humorous ad group ($n=21$) and the humorous groups ($n=51$) were used in the final hypotheses testing. An independent sample t-test was used to compare responses between the
different two groups. Mean values with standard deviations were measured in all variables.

“One-way independent ANOVA” means testing between-group differences in where a single independent variable is manipulated (Field 2013: 508, 509). An “independent samples t-test” tests whether two means of independent samples differ (Field 2013: 877), and thus this was suitable for comparisons when there were two independent groups. Post-hoc tests are sets of unplanned comparisons which are often used in exploratory work, and they are not as powerful tests as planned contrasts (Field 2013: 881, Ruxton & Beauchamp 2008). When there is not a previous theory guiding the analysis, the Sheffe post-hoc test is a suitable choice; it is coherent with ANOVA results and is more conservative compared to other unplanned comparisons (Ruxton & Beauchamp 2008).

Paper III was a 2x2 between-subject experimental design (Croson 2002, Söderlund & Dahlén 2010). The first factor was presence or absence of humor, and the second factor was perceived level of company climate, either funny or boring related to a job.

The logic of analysis followed much of the earlier experiment, as Paper III experiment also replicated the main effects of humor on attitudes and intentions variables in addition to exploring congruence as potential moderator. Manipulation check of humor was done through a univariate analysis of variance. Perceived humorousness of a job ad was a dependent variable, and fixed factors were humor group and congruence as categorical variables to be able to check interaction effects. F(1,116), F = 32.2, p = 0.000. M_{Humour} = 3.2, M_{Humour} = 5.0. There was a significant main effect, and furthermore there was no significant interaction effect between humor and congruence on perceived humorousness, which indicated successful manipulation of humor. The analysis followed the same logic with conducting the two-way ANOVA, and the significant interaction effect between humor and congruence meant that congruence was moderating the effects of humor on certain output variables (output variables: attitudes, intentions). Interaction effect can be used to estimate moderation (Field 2013: 877), which occurs when “the relationship of two variables changes as a function of a third variable.” Moderator is a variable (here, congruence) that changes the direction or size of the relationship between two variables (here, between humor and attitudes and intentions as output variables) (Field 2013: 879).

Table 10 combines the methodological choices of the mixed methods research: philosophical starting points, research designs, research methods, data sources and analysis of the research papers.
### Table 10. Philosophical starting points, research designs, research methods, data sources, analysis of the research papers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods and design</th>
<th>Paper I</th>
<th>Paper II</th>
<th>Paper III</th>
<th>Paper IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical assumptions</td>
<td>Objectivism and subjectivism</td>
<td>Objectivism</td>
<td>Objectivism</td>
<td>Objectivism and subjectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research method</td>
<td>Case 1: illustrative case study</td>
<td>A between-subject experiment</td>
<td>A between-subject experiment (replication study)</td>
<td>Case 2: instrumental case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inductive vs. deductive approach</td>
<td>Emphasis on deductive, partly inductive</td>
<td>Deductive</td>
<td>Deductive</td>
<td>Emphasis on inductive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A mixed methods research design:
- Merging the quantitative (experiments) and qualitative (case studies) data
- Paradigm emphasis decision:
  - QUAL and QUAN equal status in the overall research process
- Time-order decision:
  - concurrent QUAL (Paper I) + QUAN (Paper II) + QUAN (Paper III) + QUAL (Paper IV)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A mixed model design</th>
<th>Paper I</th>
<th>Paper II</th>
<th>Paper III</th>
<th>Paper IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a qualitative data collected. A qualitative analysis performed (mono-method design), A qualitative analysis performed (mixed model design)</td>
<td>No mixed methods</td>
<td>Yes, qualitative &amp; quantitative prestudies + qualitative experimental data &amp; analysis</td>
<td>Yes, qualitative data collected. A qualitative analysis performed (mono-method design), A quantitative analysis performed (mixed model design)</td>
<td>Present author assisted the corresponding author</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsible for empirical data collecting</th>
<th>Present author</th>
<th>Present author</th>
<th>Present author</th>
<th>Present author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case definition</td>
<td>Case 1: Use of humor in employer brand message in a small company’s online job ads</td>
<td></td>
<td>Case 2: Social media recruitment advertising campaign, where the recruitment goal was to seek the person, not the skills, by utilizing humor in recruitment ads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods and design</td>
<td>Paper I</td>
<td>Paper II</td>
<td>Paper III</td>
<td>Paper IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical setting of the study: A small company’s Internet communication channel</td>
<td>A small company’s Internet job adverts</td>
<td>A small high-tech startup company’s Internet job ad (Health Vision)</td>
<td>A small high-tech startup company (Health Vision), A small telemarketing startup company’s Internet job ads</td>
<td>An architect company’s social media recruitment campaign (with five recruitment ads)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary empirical data</td>
<td>A small company’s (game industry) humorous job adverts, 198 sentences in six job adverts</td>
<td>71 respondents (42 men and 29 women) in the role of job seekers/quantitative questionnaire</td>
<td>121 respondents in the role of job seekers/quantitative questionnaire</td>
<td>28 Architect student respondents in the role of job seekers, qualitative questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary empirical data (role)</td>
<td>Manager/owner interview 01/14 (preliminary understanding)</td>
<td>Three business students (pretesting questionnaire)</td>
<td>A qualitative prestudy related to experiment: 10 undergraduate business students A quantitative prestudy related to experiment: 22 respondents (experiment stimulus planning)</td>
<td>One manager interview (goal of the campaign, case description) Google Analytics data (preliminary success of the campaign)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods and design</td>
<td>Paper I</td>
<td>Paper II</td>
<td>Paper III</td>
<td>Paper IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
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<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>A content analysis (author &amp; co-author)</td>
<td>Statistical analysis (author &amp; co-author)</td>
<td>Statistical analysis (author)</td>
<td>A qualitative theme analysis (co-author)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A descriptive quantitative analysis (co-author)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Humor type description (author)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Combining the findings (author)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author’s contribution</td>
<td>Responsible author. Oikarinen had the main responsibility for planning, collecting, analyzing data, and writing the manuscript. Co-author gave feedback to different manuscript versions, gave suggestions for key theoretical discussions, participated in the writing process, and assisted in content analysis (~85%).</td>
<td>Responsible author. Oikarinen had the main responsibility for planning, collecting and analyzing data, and writing the manuscript. Co-author gave feedback planning &amp; analyzing, and participated in revising the manuscript (~80%).</td>
<td>Single authored. Oikarinen had the main responsibility for planning, collecting, and analyzing data, and writing the manuscript. Planning the experiment part &amp; analysis was given feedback by a senior researcher (100%).</td>
<td>Co-authored equally. (Sinisalo was corresponding author) Oikarinen had responsibility for writing the manuscript after the NFF2015 conference paper version. Oikarinen assisted in planning &amp; collecting empirical data (~50%).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Summary of the employed mixed methods research

As a summary, this dissertation follows the “dialectical” stance, where multiple paradigms have been used in mixed methods research (Greene & Caracelli 1997, in Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 27). Mixed methods research was chosen to guide the overall dissertation with the purpose of develop different communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet. The quantitative (experiments) and qualitative (case studies) data are merged, both having equal status in the overall research process and utilizing both the inductive and deductive approaches in the individual studies on different levels.
Figure 1 presents the multilevel triangulation method design used in this dissertation (see Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 63–65). Quantitative and qualitative results will be merged, interpreted, and discussed through the framework on humor in recruitment advertising in Chapter 6.

**Fig. 1. Mixed methods research: multilevel triangulation method design.**
5 Review of the results of the papers

The purpose of the dissertation is to develop different communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet and thus answer the main research question: How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives? Four research papers will create different insights into humor in recruitment advertising by focusing on different perspectives on humor in advertising: investigating the use of humor, responses to humor, moderator effects, and illustrating the managerial challenges and opportunities of humor. The first paper focuses on a message as a communication element, and thus on the level of Internet recruitment ads. The paper conceptualizes the employer brand message. The second and third papers focus on audience responses as a communication element. This means job seekers’ responses (i.e. intermediate advertising effects) to humor in Internet recruitment ads. The fourth paper approaches the phenomenon in the level of a social media recruitment campaign and focuses on multiple communication elements: sender (a small company), message (recruitment ads, recruitment campaign), and audience (job seekers’) responses. As a synthesis of the four papers, the framework of humor in recruitment advertising is presented in the Chapter 6. The main research question, sub-questions, and focus of the papers are presented in Table 11. Next, four individual research papers (Papers I-IV) are reviewed.
Table 11. Research papers, communication element & perspective on humor in advertising related to sub-questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research papers</th>
<th>Communication element (communication level)</th>
<th>Perspective on humor in advertising</th>
<th>Main RQ: How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper I</td>
<td>Message (recruitment ads)</td>
<td>Use of humor in advertising</td>
<td>RQ1: How can humor in the employer brand message be conceptualized?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper II, III</td>
<td>Job seekers’ responses to message (recruitment ads)</td>
<td>Responses to humor in advertising</td>
<td>RQ2: What kind of intermediate effects does humor have in recruitment advertising on the Internet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper III</td>
<td>Job seekers’ responses to message (recruitment ads)</td>
<td>Moderator effects of humor in advertising</td>
<td>RQ3: How does congruence moderate the intermediate effects of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper I, II, III, IV</td>
<td>Sender (A small company) Message (recruitment ads, recruitment campaign) Job seekers’ responses to message</td>
<td>Use of humor in advertising Responses to humor in advertising Moderator effects of humor in advertising Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising</td>
<td>RQ4: What kind of challenges and opportunities are related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1 Categorizing humorous employer brand message in a small company’s online job ads (Paper I)

The first research paper is co-authored with docent Sari Saraniemi. It was published in *Corporate Reputation Review* in October 2016. Oikarinen’s role as responsible author was for planning, collecting, analyzing data, and writing the manuscript. Co-author gave feedback to different manuscript versions, gave suggestions for key theoretical discussions, participated in the writing process, and assisted in content analysis.

The paper focuses on Internet recruitment ads of a small company for conceptualizing the employer brand message. The paper created the ‘use of humor’—perspective on humor in advertising in the dissertation and focused on the message as a communication element. The aim of Paper I was to answer the first
sub-question RQ1—*How can humor in the employer brand message be conceptualized?*

The strategic meaning of humor has received limited attention outside of the advertising literature (Duncan 1979, Eisend 2009, Voss 2009). The paper adds to the knowledge of communicating employer brands. To the author’s knowledge, communication style has not been discussed earlier as part of the employer brand message. By making a new conceptualization of the employer brand message, this paper is helpful in approaching the phenomenon: how a small company can use humor in online job ads.

The employer brand message concept for this paper was developed through developing a framework that utilized the idea borrowed from communication studies that a message can be described through content and style (Norton 1978, in Schindler & Bickart 2012). Thus, using similar logic, it is possible to create an employer brand message conceptualization that is based on (1) employer brand content and (2) communication style (including humor). First, the concept of employer brand content was developed by modifying the instrumental-symbolic framework which has been applied in recruitment research (Lievens & Highhouse 2003, Nolan et al. 2013).

The research strategy was presented in the paper as an illustrative case study, which is a suitable method for studies considering the little understood phenomenon (Spence & Essoussi 2010).

Paper I was able to answer the first sub-question RQ1—*How can humor in the employer brand message be conceptualized?* Thus, the main contribution of the first paper is conceptual. The employer brand message concept was developed as a two-dimensional concept that includes both employer brand content and communication style (including humor). Employer brand content was approached through modifying an earlier acknowledged symbolic-instrumental framework (Lievens & Highhouse 2003). The paper offered new insights for branding scholars on employer brand message conceptualizing and provided a conceptual contribution to the employer branding literature by conceptualizing the employer brand message with humor as a communication element in a novel way. In addition, the first paper offered empirical illustrative case evidence on the rarely investigated phenomenon.
5.2 The effects of humor in online recruitment advertising (Paper II)

The second research paper was co-authored with professor Magnus Söderlund, and it was published in the *Australasian Marketing Journal* in August 2016. As responsible author, Oikarinen had the main responsibility for planning, collecting and analyzing data, and writing the manuscript. Earlier conference paper version presented in EMAC in 2013 was written solely by Oikarinen. Co-author gave feedback to planning, collecting the data, and participated analyzing data and writing process towards published research paper.

The paper has the focus on the effects of contemporary humor in Internet recruitment advertising. More specifically, the paper focused on the intermediate advertising effects of humor on job seekers’ responses. The paper represents ‘responses to humor’—perspective and focuses on the ‘job seekers’ responses’ as a communication element. The aim of Paper II was to answer sub-question RQ2—*What kind of intermediate effects does humor have in recruitment advertising on the Internet?*

When humor appears to be on the rise in consumer-targeted ads (Weinberger *et al.* 2015), it potentially will spill over to online recruitment ads as well, especially when firms are eager to achieve the positive viral effects of humor in an online environment (Swanepoel *et al.* 2009). When the phenomenon is assumed to be on the rise, it was also important to investigate it through experimental design, to ask “whether something can happen, rather than whether it typically does happen” (Mook 1983).

The research design was a *between-subject experimental design* with four job ad versions with a control version and different types of humor versions. Seventy-one university students were respondents and answered a questionnaire. The intermediate advertising effects of humor were investigated in the empirical settings of a small company’s Internet recruitment advertising. In this case, the company was the fictive small high-tech startup company “Health Vision,” which operated in the e-health industry.

The findings of the paper contribute to the discussion on humor in advertising by presenting that in the unexplored recruitment advertising context, *humor negatively affected attitudes toward the ad, the company, and the job*, which are controversial findings related to the earlier established positive effects of humor in consumer advertisements (Eisend 2009, Sternhal & Craig 1973, Weinberger & Gulas 1992). By identifying the negative effects of humor on attitudes, the paper offers a contribution to the discussion on the risks of using humor in advertising.
(e.g., Beard 2008, Madden & Weinberger 1984), and the findings suggest that the ad context where humor is present should be understood as a potential moderating variable.

The potential positive effects of humor in online job ads were also found. Humor content enhanced sharing intentions of online job ads. This is in line with earlier studies that have shown the potential of humor in increasing sharing and indicating the viral effects of humor (Golan & Zaidner 2008, Porter & Golan 2006). Identified positive effects of sharing intentions are also closely related to word-of-mouth, which might make the message more credible and reduce the costs of reaching additional receivers.

Thus, the results of this paper were consonant with arousal-related theories of the viral message (Berger 2011, Berger & Milkman 2012, Nelson-Field et al. 2013). However, it was possible to conclude that a positive association between humor and sharing intentions is not necessarily positive for an advertiser due to the negatively charged job ad content; thus negative word-of-mouth is possible. Finally, the findings indicated that humor did not have a negative effect on the intention to apply, which is relevant information for recruiters.

The general contribution of the second paper is to bring the hitherto unexplored recruitment advertising context to the growing literature on the effects of humor in the advertising literature.

As a conclusion, Paper II answered the second sub-question RQ2—What kind of intermediate effects does humor have in recruitment advertising on the Internet? The results indicated that humor negatively affected attitudes toward the ad, the company, and the job. Positive effects of humor in Internet job ads were also found: humor content enhanced sharing intentions of Internet job ads. However, humor in job ads probably has the negative valence effect of high arousal. Therefore, the intended contribution of Paper II was to extend humor in advertising theory in several ways through testing humor in consumer advertising theories in the unexplored recruitment advertising context.

5.3 The moderating role of congruence between humor and fun climate of the company on the effects of humor in Internet job ads (Paper III)

The third research paper was written by the author alone, and it was published as a book chapter in Advances in Advertising Research Vol. VII: Bridging the Gap
between Advertising Academia and Practice in January 2017. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the ICORIA 2015 conference.

The third paper has a similar focus on the effects of humor in Internet recruitment advertising compared to the second paper. Similarly, the third paper focused on the intermediate advertising effects of humor on job seekers’ responses. The paper represents ‘moderator effects of humor’—perspective and ‘responses to humor’—perspective on humor in advertising in the dissertation and focus on congruence as potential moderator. Paper focused also on the ‘job seekers’ responses’ as a communication element.

The aim of Paper III was to answer sub-question RQ3—How does congruence moderate the intermediate effects of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet? In addition to this, the third paper aims to replicate findings from the experimental study presented in the second paper. Thus, the third paper also answered sub-question RQ2—What kind of intermediate effects does humor have in recruitment advertising on the Internet?

The research design was a 2 x 2 between-subject experiment (Croson 2002, Söderlund & Dahlén 2010). Job ads of fictive companies with a low fun climate (“TelConnect”) and high fun climate (“Health Vision”) were modified to produce versions of the incongruity resolution type of humor stimuli and non-humorous control job ad versions. 121 university students were respondents and answered a questionnaire.

The empirical findings of this paper as a replication study of the second paper (Paper II) indicated that the incongruent resolution type of humor in Internet job ads had significant negative main effects on attitudes to the job ad, the company, and the project manager. Moreover, humor had negative (but no significant) main effects on attitude toward job and attitude toward industry; likewise humor had a slightly negative (but no significant) main effect on intention to apply for a job. However, there was a positive main effect of humor (not significant) on intention to share a job ad. Even these results were not strictly identical regarding individual measures, it is possible to conclude that the replication study supported the earlier findings of the second paper (Paper II).

Moreover, the results of this paper indicated significant interaction between humor and the congruence level between humor and fun climate of the company on all attitude variables (job ad, job, company, project manager, industry) and intention variables (intention to share and intention to apply). Thus, the results indicated that congruence moderates the effects of humor in Internet job ads.
The paper has several intended contributions. First, the paper discusses and identifies the moderating role of congruence between humor and fun company climate, and thus attends to the discussion on different moderators in humorous advertising (e.g., Lee & Lim 2008, Zhang & Zinkhan 2006). Second, the paper also gives a new angle to the emerging discussion on the positive effects of congruency in advertising (Kamins 1990, Kamins & Gupta 1994) investigated in the scarcely investigated recruitment advertising context. Third, the paper contributes to a recent emerging discussion on the need for high congruency between recruitment ads and organizational image (Baum et al. 2016) by giving a more specific description of the congruency between humor and a company’s fun climate. Fourth, the paper points out the potential risks of humor in a specific recruitment advertising context. Thus, the paper was also able to answer sub-question RQ2—*What kind of intermediate advertising effects does humor have in recruitment advertising on the Internet?*

In addition, Paper III answered the third sub-question RQ3—*How does congruence moderate the intermediate effects of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?*

### 5.4 Personality or skill: A qualitative study of humorous recruitment advertising campaign on social media (Paper IV)

The fourth research paper was published in the International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising in March 2017. The paper was co-authored by Dr. Jaakko Sinisalo, who acted as corresponding author and both authors had equal contribution. The early version of the paper was presented at the NFF 2015 conference in August 2015 (Sinisalo & Oikarinen). The role of Oikarinen was writing research paper starting from conference paper manuscript through extending and revising theoretical discussion. Author assisted empirical data collection and she was responsible for a specific part of analysis (description of humor) as well as combining empirical findings.

The fourth paper represents the ‘use of humor’, ‘responses to humor’, and ‘challenges and opportunities related to humor’ perspectives on humor in advertising in the dissertation, with the main perspective on the challenges and opportunities related to humor. The paper took a more holistic recruitment advertising campaign level approach compared to earlier papers (papers I, II, and III) and focused on multiple communication elements: *sender* (a small company),
message (recruitment ads, recruitment campaign), audience (job seekers’) responses.

The aim of Paper IV was to identify the challenges and the opportunities of using humor in a social media recruitment advertising campaign and thus to answer sub-question RQ4—What kind of challenges and opportunities are related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?

The case study was chosen as a suitable methodological approach to understand and describe the social media recruiting campaign of a high profile company operating in the architecture industry. The company was operating in the architecture industry, which is a relatively traditional and conservative industry. Thus, having a humorous or funny element in their recruitment ad with little job description or other elements was something that was not expected in the architecture sector. The paper presented that one goal of the Case company’s recruitment campaign was related to the question of how to differentiate themselves as an employer and build a unique employer brand identity (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004). The findings also support the statement of De Cooman and Pepermans (2012), who emphasize that companies are able to focus on such values, in this case communicating with humor and playfulness in recruitment adverts, which are not obvious within their industry.

The paper was able to describe the challenges and opportunities related to the role of humor as a recruitment tool and it was able to communicate company’s symbolic information and values in their recruitment ads. Based on Walker et al. (2011), there is little research on how companies are able to handle a symbolic brand image during recruitment, and this paper brings a new perspective on humor in recruitment ads. Table 12 presents the objectives, identified challenges, and opportunities related to a recruitment advertising campaign filled with humor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives of the campaign</th>
<th>Identified challenges (-)</th>
<th>Identified opportunities (+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To raise awareness among the general audience</td>
<td>-Social media (Facebook) was not reaching job seekers</td>
<td>+Awareness among general audience raised after campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attract potential applicants to visit the web page of the firm</td>
<td>Could not be confirmed</td>
<td>+Traffic on the webpage increased, and interest towards the firm rose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objectives of the campaign | Identified challenges (-) | Identified opportunities (+)
---|---|---
To differentiate from other companies in the traditional & conservative architecture industry | -Humor in recruitment ads is considered unconventional in the architecture industry | +Differentiate from other companies by emphasizing personality over skills in the recruitment campaign
 | -Humor can be linked to unprofessionalism | +Humor has the potential to raise the positive image of the firm
 | -Humor can strengthen the negative image of the firm | |
To recruit people who fit the organization and the sense of humor needed (best person-organization fit) | Potential job seekers would not apply: | +Humor helps potential job seekers evaluate their person-organization fit (whether or not to apply) ->save resources
 | -Potential job seeker does not understand the message | |
 | -Emphasis on person over skills, lack of specific requirements | |
 | -Prefer facts and concreteness over abstractness | |
Type of humor | -Overly complicated or symbolic humor created confusion among potential job seekers | +Simple text and playful humor type (funny picture) with a smiling face was the most generally accepted
Architecture industry-specific issues | -Humor could be related to unprofessionalism in conservative industry | +Website of architecture firm is important (visually & content)
To attract many applicants | -Few applicants applied based on recruitment campaign | +Relatively high amount of intentions to apply

One of the most interesting findings in the paper was the notion that humor seems to have a beneficial role in testing a job seeker’s person-organization fit. It seems that humor in recruitment ads can work as a way of self-selecting out certain applicants. This is an interesting finding because to the author’s knowledge, humor has not previously been discussed in relations the person-organization fit.

Finally, by identifying challenges and opportunities, Paper IV was able to answer sub-question RQ4—*What kind of challenges and opportunities are related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?* Thus, the main contribution
of the paper was to provide managerial contribution and empirical case evidence of the rarely investigated phenomenon.

5.5 Summary of the research papers

A summary of the research papers (papers I-IV) are presented in Table 13. This will present key aspects of the papers: title, authors, research questions, communication element, perspective on humor in advertising, definition of humor, and contributions.

Table 13. Summary of the research papers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Categorizing humorous employer brand message in a small company’s online job ads</td>
<td>The effects of humor in online recruitment advertising</td>
<td>The moderating role of humor and fun climate of the company on the effects of humor in Internet job ads</td>
<td>Personality or skill: A qualitative study of humorous recruitment advertising campaign on social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Oikarinen E-L &amp; Saraniemi S</td>
<td>Oikarinen E-L &amp; Söderlund M</td>
<td>Oikarinen E-L</td>
<td>Oikarinen E-L &amp; Sinisalo J</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main RQ: How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQs</th>
<th>Communication element</th>
<th>Perspective on humor in advertising (supporting opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</th>
<th>Perspective on humor in advertising (supporting opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</th>
<th>Perspective on humor in advertising (supporting opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1, (RQ4)</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Job seekers’ responses (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</td>
<td>Job seekers’ responses (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</td>
<td>RQ4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2, (RQ4)</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Job seekers’ responses (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</td>
<td>Job seekers’ responses (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RQ2), (RQ4)</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Job seekers’ responses (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</td>
<td>Job seekers’ responses (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Job seekers’ responses (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</td>
<td>Job seekers’ responses (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising) (Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Use of humor in advertising
- Responses to humor in advertising
- Moderator effects of humor in advertising
- Challenges and opportunities related to humor in advertising
- Use of humor in advertising
- Responses to humor in advertising
- (Use of humor in advertising)
- (Responses to humor in advertising)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition of humor (in recruitment advertising)</td>
<td>-Humor is defined as a communication style and defining employer brand message</td>
<td>-Humor is a stimulus (humor attempt),</td>
<td>-Humor is a stimulus (humor attempt),</td>
<td>-Humor as a challenging symbolic element in recruitment campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Responses (attitudes, intentions) to humor investigated having negative effects, positive effects of sharing intentions</td>
<td>-Responses (attitudes, intentions) to humor investigated having negative effects, positive effects of sharing intentions</td>
<td>-Humor is able to test the person-organization fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution(s)</td>
<td>-Conceptual contribution on employer branding literature: defining employer brand message with communication element</td>
<td>-Extending advertising theory through testing humor in consumer advertising theories in recruitment advertising context</td>
<td>-Identifying congruence as a specific moderator in humorous advertising literature</td>
<td>-Managerial &amp; practical contribution: identified challenges (e.g., humor could be related to unprofessionalism in conservative industry) and opportunities (e.g., humor helps potential job seekers evaluate their person-organization fit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Give a new recruitment advertising perspective on congruence in advertising literature</td>
<td>-Replication study on the effects of humor in recruitment advertising</td>
<td>-Empirical case evidence on the rarely investigated phenomenon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Discussion

This chapter discusses the conclusions of the dissertation. First, the main conclusions and contributions of the dissertation will be presented by answering the individual sub-questions of the study. Second, an empirically grounded framework will be presented, which combines the various perspectives and key findings of individual sub-questions together and helps to answer the main research question of the study. Third, theoretical and methodological contributions and managerial implications of the study are discussed. Finally, an evaluation of the study will be conducted and the limitations of further research ideas are discussed.

6.1 Conclusions and contributions by answering the research questions

The purpose of the dissertation was to develop different communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet. The main research question was: How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives? Four individual papers aimed to answer four sub-questions. (RQ1)—How can humor in the employer brand message be conceptualized? (RQ2)—What kind of intermediate effects does humor have in recruitment advertising on the Internet? (RQ3)—How does congruence moderate the intermediate effects of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet? (RQ4)—What kind of challenges and opportunities are related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?

Each sub-question was aimed at a certain perspective on humor in advertising (use of humor, responses to humor, moderator effects, managerial challenges and opportunities related to humor) and communication elements (sender, message, job seekers’ responses) (see Table 13). Thus, by answering sub-questions, various perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising were created, and the main research question was answered. Next, conclusions and main contributions of the study are discussed by answering the research questions.

Conceptualizing humor in employer brand message

The first sub-question (RQ1)—How can humor in the employer brand message be conceptualized?—was answered based on the conclusions in Paper I. Through answering the first sub-question, this dissertation develops ‘use of humor’—
perspective in recruitment advertising focusing on ‘the message’ as a communication element.

In this study, the employer brand message concept is defined as a two-dimensional concept including both employer brand content and communication style (including humor, informal, and formal style) elements. Employer brand content is categorized into (1) symbolic attributes: staff, applicant, and other stakeholders, and (2) instrumental attributes: company and job. The thematic relatedness of the communication style to the employer brand content attributes is presented to describe using humor in the employer brand message. The framework for conceptualizing the employer brand message is presented in Table 14.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer brand message</th>
<th>Employer brand content</th>
<th>Communication style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic attributes</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Humorous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other stakeholders</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental attributes</td>
<td>Company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other attributes</td>
<td>Additional information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study considers communication style, and more specifically, the humor element in an employer brand message. To the author’s best knowledge, communication style has not been discussed earlier as part of the employer brand message, although employer branding has been discussed in job adverts in individual studies (e.g., Backhaus 2004, Elving et al. 2013, Nolan et al. 2013). Three different communication styles (humorous, informal, and formal) were identified in this study in the small company’s online job ads. Backhaus (2004) has earlier mentioned the lack of classifications of language in recruitment materials, and this makes the categorization of communication styles interesting. Thematic relatedness of humor is defined as the relation between employer brand content and humor, based on Speck’s taxonomy (refer to Spotts et al. 1997), which offers the possibility to define humor as a communication style and part of the employer brand message.
Employer brand message conceptualization contributes to employer branding literature because the concept of employer brand message has been scarce and has been focused more on information content aspects of employer brand messages (e.g., Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, Sutherland et al. 2002, Wilden et al. 2010) ignoring the meaning of communication style. The employer brand message concept further clarifies the difference from the employer image concept, which is typically categorized as instrumental and symbolic attributes, but the focus has been job seekers’ associations towards an organization as a working place (Lievens & Slaughter 2016), not on the message itself.

This study brings a new angle to literature of the use of humor in advertising where the focus has been on advertising message element (e.g., Speck 1990, Spotts et al. 1997).

To sum up, the study presents the employer brand message framework, which is able to answer sub-question (RQ1)—How can humor in the employer brand message be conceptualized?

Intermediate effects of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet

The second sub-question (RQ2)—What kind of intermediate effects does humor have in recruitment advertising on the Internet?—was answered based on the conclusions in Paper II (and strengthened in Paper III). Through answering the second sub-question, this dissertation develops ‘responses to humor’—perspective in recruitment advertising focusing on the ‘job seekers’ responses’ as a communication element.

Humor in this study related to experimental settings consists of either the incongruence-resolution (personification) type of humor (Paper III) (Spotts et al. 1997, Catanescu & Tom 2001) or three different types of humor (Paper II): incongruence-resolution (personification), nonsense (self-deprecating) humor (Gulas & Weinberger 2006: 38), and irony (Kelly & Solomon 1975, Stern 1990). Humor types involved slightly mild put-down elements of humor, thus negative elements of humor mirror the current nature of humor, which tends to be more non-playful, satirical, nonsense, aggressive, and sexual (Weinberger et al. 2015).

As a conclusion of this study, humor has mainly negative intermediate effects on job seekers. Humor has a negative effect on attitudes (to the job ad, the company, and the job). The replication study (Paper III) is able to confirm the results regarding attitude toward the job ad and company, but it is not able to find significant negative effects related to attitude toward the job. The results related to
negative attitudes are controversial findings compared to the general positive effects of humor on attitudes in traditional consumer advertising (Eisend 2009, Weinberger & Gulas 1992), and the study contributes to the broader literature on responses to humor in advertising. The study also contributes to the risks of humor in advertising, as these findings are able to continue the discussion on restrictions and potential risks related to humorous advertising (e.g., Beard 2008, Madden & Weinberger 1984).

However, humor has no effect on attitude toward the manager (Paper II) and on intention to apply (papers II and III). Somewhat different findings are presented in the replication study, where the negative effects on attitude toward the manager are significant. Moreover, humor has a positive impact on intention to share an ad (papers II and III). This increase in sharing related to humor is in line with previous studies on the viral effects of humor (e.g., Golan & Zaidner, Porter & Golan 2006). More specifically, it seems that humor in recruitment ads creates high arousal with negative valence. It is possible to assume high-arousal emotions (e.g., anger, anxiety) due to the sensitive and high-involvement nature of the recruitment ad context towards employment. This is consonant with arousal-related theories on the transmission of the viral message (Berger 2011, Berger & Milkman 2012, Nelson-Field 2013).

Increased sharing intentions by humor are however important from the managerial perspective. It is able to reduce the costs related to reaching more message receivers, and it increases the credibility of the message. However, although humor has positive effects on sharing intentions, it cannot be equated as positive effects to the advertiser. It should be acknowledged that the negative charge related to the ad may cause negative word-of-mouth.

The study summarizes and provides an answer to sub-question (RQ2)—What kind of intermediate effects does humor have in recruitment advertising on the Internet?—The results from experimental settings where humor is manipulated in Internet recruitment ads indicate mainly negative intermediate advertising effects of humor. The study extends the advertising theory related to humor effects in the unexplored recruitment advertising context and emphasizes the risks related to using humor in a personally relatively sensitive employment related context. The potential of humor is related to its positive impact on intention to share an ad, which is an important advertising effect in social media.
Congruence as moderating the intermediate effects of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet

The third sub-question (RQ3)—How does congruence moderate the intermediate effects of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?—was answered based on the conclusions in Paper III. Through answering the third sub-question, this dissertation develops ‘moderator effects’ and ‘responses to humor’ perspectives in recruitment advertising focusing on congruence as a potential moderator, and ‘audience (job seekers’) responses’ as a communication element.

A first conclusion related to the third sub-question is to identify the congruence between humor and a fun company as moderating the effects of humor. There is a significant interaction effect between humor and the congruence level between humor and fun climate on the attitudes (recruitment ad, job, company, industry) and intention variables (intention to apply for a job, intention to share a job ad). In addition, there is a partially significant interaction effect on attitude toward a project manager. This conclusion attends to the emerging discussion on describing different moderators in the humor in advertising literature, such as prior brand evaluations (Chattopadhyay & Basu 1990), sensation seeking (Galloway 2009), and product involvement (Chung & Zhao 2003).

A second conclusion is that the effects of humor seem to be more favorable in a high-congruency situation in the recruitment advertisement context. The results support the discussion on the positive effects of congruent messages in advertising (Kamins 1990, Kamins & Gupta 1994) and give a new angle by investigating the recruitment advertising context.

Third, the findings are able to give a more specific description of the congruency between humor and a company’s fun climate. These findings continue a very recent emerging discussion on congruency in recruitment advertising context generally, where the findings have revealed the need for high congruency between recruitment ads and organizational image (Baum et al. 2016).

This study answers (RQ3)—How does congruence moderate the intermediate effects of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet? Congruence between humor and the fun climate of the company is identified as moderating the effects of humor in recruitment ads, and the effects of humor seem to be more favorable in high-congruency situations in the recruitment advertisement context. These conclusions give new insights into advertising literature on both humor and congruence in the unexplored recruitment advertising context.
The challenges and opportunities related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet

The fourth sub-question (RQ4)—What kind of challenges and opportunities are related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?—considers managerial approach to humor in the dissertation. Through answering the fourth sub-question, this dissertation develops ‘use of humor’, ‘responses to humor’ and ‘challenges and opportunities related to humor’ perspectives in recruitment advertising and focused on multiple communication elements: ‘sender’ (a small company), ‘message’ (recruitment ads, recruitment campaign) and ‘job seekers’ responses’.

Starting with the conclusions related to employer brand message, the opportunities of humor is described on the individual recruitment ad level in Paper I. One conclusion of Paper I is to provide a new framework as a method for managers related to defining and evaluating a company’s employer brand message. More specific awareness of the company’s employer brand message is helpful in making a strategic choice on what to focus on and how to communicate (possibly with humor) human-related symbolic and instrumental attributes. Although empirical illustration of defining the employer brand message was conducted in a small company’s recruitment ad context, the assumption is made that the framework could be generally applied to any company’s recruitment or marketing communication contexts. It is important, for example for small startups lacking resources to understand the potential of using humor as part of the employer brand message as a low-budget and non-traditional branding tool (see Dahlén et al. 2009). These results can also be seen in the light of how managers can handle a symbolic brand image during recruitment, as there is little research on the topic (Walker et al. 2011).

According to the findings (Paper IV) (related to the discussion of the most suitable humor types) when utilizing humor in a social media recruitment campaign, simple text and a playful humor type (funny playful picture) with a smiling face in the recruitment ads has great potential to be broadly accepted among potential job seekers. It also seems to be risky to use too complicated humor, as overly complicated or symbolic humor creates confusion among potential job seekers. These results support earlier studies in that the human face with a smile has been shown to have positive effects in customer service (Söderlund & Rosengren 2008) and in advertising (Berg et al. 2015). In this study, humor that has been tested experimentally (papers II and III) also had mild put-down elements (e.g., irony, incongruent-resolution type of humor: personification type of humor) (Spotts et al.
1997, Catanescu & Tom 2001) and the general negative effects of humor on attitudes. However, humor types followed the current trend, which has shown that consumer-targeted ads have changed from playful and gentle forms toward humor types comprising more aggressive and less warm elements (Weinberger et al. 2015). It is said that humor could be seen as a small intelligence test (e.g., Norrick 2003), and thus it is possible that even more complicated forms of humor have the potential to work as a selection test for companies.

There are many opportunities related to humor in the recruitment advertising context, which can be seen linked to the discussions related to responses to humor. First, there is a positive impact on intention to share an ad, which is an important advertising effect in social media (papers II and III). Furthermore, this can in turn reduce the costs related to reaching more message receivers, and thus it also increases the credibility of the message. However, it seemed that humor in this particular recruitment ad context created high arousal with negative valence. Thus, it should be acknowledged that the negative charge related to the ad consists of risks, because it can cause negative word-of-mouth. Humor is indeed increasing the sharing of intentions (e.g., Golan & Zaidner, Porter & Golan 2006). It has been explained that “provocative content” is a key element of viral advertising and humor could take a role of provocative content as well, as it is acknowledged as one of the main drivers creating arousal for viral advertising (Brown et al. 2010, Porter & Golan 2006, Nelson-Field et al. 2013).

Second, turning to findings that emerged from the humor-filled social media recruitment campaign (Paper IV): Humor in recruitment ads in the campaign has the potential to work as a device for self-selecting the applicant out of the applicant pool (Paper IV), thus potential job seekers can test their person-organization fit. This can save resources of the firm. This conclusion offers a new and interesting perspective for managers when recruiting. As the person-organization fit is defined as a value congruence between organization and people (Morley 2007, Kristof-Brown et al. 2005), it seems possible that humor can be a potential way for job seekers to test how congruent their values are related to understanding humor of employer.

Then turning to the challenges related to the job seekers’ responses to humor: First, the study describes the negative intermediate advertising effects of humor in the Internet recruitment advertising context and job ad level in the form of attitudes towards the job ad and the company. These emphasize the risks related to the humor usage in the personal and sensitive employment context, such as recruitment advertising. These results, related to negative attitudes, are controversial compared
to the generally positive effects of humor on attitudes presented in traditional consumer advertising (Eisend 2009, Weinberger & Gulas 1992). Furthermore, the results show that the recruitment advertising context is risky regarding negative attitudes among job seekers and thus these results contribute on discussion on risks related to humorous advertising (e.g., Beard 2008, Madden & Weinberger 1984).

Second, related to a job seeker’s intentions to apply for a job, there is also a risk that only a few applicants will actually apply based on the recruitment campaign, even if the goal would be to get many applicants. However, experimental studies (papers II and III) in this dissertation informed more positively from the recruitment perspective that humor has no effect on intention to apply, and the results of the recruitment advertising campaign study (Paper IV) similarly reveal relatively high numbers of job seekers with the intention to apply. Generally, employer branding is considered to be important in the attraction phase, where intention to apply is one of the key outcomes (Gomes & Neves 2011, Backhaus & Tikoo 2004).

Third, related to potential job seekers, there is a risk that a potential job seeker does not understand the message of such a recruitment advertising campaign where by using humor, the emphasis is put on the person and not the skills, and where the advertisement may lack specific requirements. It seems that some applicants prefer facts and concreteness over abstractness in recruitment ads. Earlier studies have generally informed this distracting and negative effect of humor on comprehension in other than the Internet recruitment advertising context (Sternhal & Craig 1973). The Internet, however, is a different context, and reading recruitment ads is different from reading consumer ads. The recruitment advertising context can be seen as a high-involvement context, where the effectiveness of humor is reduced (Fugate 1998) and humor might possibly create more favorable attitudes among a low-involvement audience than among a high-involvement audience, as has been the case with consumer products (Zhang & Zinkhan 2006).

Related to the moderator effects, the effects of humor seem to be more favorable in a high congruency situation in the recruitment advertisement context where the congruence between humor and a fun company climate was identified as moderating the effects of humor (Paper III). This study describes congruence as a moderator and adds to the discussion of identifying different moderators such as sensation seeking (Galloway 2009) or product involvement (Chung & Zhao 2003). These results are also in line with the discussion on the positive effects of congruent messages in advertising (Kamins 1990, Kamins & Gupta 1994).
A humor-filled social media recruitment campaign (Paper IV) seems to offer both challenges and opportunities for companies related to industry factors and brand management perspectives. First, humor can be used to differentiate from other companies in the traditional and relatively conservative architecture industry, and humor has the potential to raise the positive image of the firm. However, humor in a recruitment campaign can also be considered to be unconventional in the architecture industry, and humor could be related to unprofessionalism in a conservative industry such as the architecture industry, and it is also a risk that humor can strengthen the negative image of the firm. These results seem to be mixed and show that job seekers actually can have very scattered (both positive and negative) views on the image of the firm and how suitable humor is in recruitment ads. De Cooman and Pepermans (2012) emphasize that it is possible for companies to focus on values that are not obvious within their industry, in this case (Paper IV), humor in recruitment adverts in the architecture industry.

6.2 Communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet

Next, a framework (see Table 15) is created to illustrate different communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet by answering the main research question: How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives? New perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising are given by focusing on different communication perspectives: investigating the use of humor in the employer brand message (RQ1), job seekers’ responses to humor (RQ2), and moderator effects of humor (RQ3). In addition, managerial challenges and opportunities of humor in recruitment advertising (RQ4) will be approached.

The phenomenon of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet can be approached through the framework, which integrates three perspectives: communication elements of recruitment advertising context and perspectives on humor in advertising. In addition, empirical data has been collected from Internet communication channel and the empirical findings are presented as managerial challenges and opportunities, specifically relevant on the Internet. The framework provides a novel research approach on humor in recruitment advertising. The framework of ‘communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet’ develops a holistic understanding with different communication perspectives and managerially relevant approach to the phenomenon.
To be concluded, humor in recruitment advertising can be approached by taking multiple communication perspectives on the phenomenon. These different perspectives represent well those different possibilities to be able to research the phenomenon while also having mixed methods research as a research design. First, defining the *employer brand message* to the understand company’s use of humor at the level of recruitment ads. Second, investigating the intermediate advertising effects of humor in recruitment ads on job seekers (attitudes, intention to share, and intention to apply) with the chosen moderator effects (here: congruence) to understand job seekers’ responses to humor. Third, taking a managerial company perspective on the risks of humor through identifying challenges and opportunities related to the phenomenon on both the recruitment campaign and adverts levels.

**Table 15. Communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication elements of recruitment advertising</th>
<th>Perspective on humor in advertising</th>
<th>Managerial challenges (-) opportunities (+) related to humor</th>
<th>Reflections to earlier literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sender (company, industry-factors)                | Use of humor                      | +Potential of a company to differentiate in a conservative industry  
+Humor has potential to raise the positive image of the firm.  
-Humor can strengthen the negative image of the firm  
-Humor is unconventional in the architecture industry  
-Unprofessionalism in a conservative industry | Companies can focus on values that are not obvious within their industry (De Cooman & Pepermans 2012) |
<p>| Employer brand message                            | Use of humor                      | +Method for defining and evaluating employer brand message (humor is a communication style element in the employer brand message) | Little research on how companies are able to handle symbolic brand image during recruitment (Walker et al. 2011) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication elements of recruitment advertising</th>
<th>Perspective on humor in advertising</th>
<th>Managerial challenges (-) opportunities (+) related to humor</th>
<th>Reflections to earlier literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Message (type of humor)</strong></td>
<td>Use of humor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+Simple playful humor with</td>
<td></td>
<td>Smile has been evidenced as</td>
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<td></td>
<td>smiling face is positively</td>
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<td>having positive effects in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>evaluated by job seekers</td>
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<td>customer service (Söderlund</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Too complicated and symbolic</td>
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<td>&amp; Rosengren 2008) and in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>humor is negatively accepted by</td>
<td></td>
<td>advertising (Berg et al. 2015)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>job seekers</td>
<td></td>
<td>More complicated humor can be</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>seen as a little intelligent test</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Norrick 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job seekers' responses (Attitudes)</strong></td>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
<td>-Humor has negative effects on attitudes to a job ad and</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>company</td>
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<td></td>
<td>+Potential to attract potential</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>job seekers visit the webpages of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the firm</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Job seekers' responses (Attraction)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
<td>+Potential to attract potential job seekers visit the</td>
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<td>webpages of the firm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>**General audience responses</td>
<td>+Awareness among general audience raise</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Awareness)</td>
<td>+Increasing the traffic on the company's webpage</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Job seekers' responses (Comprehension)</strong></td>
<td>-Potential job seeker does not understand the message</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Job seekers' responses (Intention to apply)</strong></td>
<td>-Risk that only few applicants will apply</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
<td>+Humor has no effect on intention to apply</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+Relatively high amounts of applicants to intention to apply</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Internet offers both job seekers and employers a place for meet through websites and job-listing boards (Cober et al. 2000)

Humor raise awareness (Weinberger 1984, Sternhal & Craig 1973)

Employer branding is considered important in the attraction phase where intention to apply is one of the key outcomes (Gomes & Neves 2011, Backhaus & Tikoo 2004).
### Communication elements of recruitment advertising

#### Managerial challenges (-) related to humor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job seekers’ responses’ (Person-organization fit)</th>
<th>Responses to humor</th>
<th>+Self-selecting an applicant out of the applicant pool saves resources (person-organization fit)</th>
<th>Symbolic attributes are able to form perceptions of P-O fit (Nolan et al. 2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job seekers’ responses (Intention to share)</td>
<td>Responses to humor</td>
<td>+Raised intention to share recruitment ads +Reducing costs related reaching more receivers -Negative word-of-mouth</td>
<td>Humor is increasing sharing intentions (e.g., Golan &amp; Zaidner 2008, Porter &amp; Golan 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job seekers’ responses (Congruence)</td>
<td>Moderator effects of humor and fun company (Congruence)</td>
<td>+High congruency between humor and fun company climate situation more favorable</td>
<td>Positive effects of congruent messages in advertising (Kamins 1990, Kamins &amp; Gupta 1994)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.3 Theoretical and methodological contributions

The purpose of the dissertation has been to develop different communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet. The main research question was: *How can humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet be approached from communication perspectives?*

This study contributes to the advertising literature by developing new research approach (framework) on humor in recruitment advertising, and extending the body of research on humor in advertising empirically in recruitment advertising on the Internet. Contributions are described in this dissertation in multiple ways, inspired...
by the discussion of contributions in methods, theory, and contexts levels by Ladik and Stewart (2008).

6.3.1 Methodological contribution

The study offers an intended methodological contribution. This study has utilized mixed methods research with a multilevel triangulation method design (see Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 63–65) when combining the qualitative-dominated case studies and the quantitative experimental studies. In addition, the level of analysis varied from a sentence-level content analysis (Paper I), job seekers’ responses to an individual job ad (papers II and III), to a campaign-level approach with individual job seekers’ responses (Paper IV) which offered a multilevel understanding of the phenomenon. Mixed methods research presents a relatively new approach when investigating humor in advertising, as earlier studies have been dominated by experimental studies (e.g., Eisend 2009, Crawford & Gregory 2015). Utilizing case studies and experimental studies in mixed methods research is a surprising combination, and surprise can be considered as being one element of the scientific contribution effort (Ladik & Stewart 2008). Yet through mixed methods research, it was possible to get different insights and a richer understanding of the phenomenon than with only a qualitative or quantitative approach.

The second methodological contribution of the dissertation is to create a new analytical framework on defining employer brand message (Paper I). What is new in this framework is that it is originally based on a sentence-level content analysis (unlike the most often used ad-level analysis) regarding the defining of employer brand content and communication analysis in the job ads. Finally, a company’s employer brand message in job ads is presented as the distribution of individual employer brand content elements and communication styles in each employer’s brand contents. It can be argued that a sentence-level analysis means that it is not possible to make generalizations and using statistical significance tests based on empirical results. However, the empirical results in this study (Paper I) illustrated a small startup company’s employer brand message defined from its online job ads, and similarly, any company is able to utilize the method and define and evaluate its employer brand message from a company’s recruitment or other marketing communication materials.

The framework of humor in recruitment advertising can be seen as providing an example of research design for researchers for how to explore humor in
advertising in a specific advertising context by taking multiple communication perspectives on the phenomenon through mixed methods research.

6.3.2 Theoretical contributions

This dissertation contributes to the advertising literature by developing new research approach on humor in recruitment advertising. Research approach (framework) has potential to be modified and applied by advertising researchers.

Contributions related to the framework on humor in recruitment advertising

This study has developed the framework on humor in recruitment advertising by focusing on different communication perspectives: investigating the use of humor in the employer brand message, the job seekers’ responses to humor, moderator (congruence in this study) effects, and the managerial challenges and opportunities related to humor. The framework is able to combine different communication elements, perspectives on humor in advertising with managerial challenges and opportunities related to humor. This integration brings new more holistic research approach to humor in advertising studies as earlier perspectives on humor in advertising represent most often the ‘use of humor’, ‘responses to humor,’ and ‘moderator effects’ perspectives (see Eisend 2017).

The framework on humor in recruitment advertising offers contribution as it is able to create an understanding of the phenomenon with multiple levels and perspectives, which is a different, yet suitable option for the context-dependent phenomenon compared to the earlier stimulus-response models in advertising where humor has traditionally been seen as a message appeal (Percy & Rossiter 1992). The framework also combines the general stimulus-response framework (humor in the employer brand message and the responses to it) with the more practical managerial-level findings.

The new research approach extends many ways the traditional understanding about research perspectives on humor in advertising. The framework combines communication elements and perspectives on humor in advertising with managerial challenges and opportunities related to humor, and all these in one mixed methods research. It also creates conceptual contribution by definition of recruitment advertising, which is described next.
Contributions related to definition of recruitment advertising

First, this study introduces new theoretical definition of recruitment advertising context, which has been rarely studied context among advertising researchers (see Feldman et al. 2006). Drawing from earlier definitions of advertising (Dahlén & Rosengren 2016, Eisend 2016, Huh 2016), this study defines recruitment advertising as employer brand message communication intent on impacting job seekers. The new definition offers a conceptual contribution to earlier definitions of recruitment advertising (see Van Hoye & Lievens 2007, Backhaus 2004), which has not been able to describe brand communication and audience aspects elements which are relevant in current definitions of advertising. It potentially helps to approach recruitment advertising from advertising perspective. Thus, the definition of recruitment advertising contributes to advertising literature as advertising researchers have put little interest in recruitment advertising (one exception is Feldman et al. 2006). ‘Employer brand message communication’–definition is able to make a connection between employer brand message and recruitment advertising.

Employer brand message conceptualization contributes to employer branding literature because the concept of employer brand message has been few and has been focused more on information content aspects of employer brand messages (e.g., Backhaus & Tikoo 2004, Sutherland et al. 2002, Wilden et al. 2010) ignoring the meaning of communication style. This study creates a new angle to literature of the use of humor in advertising where the focus has been on advertising message element (e.g., Speck 1990, Spotts et al. 1997). This creates new understanding to the literature of humor in advertising by providing ‘use of humor’–perspective in recruitment advertising context by conceptualizing humor as a communication style in employer brand message.

Contributions related to empirical findings of humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet

This study is extending the body of research on humor in advertising empirically in recruitment advertising on the Internet. To the author’s knowledge, this is one of the first studies on the topic of humor in recruitment advertising (one exception is Ryan et al. 2000).

By offering the framework of communication perspectives on humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet this study empirically emphasizes the managerial challenges and opportunities related to using humor in a personally
relatively sensitive employment related context. This offers contribution to the discussion of potential risks of using humor in advertising (e.g., Beard 2008, Madden & Weinberger 1984).

Empirical managerial findings related to **challenges and opportunities of humor** in recruitment advertising on the Internet, seem to relate to emerging discussion on how advertising is (or might be) used in digital, virtual media or other developing media, which is a current issue among humor in advertising researchers. This study is also adding knowledge on how context factors (recruitment advertising) are affecting the use of humor in advertising (see Weinberger & Gulas 2018).

First, the **opportunities related to humor** was identified as working as a device for a person-organization fit. This conclusion offers a new and interesting perspective for managers when recruiting. To author’s knowledge, there has not been earlier academic discussion about discussing connections of humor and person-organization fit. As the person-organization fit is defined as a value congruence between organization and people (Morley 2007, Kristof-Brown et al. 2005), it seems possible that humor can be a potential way for job seekers to test how congruent their values are related to understanding humor of employer.

Second, this study has shown that humor is offering the opportunities for social media marketing by increasing the sharing intentions of recruitment ads. This increase in sharing related to humor is in line with previous studies on the viral effects of humor (e.g., Golan & Zaidner, Porter & Golan 2006). However, more specifically, it seems that humor in recruitment ads develops high arousal with negative valence. It is possible to assume high-arousal emotions (e.g., anger, anxiety) due to the sensitive and high-involvement nature of the recruitment ad context towards employment. This is in line with arousal-related theories on the transmission of the viral message (Berger 2011, Berger & Milkman 2012, Nelson-Field et al. 2013).

The main **identified challenges of humor** are related to negative intermediate advertising effects and negative word-of-mouth. The contribution of this study is to bring a new angle to earlier acknowledged studies on responses to humor in advertising (e.g., Eisend 2009, Weinberger & Gulas 1992, Madden & Weinberger 1984). The results of this study related to negative attitudes of job seekers in recruitment advertising are controversial findings compared to the general positive effects of humor on attitudes in traditional consumer advertising (Eisend 2009, Weinberger & Gulas 1992).
The study also contributes to the stream of literature on the *moderator effects* of humor in advertising (e.g., Chung & Zhao 2003, Weinberger & Gulas 1992, Zhang & Zinkhan 2006) by investigating congruence between humor and fun climate of the company as a potential moderator. This study attends to the discussion on describing different moderators in the humor in advertising literature, such as prior brand evaluations (Chattopadhyay & Basu 1990), sensation seeking (Galloway 2009), and product involvement (Chung & Zhao 2003). These conclusions give *new perspectives into advertising literature* on both humor and congruence in the unexplored recruitment advertising context.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the social media recruitment campaign level related to the *Internet as a communication channel* (Paper IV). First, *social media (Facebook) as a digital channel* is not necessarily working properly to reach job seekers. There is a potential related to humor raising awareness and interest towards the firm among a general audience, and increasing the traffic on the company’s web page. Humor also has the potential to *attract potential job seekers* visiting the web pages of the firm to seek more information about the firm. From an employee recruiting perspective, social media has developed into a leading communication channel for recruiting (Cappelli 2001, Laumer et al. 2010, Sivertzen et al. 2013, Tumasjan et al. 2011). Therefore, the research of recruitment advertising on the Internet will benefit the created knowledge on challenges and opportunities of humor in recruitment advertising.

### 6.4 Managerial implications

The study identifies several managerial challenges and opportunities related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet. These were discussed in detailed way earlier by answering the fourth sub-question (RQ4)—*What kind of challenges and opportunities are related to humor in recruitment advertising on the Internet?* In summary, different perspectives (use of humor, responses to humor, moderator effects, managerial challenges and opportunities of humor) are gathered on humor in advertising by focusing on different communication elements (sender, message, and job seekers’ responses) and investigating the phenomenon on different levels (both recruitment ads and the recruitment campaign). Humor seems to have a managerial potential in recruitment advertising as a device for self-selecting an applicant out of the applicant pool (Paper IV) and potential for social media marketing by increasing sharing intentions (papers II and III). This study also discusses the challenges (e.g., negative intermediate advertising effects of humor,
negative word-of-mouth) of using humor in the sensitive and personal employment context.

This study identifies different kinds of challenges and the potential of a company’s humorous recruitment advertising campaign on social media. It is important for managers to understand that there are different communication elements that must be acknowledged when executing humor, such as humor type, the different ways a job seeker responds, whether humor is considered as unconventional or unprofessional in the industry, and how suitable the Internet is as a communication channel and used as a firm’s own media, which is relevant for small companies as low-cost media. This study presented a case example of how companies can use humor, and thus are able to emphasize different values that are not expected for their industries (De Cooman & Pepermans 2012).

When humor appears to be on the rise in consumer-targeted ads (Weinberger et al. 2015), its assumptions will spill over to recruitment ads. Especially when firms are eager to achieve the positive viral effects of humor in an online environment (Swanepoel et al. 2009), the prevalence of humor potentially will be on the rise in Internet recruitment ads. This dissertation has provided empirical case evidence on how small companies can use humor in their Internet recruitment ads and in employer brand messages. For small companies, it is of utmost importance to understand how they can manage their employer brand messages and put the focus on both content and communication style elements. Typically, companies have put more emphasis on instrumental facts in their employer branding in recruitment ads (Nolan et al. 2013). Evidence collected from case studies in the dissertation showed a different approach and examples of how a small company has emphasized symbolic attributes that are related to humans, such as staff, job seekers, and stakeholders, and communicated those humorously (Paper I). This offers a potential for small companies in recruiting when symbolic attributes also have the potential to form perceptions of a P-O fit among job seekers (Nolan et al. 2013).

6.5 Evaluation of the study

The dissertation has utilized mixed methods research and different research methods: experimental (Paper II, III) and case study design (Paper I, IV) to be able to answer the main research question. Thus, the dissertation utilized between-method triangulation, which means using different methods measuring the same phenomenon (or unit) with different perspectives (Denzin 1970, Lloyd 2011). One
simple argumentation for triangulation is to create a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and to create more credible results (see Hussein 2009). Triangulation can be conducted for confirmation or completeness purposes, and this study has a main focus on the completeness purpose. This means that findings from the qualitative case studies and experimental studies are completing each other rather than confirming the findings. Triangulation for the purpose of completeness is often utilized to investigate a previously unexplored and complex research problem, which was the case when investigating humor in advertising in the context of a recruitment advertising (Hussein 2009).

*General mixed methods research evaluation* criteria are discussed shortly. The first question is whether the research is mixed methods. The methodology section has made a detailed description of multilevel triangulation method design and justifications of the mixed methods research. The second question is whether the study describes rigorous mixed methods research. The reasons for multiple types of data are presented in the methodology section, both quantitative and qualitative procedures have been opened, the concurrent nature of data collection is established, and the author’s paradigmatic stance as mainly objective is described. The third question is whether the author displayed advanced knowledge of the used mixed methods design. Multilevel triangulation method design has been described and visualized (see Figure 1). In addition, purpose, research questions, and data analysis are described, and some methodological articles on mixed methods research have been cited (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 163–164).

Triangulation design is considered to be effective where different types of data are collected independently and roughly at the same time. One of the acknowledged challenges is to be able to have all the expertise that is needed in this kind of design. This can be tackled by having a research team that has expertise in both qualitative and quantitative methods, and in this dissertation this was taken into account by having in individual studies co-authors who have experienced either experimental quantitative methods or qualitative case study methods (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 66).

Peer review practice is a key element in the evaluation of research in addition to an author’s own subjective evaluation of the study. The research papers included in this dissertation (Paper I, II and IV) have been evaluated in the academic journals’ review process. Paper III is a book chapter that has been reviewed and presented at an academic conference and at research seminars and has had several comments and discussions among peers. The overall dissertation is evaluated in the pre-
examination process by experienced and acknowledged advertising and corporate communication scholars.

When following the main chosen scientific paradigm of this study—positivism—the quality criteria can be generally based on: internal validity (“isomorphism of findings with reality”), external validity (“generalizability”), reliability (“in the sense of stability”) (see Guba & Lincoln 1994) and construct validity (Gibbert et al. 2008, Yin 1994). These four criteria have been loosely used to guide evaluations of the quantitative-dominated experimental studies (Paper II, Paper III) and the qualitative-dominated case studies as quality criteria have been adopted in case studies (see Yin 1994) (Paper I, Paper IV) in the dissertation. The qualitative and quantitative parts of the dissertation represent different approaches, which are merged concurrently to understand the phenomenon in the mixed methods research.

Transferability of the results of the dissertation is shortly discussed. Transferability considers how well the results can be generalized to other settings (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Similarly, quantitative researchers with experimental logic are talking about external validity (see Onwuegbuzie & Johnson 2006), which can be described as two aspects with the main threads of population validity and ecological validity (Bracht & Glass 1968). The dissertation is able to develop new framework on humor in recruitment advertising and investigates it in the empirical setting of (small company’s) Internet communication channel. What comes to empirical results, Weinberger and Gulas (1992) have emphasized how difficult it is seeking for generalizations in humor in advertising studies, when an issue is that in “some situations humor works and some other it does not work.” This study has investigated the phenomenon of humor in advertising in the context of recruitment advertising. More specifically, the Internet was defined as a communication channel and as a key part of empirical setting. Internet was visible in the real-life cases and experiments. As the communication channel seemed to be important aspect of the phenomenon, it can be considered that empirical findings should be discussed mostly on the Internet. The overall framework, which consists of different communication perspectives (communication elements of the context of recruitment advertising and perspective on humor in advertising) with managerial approach, offers research approach, which represents more general framework for investigating humor in the different advertising contexts.
6.5.1 Evaluation of experiments

The critics of experiments have criticized their artificial settings as being unable to offer practical solutions to applied problems and they have criticized the use of college students as research participants (Kardes 1996). However, experimentation (Lynn & Lynn 2003) and controlled artificial settings are needed to be able to understand specific cause-effect relationships (Kardes 1996), and this was the goal in the research questions related to experimental studies in this dissertation. However, the artificial setting of the experiments using fictive humorous recruitment adverts were useful. First, the humor in Internet recruitment ads seems to be still rare in real life, and the study was able to ask “whether something can happen, rather than whether it typically does happen” (Mook 1983). Second, for actual firms taking a risk of potential negative effects of humorous recruitment ads is not convenient. Third, using fictive small start-up company material avoids the confounding effects of potential prior attitudes (Söderlund & Dahlén 2010).

This study used university students as participants in the experiments. In basic research when the focus is on relative effects, the student samples are considered to be appropriate (Kardes 1996). Decision of subject pool (Croson 2002: 928) was based on choosing university students from the population of young job seekers. Acknowledging the critics of students as convenience sample in consumer research (Pham 2013), however, in this study students represented well the potential job seekers and target group of recruitment ads, although they were not representative of the broader population of job seekers, which is criticized by Rynes et al. (1980). It has to be admitted that both experiments had small samples of stimuli and a small number of participants. However, the number of independent observations per treatment group was considered relevant (Croson 2002: 939).

The conducted experiments were classified as true laboratory experiments which have a high internal validity and low external validity (Lynn & Lynn 2003). Internal validity “is the strength with which one can conclude that the manipulated treatment caused the observed changes in the outcome measure” (Lynn & Lynn 2003). Randomly assigning subjects to different treatment groups is important in the experiments to achieve a high internal validity; consequently, in this dissertation, participants were randomly allocated to different treatments groups in both experiments (Lynn & Lynn 2003).

Construct validity is achieved when manipulated variables and measures are labeled and identified correctly. In this study, construct validity was taken into account by using output variables that are established in the earlier literature.
Regarding manipulated variables, the manipulation checks of humor (perceived humorousness) was measured as successful in both experiments. However, in Paper III, the construct validity was seen as more limited regarding the fun climate concept and congruence, and those constructs need further development in the next phases of the research. Construct validity is often seen as problematic in basic research (Lynn & Lynn 2003).

Reliability of quantitative research can be defined as “the ability of a measure to produce consistent results when the same entities are measured under different conditions” (Field 2013: 882). Reliability was developed through the reporting of the overall research process in detail in the experiments: for example, describing stimulus development, constructs used with individual items, and the stimulus material in the publications as well as describing the statistical analysis. More specifically, the unweighted average of the item responses were used for all the multi-item measures, and Cronbach’s coefficient alpha related to scale reliability (Peterson 1994) was calculated to be at a sufficient level for all scales of different output variables.

6.5.2 Evaluation of case studies

In this dissertation, the case studies had a qualitative focus, yet they utilized either quantitative analysis or had a small amount of quantitative data. This meant increasing credibility through analysis method triangulation and data source triangulation (see Hussein 2009).

Validity in qualitative research is generally related to the aim of providing evidence for the correctness of the description (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 292). Construct validity is related to the quality of conceptualization of the relevant concept, and how well a study investigates what it claims to investigate (see Gibbert et al. 2008). First, case study researchers should establish a chain of evidence, which enables the reader follow the process from research questions to final conclusions (Yin 1994: 34, 100) when aiming at to increase construct validity and reliability. Second, researchers should use multiple sources of evidence (Yin 1994: 90–92) and this can be conducted through different triangulation types (see Patton 1987, in Yin 1994: 92). This means using several methodological approaches, analysis methods, different sources of data, different investigators, (Hussein 2009, Patton 1984: 329–332) and theoretical approaches when investigating the same phenomenon (Hussein 2009). How to conduct chain of evidence as well as use
multiple sources of evidence is described in Chapter 4 Methodology in detailed way.

Reliability is seen to have a limited and minor role in qualitative studies when it is looked at in mixed methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007: 134–135). In qualitative research, reliability is related to how well the operations of the study can be repeated with similar results by other researchers (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 292, Patton 1984: 33). Reliability issues have been taken into account with a careful documentation of the research process in Chapter 4 Methodology and in the papers (Papers I, IV).

External validity is related to the question of generalization (Gibbert et al. 2008, Yin 1994). There is a difference between statistical and analytical generalization. Analytical generalization refers generalization from empirical observations to theory whereas statistical generalization means generalizations to population. Case studies are not allowing statistical generalizations (see Yin 1994).

There has been a debate between scholars how well case studies are able to create theory and generalize their findings and there has been critics on single-case studies (see Yin 2003). Even though, their usefulness has also been recognized. For example Dubois and Gadde (2002) see single case studies as relevant because of the possibility of learning particular cases. Dyer and Wilkins (1991) support the idea that single in-depth case study can offer rich and contextualized knowledge compared to the aim of seeking evidence and generalizations from multiple cases that are often thin on description.

Content analysis has been criticized for its limited generalizability. However, the intention of content analysis is to describe the data and not make larger generalizations (Paper I). To increase the credibility of the content analysis process, investigator triangulation was utilized when two researchers coded sentences to different classes independently based on a constructed coding agenda. The reliability was measured as agreements with Krippendorff’s alphas, and it was considered to be adequate (see Kolbe & Burnett 1991). It can be argued why analyzing employer brand messages from one company? Analysis unit was the sentence-level rather than ad-level, which means that each sentence was analysed in each of the six humorous ads of the case company. However, in the illustrative case study the aim of the study is not make empirical generalizations to larger population from collected sample of data. The empirical data which was provided was able to answer adequately to the sub-research question on how humor in employer brand message can be conceptualized.
A case study is considered an appropriate choice in such situations when the phenomenon occurs in a real-life context and the researcher has little control (see Stake 2005, Yin 2003). Most often, the high controllability is not the goal in the case studies. However, in this dissertation, cases were not investigated strictly in their real-life settings even where natural data was analyzed. High controllability was achieved when responses to a real-life social media campaign was investigated after a real campaign in a relatively controllable classroom environment. Furthermore, it was not possible to test the effects of humor on a real company’s recruitment ads because of the potential negative effects on a company. Thus, it was good to keep in mind the ethical aspects related to investigating potentially harmful effects in a real-life context. Therefore, in this dissertation, repeated simulated real-life cases were used (Paper IV).

6.6 Reflections, limitations and suggestions for further studies

One of the challenges has been the lack of previous knowledge on the prevalence of humor and employer brand elements in recruitment ads. Therefore, in the future studies, developing the employer brand message framework which is suitable for analysis of ad-level and conducting large-scale content analysis of the humor and other (e.g. employer branding) content of recruitment ads would provide useful continuum for studies on employer branding in recruitment ads. For example, based on the research of Elving et al. (2013) majority of the Dutch job advertisements did not have elements of employer branding, thus, it would be interesting future research avenue to conduct these kind of studies in the Finnish context.

However, this dissertation have shown that phenomenon of humor in recruitment advertising do exist as individual empirical case examples are collected from small company’s Internet communication channel. Consequently, this also does make sense to study the topic. Even humor in recruitment advertising is not assumed to be widely used by companies yet, the assumption is that the prevalence of using humor in recruitment ads is rising, similarly compared to what has been happening in consumer ads (Weinberger et al. 2015).

In this study, humor has been defined as communication style and an element of employer brand message. In future studies, it would be interesting to continue research related to employer brand message communication with experimental designs. For example, it could be investigated whether humor in the employer brand message is more effective when it is communicating symbolic human-related attributes compared to instrumental attributes. How humor can be part of branding
is worth studying in further research and is able to offer interesting new research avenues, for example humor seems to have potential to communicate corporate brand identity with ethical values on Facebook (Alatalo et al. 2018) and effectiveness of humor could be tested experimentally in this kind of corporate branding context.

One limitation of this study is related to the potentially low relevance of humor for the job seekers in the recruitment process. Humor is only one communication style element of employer brand message where company can present itself to prospective employees, and prospective employees need more information before they choose an employer. It can be argued that humor has potential in the early phase of recruitment process and attraction phase but the meaning of humor is not high in the decisional phases when a prospective employee is weighing all information on different companies, and in making a final decision for which employer to choose. However, this study has the focus on recruitment advertising, which is a way of attracting the best job seekers (Backhaus 2004). Attracting phase is relevant phase from the advertising perspectives, yet further studies could investigate humor in the overall recruitment process (e.g. Breaugh & Starke 2000, Ullah 2010, Uggerslev et al. 2012).

One of the methodological limitation is related to the aspect of collecting empirical evidence from setting of small companies operating in Internet communication channel. This decision was rooted to some compromises for practical reasons. Empirical observations were made from this empirical setting, which offered real-life cases as a starting point when exploring the phenomenon. However, when experimental comparisons have not been made in terms of small versus large companies or comparisons between online versus offline communication, it seems challenging to prove whether the findings are particular to these dimensions. Therefore, in further experimental studies these dimensions could be studied as potential moderators to provide additional knowledge how firm size or communication channel moderates the effects of humor in recruitment advertising.

One of the limitation could be seen as related to the wide spectrum of humor definitions in this dissertation and lack of producing one single definition of humor. However, humor has not been a research object as such, and thus defining humor has not been a sub-question to be answered in this dissertation. Another limitation has been that the main focus in this dissertation has been on the textual form of humor. Most humorous text in the Internet are image-based, and visual humor has been proven to be more prominent than verbal humor (Shifman 2007). Image-based
appeals are indeed dominating the cluttered environment in advertising (Söderlund & Dahlén 2010); and furthermore, when dealing with Internet advertising, web pages based on video are able to get more attention than other information types (Hsieh & Chen 2011). Thereafter, in future studies, humor should be investigated as an image-based appeal, and its effectiveness could be investigated in different information types (e.g., text, text-picture, picture, or video) (Hsieh & Chen 2011).

Humor is one of the emotional advertising appeals such as sex and attractiveness, or more shocking or controversial forms of advertising, such as taboo advertising. More recently, combinations of different appeals have been investigated and humor is potentially effective when utilized in taboo advertising. Humor might help to find an optimal level of arousal in high-level taboo advertisements (Sabri 2012). Another example is from Blackford et al. (2011), who have looked at the prevalence of humor and violence in Super Bowl commercials and observed that combining humor and violence has become more common. Testing the effects of humor and fear appeals in recruitment adverts context would bring a novel perspective to research on combined effects (see Yoon & Tinkham 2013). Another potential area could be to combine and test the effectiveness of storytelling and humor, as it has been identified as potentially one influential element for effective brand stories (Chiu et al. 2012). It could be worth investigating the study of combined effects of different advertising appeals also in recruitment ads.

Recently, the importance of integrative cognitive and affective models in understanding the effects of humor in advertising have been acknowledged (Eisend 2011, Crawford & Gregory 2015). In this dissertation, the focus has not been to study the underlying mechanisms of humor processing. Furthermore, brand-related effects were not investigated as output variables. Future avenues of research could investigate aspects related to the mechanisms of humor processing as well as brand-related audience responses in recruitment advertising.

The responses to humor were investigated from the perspective of job seekers. Target group could be seen as a limitation when considering the intended contribution effort in marketing research. Thus, further extensions of the study could examine the responses of consumers who are not job seekers to understand the extended effects of humorous recruitment advertising on these consumers as a main target group (see Feldman et al. 2006). Moreover, other external stakeholders and their role in recruitment advertising (Oikarinen & Saraniemi 2012) could be investigated as well as broader audience’s responses. It is also possible to
investigate the effectiveness of a company’s consumer-targeted marketing material on job seekers.

Not all consumers are similar, and not all job seekers are similar as well. Further studies could investigate the role of involvement that has been described as being a moderator in the consumer advertising context (Halkias & Kokkinaki 2013). There might be differences between passive and active job seekers in how they respond to humor. Is the level of job seeking (active job seekers as a high-involvement audience) activity moderating the effects of humor in recruitment advertising? In the case of nonhumorous products, humor created more favorable attitudes in a low-involvement audience than in a high-involvement audience (Zhang & Zinkhan 2006). The mechanism could be similar among job seekers, and further studies might investigate whether passive job seekers create more positive attitudes to humor in recruitment advertising.

The responses that were investigated in the experiments were short term responses. Further studies should also focus on longer-term advertising effects, which are also relevant when operating in the recruitment advertising context where decisions to apply for a job are often a longer-term process. Humor can have a positive “sleeper” effect regardless of negative short-term effects (Nabi et al. 2007). Methodologically speaking, related to experimental designs, instead of relying on measuring consumer responses through a self-administered questionnaire, data could be collected in many other ways. For example, the detection of emotional reactions from facial expressions and the measuring of electrophysiological signals, cognitive and affective responses to humor can be tackled in detailed new ways.

In future studies, humor relatedness (see Cline & Kellaris 2007) is perhaps a more relevant concept to be used compared to congruence in the discussion on the relation between humor and fun company climate. It has to be acknowledged that there was a lack of evidence of fun company climate being valid for the measurement of perceptions of the company climate. As the ‘fun company’ in the experiment was not perceived very funny (5.0/10), even it was significantly funnier compared to ‘boring company’ (3.2/10) the manipulation was not totally successful. Therefore, in further studies, as a methodological development of experimental design, manipulation of the “fun climate” could be done using one company instead of two different companies related to the fun aspect through, for example, pictorial stimuli and using smiling, happy people (see Rafaeli 2006). However, as a counterargument, fun climate was not a key concept in the dissertation and this issue can be seen as a methodological issue. Further theoretical developments can be suggested for example towards workplace fun concept (e.g., Tews et al. 2012).
and another potential aspect is to look at humor as related thematically to the advertised job itself. Investigating both humor-job relatedness and humor-company climate relatedness aspects as potential moderators would be an interesting further step in research on the effects of humor in recruitment advertising.

This study has investigated humor in recruitment ads in the northern cultural context in Finland, which can be regarded as a limitation of this study. However, to the author’s knowledge, there was no underlying research on humor in recruitment advertising context, and this is why it was justified to start research in one cultural context and exclude cultural comparisons in the early phase of the research project. It seems that irony is much used in Finland (Vuorela 2005) and might also be more effective in the Finnish cultural environment. In future research, it would be interesting to tackle the question of effectiveness of humor in different cross-cultural context (see Eisend 2009).

Research on advertising has evolved rapidly recently. As an indication of that development, new emerged research topics can be identified in the research of humorous advertising. Brand parody communication represents this kind of emerging research area as an emerging company’s communication strategy in media campaigns attacking a competitor’s brand; the results show how tactics can harm the parodied brand (Jean 2011). Roehm and Roehm (2014) have noticed both positive and negative effects on attitudes when using parody advertising tactics. Earlier research on humorous advertising have indeed been dominated by company-related advertising. The study by Van den Berg et al. (2011) on user-generated parody ads represents a new emerging research stream which deals other than company-generated ads. This possibly also helps advertising researchers to more naturally approach humor as an amusing communication, which is shared between people in social settings (Mesmer-Magnus et al. 2012) instead of approaching humor as a stimulus in the ad and as a message appeal (Percy & Rossiter 1992).
References

Boing H (1994) The role of a salesperson within a long term buyer-supplier relationship in the industrial market. Relationship Marketing, Theory, Methods and Applications, Research Conference Proceedings, J. Sheth and A. Parvatiyar, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.


Appendix 1 A qualitative questionnaire (Paper IV)

A qualitative questionnaire (printed) was prepared to ask about respondents’ (recruited among architect students participating in a lecture) perceptions towards individual recruitment ads and the overall recruitment campaign of the architect company. Participants were asked to evaluate and give justifications about the following questions (Finnish).

Sivu 1 – Katso ilmoitusta ja vastaa kysymyksiin (aikaa noin 4 minuuttia) (jatka kääntöpuolelle tarvittaessa)

1) Mitä ajattelet ilmoituksesta? (Esim. kuvaila ilmoitusta omin sanoin ja sen eri puolia erilaisin adjektiivein)
2) Millaista työntekijää ajattelet ilmoituksella haettavan? (Kuvaile haetun työntekijän ominaisuuksia)

Sivu 2 – Katso ilmoitusta ja vastaa kysymyksiin (aikaa noin 4 minuuttia) (jatka kääntöpuolelle tarvittaessa)
1) Mitä ajattelet ilmoituksesta? (Esim. kuvaille ilmoitusta omin sanoin ja sen eri puolia erilaisin adjektiivein)
2) Millaista työntekijää ajattelet ilmoituksella haettavan? (Kuvaile haetun työntekijän ominaisuuksia)

Sivu 3 – Katso ilmoitusta ja vastaa kysymyksiin (aikaa noin 4 minuuttia) (jatka kääntöpuolelle tarvittaessa)

1) Mitä ajattelet ilmoituksesta? (Esim. kuvaille ilmoitusta omin sanoin ja sen eri puolia erilaisin adjektiivein)
2) Millaista työntekijää ajattelet ilmoituksella haettavan? (Kuvaile haetun työntekijän ominaisuuksia)
Sivu 4 – Katso ilmoitusta ja vastaa kysymyksiin (aikaa noin 4 minuuttia) (jatka kääntöpuolelle tarvittaessa)

1) Mitä ajattelet ilmoituksesta? (Esim. kuvaila ilmoitusta omin sanoin ja sen eri puolia erilaisin adjektiivein)

2) Millaista työntekijää ajattelet ilmoituksella haettavan? (Kuvaila haetun työntekijän ominaisuuksia)

Sivu 5 – Katso ilmoitus ja vastaa kysymyksiin (aikaa noin 4 minuuttia) (jatka kääntöpuolelle tarvittaessa)

1) Mitä ajattelet ilmoituksesta? (Esim. kuvaila ilmoitusta omin sanoin ja sen eri puolia erilaisin adjektiivein)

2) Millaista työntekijää ajattelet ilmoituksella haettavan? (Kuvaila haetun työntekijän ominaisuuksia)

Sivu 6 – Mieti kampanjaa kokonaisuudessaan ja vastaa seuraaviin kysymyksiin. (Aikaa noin 10 minuuttia) (jatka kääntöpuolelle tarvittaessa)
1) Mikä esityystä viidestä ilmoituksesta on mielestäsi paras? Perustele vastauksesi.
2) Mikä esityystä viidestä ilmoituksesta on mielestäsi huonoin? Perustele vastauksesi.
3) Mitä mieltä olet tällaisesta kampanjasta? (Esim. suhtaudutko tämässä ilmoittelussa positiivisesti, neutraalisti vai negatiivisesti?). Perustele vastauksesi.
4) Mitä ajattelet yrityksestä työnantajana tämän kampanjan perusteella? (Esim. kuvaile yritystä ja työntekijöitä, ilmapiiriä tms.). Perustele vastauksesi.
5) Onko tällainen rekrytointimainonta mielestäsi tyypillistä toimialalle? (Esim. kuinka näet yrityksen ilmoittelun suhteessa muiden saman alan yrityksen ilmoittelua?). Perustele vastauksesi.
6) Mikäli asia olisi sinulle ajankohtainen, saisiko tällainen kampanja sinut hakemaan yritykseen töihin? Perustele vastauksesi.

Vastaajan taustatiedot (aikaa noin 5 minuuttia)
1. Sukupuoli
   ☐ Mies,
   ☐ Nainen
2. Ikä
   ________ vuotta
3. Oletko nähnyt kampanjaa aiemmin?
   ☐ Kyllä,
   ☐ Ei
4. Tunnetko ilmoituksissa olleen yrityksen entuudestaan?
   ☐ Kyllä,
   ☐ En
   Jos vastasit edelliseen kysymykseen kyllä, niin miten tunnet yrityksen?
5. Muuttiko kampanja mielikuvaa ilmoituksissa olleesta yrityksestä?
   ☐ Kyllä,
   ☐ Ei
   Jos vastasit edelliseen kysymykseen kyllä, niin miten?
6. Kuvaila vielä lopuksi millainen merkitys työpaikkailmoituksilla on sinulle, kun haet työpaikkaa?
7. Mikäli haluat tietoa tutkimuksen tuloksista, laita alle sähköpostiosoitteesi
   ________________________________ @ ________________________________ KIITOS
Appendix 2 Interview guide (Paper IV)

An interview with the architecture firm’s office manager was conducted related to understanding the intentions of both the individual humorous recruitment advertisement and the goals of the recruitment campaign (Finnish).

- Mitä on mietitty kun kampanjaa on suunniteltu?
- Miten Facebook on vaikuttanut ilmoitusten suunnittelun yms…
- Yksittäisten ilmoitusten tarkoitusperät
  - Ilmoitus 1 ("Haetaan arkkitehtitä hullun vaativiin tehtäviin")
  - Ilmoitus 2 ("Arkkitehdille rantatontti Oulujoen varressa…”)
  - Ilmoitus 3 ("Haemme arkkitehtijoukkueeseen laitahyökkääjää…")
  - Ilmoitus 4 ("Sinäkö se oot?”)
  - Ilmoitus 5 ("Haluaisitko ajatella nykyisistä työkavereistasi hyvää?”)
- Mitä kohderyhmiä tavoiteltiin?
- Tai mietittiinkö sitä? Miten suunnitelmaallisesti päädyttiin juuri tällaisiin mainoksii?
- Mikä yllätti kampanjan jälkeen, miksi?
  - Mitä opittiin?
Appendix 3 A stimulus material (Paper III)
Appendix 4 A questionnaire (Paper III)

Taustakysymyksiä

1. Mikä on opintojoesi pääaine?
   () jossaloastesell, mikä: __________ () insinöörinteet () lääketiede () huoneontpteet () muu

2. Mikä on koulutustunnus?
   () Peruskoulu () Ylioppilas () Maisteritutkinto tai ylempi

3. Mikä on täsmänhetkinnen rooliist työelämässä?
   () Päätösmiehen opiskelija () Opiskelija, osa-ajastamolla () Töissä, osa-aikainen opiskelija

4. Mitä pidät täsmänhetkisestä roolissaist työelämässä?
   En pidä sitä 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Pidän sitä

5. Oletko hakemust työpaikkaa viimeisen 30 päivän aikana?
   () Kyllä
   () Ei

6. Luuletko, että haet työpaikkaa seuraavien 30 päivän aikana?
   El lainkaan todennäköistä 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Hyvin todennäköistä

7. Työn ja työpaikan etsinnän metekitys elämisessä?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>El lainkaan samaa mieltä</th>
<th>Täysin samaa mieltä</th>
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<tr>
<td>Työpaikka jossa työelämässä on tärkeästi minulle</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Työpaikan etsinnän on tärkeissä roolissa elämässäni</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Viiran paljon alkaa etsien eri työpaikka- ja työoikeudisia Internetissä!</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

8. Oletko mies vai naisten?
   () mies
   () naisten

9. Kuita vanha olet?

   Olen __________ vuotta vanha

KUVITTELE SEURAAVAKSI, ETTÄ OLET ETSIMÄSSÄ PARHAILLA TYÖTÄ JA KATSELET SEURAAVALLA SIVULLA OLEVAA TYÖPAIKKAILMOITUSTA INTERNETISSÄ. LUE TYÖPAIKKAILMOITUS JA VASTAA SITÄ SEURAAVIN KYSYMYKSIN.
Haemme 2 harjoittelijaa

Haemme tulevuuksen ammattilaisia, jotka eivät pelkää ottaa vastuuta ja jotka haluavat jakaa tavoittelemme telemarkkinointiaan järkevää kehitysviihtyä. Esitteen parhaillaan jossakin kahtta lajikirjasta harjoittelija, jotka haluavat olla mukana ammattilaisista koneestavasti liittyneen rakentamassa ja kehittämässä tulevuuksen telemarkkinointiasemista. Toivomme sinulta alitaa kiinnostusta puhelinperusteluihin ja henkilön kantaamaan.

Edellytykset vaikeuksista:

- Kehostaa tarvittavaa taustatietoja ja hoitoaan
- Sujuva kirjoittaminen, että puhetaan englanniksi kestä

Tarvitsemme seuraavan:

- Mylenkiintoisia ja haastavia tehtäviä
- Mahdollisuuksien ammatilliseen urakehitykseen
- Armon ja positiivisen työyhteisön
- Vastakkaisen tasapainon työläis- ja vapaan-vuoden välillä


Makenes sekä Ota toimintatietoa 20.6.2013 mennessä sähköpostilla osoitteeseen jorma.hinnunen@telconnect.fi

Jorma Hinnunen,
Projektipäällikkö
TelConnect Oy
1. Mitä ajattelet työpäiväkäyttöteksteestä?

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Kuinka hauska tänään työpäiväkäyttötekstistä?

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2. Mistä ajattelet työpaikasta?

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<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Negatiivinen vaikutelma

- Ei hauska  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
- Ei leikkisä | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
- Ei viihtyvä | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Vältä

- Tyhjä | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
- Pöydäytävä | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

3. Mistä ajattelet yrityksestä?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En pidä siitä</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negatiivinen vaikutelma

- Ei hauska | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
- Ei leikkisä | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
- Ei viihtyvä | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Vältä

- Tyhjä | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
- Pöydäytävä | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

4. Kuinka hauskaa ajattelet olevan työskennellä tänä yrityksessä harjoittelijana?

- ei lainkaan hauska | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
- hyvin hauska
5. Mitä ajattelet toimialastaa?

Huono 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Hyvä
En pitäisi sitä 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Pidän sitä
Epämiellyttävää 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Miellyttävää
Negatiivinen vaikutelma 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Positiivinen vaikutelma
Ei hauska 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Hauska
Ei leikkiä 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Leikkää
Ei viihdyttävää 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Viihdyttävää
Työä 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Ei työä
Pitkäaikatyöä 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Ei pitkäaikatyöä

6. Kuinka hauskana ajattelet olevan työskennellä sillä toimialalla harjoitelmijana?

ci lainkan hauskana 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 onnitteli hauskana

7. Mitä ajattelet projektin jälkeenkäytöstä?

Huono 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Hyvä
En pitäisi hänestä 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Pidän hänestä
Epämiellyttävää 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Miellyttävää
Negatiivinen vaikutelma 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Positiivinen vaikutelma
Ei humoristinen 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Humoristinen
Ei hauska 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Hauska
Ei leikkiä 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Leikkää
Ei viihdyttävää 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Viihdyttävää
Työä 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Ei työä
Pitkäaikatyöä 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Ei pitkäaikatyöä
8. Työpaikan kilpailuvuus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eri miehiltä</th>
<th>Samana miehiltä</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yrityksen toimialueen kilpailuvuus</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakaisin vierailulla yrityksen netisivuilta saadaksesi</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eronneen tienoa yrityksestä</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakaisin kysyä liittimoista työpaikkaan liittyen</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakaisin puhua jonkan kanssa, joka työskentelee täi</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on työskennellyt yrityksessä</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakaisin hakea työpaikkaa</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

9. Koinka todennäköistä on etä lähetät hakemukseen sähkön työpaikkaan?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eri todennäköistä</th>
<th>Hyvin todennäköistä</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epäonnistunut</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>EI lauantavia</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahdotonta</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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10. Haluaisitko harkia tämä työpaikallistoitus toiselle?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Erittäin epäonnistunut</th>
<th>Hyvin onnistunut</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kerro muille tästä työpaikalistoituksesta</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puhun muiden kanssa tästä työpaikalistoituksesta</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lähetän työpaikalistoituksen ystävilleni sosiaalisessa mediassa</td>
<td>2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kuinka uskot tavata työpaikalistoitus mielestäsi on?

| Ei lainkaan uskottava | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Hyvin uskottava |

Kirjoitaisitko vielä, minkä ajattele olleen tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus?

Kilots osallistumisesta!
Appendix 5 A qualitative prestudy (Paper III)

A qualitative prestudy was used before main experiment. The idea was to get different options about company types which were perceived as the most funniest and most boring companies. This helped to develop the actual stimulus material for the main experimental setting.

- Kuvittele, että olet etsimässä töitä. Haluaisit löytää paikan harjoittelijana.
  - Kuvaile minkä tyyppisessä yrityksessä on kaikista hauskinta työskennellä?
  - Kuvaile minkä tyyppisessä yrityksessä on kaikista tylsintä työskennellä?
Appendix 6 A quantitative prestudy (Paper III)

*A quantitative prestudy* was used before main experiment. The idea was to get different options about company types which were perceived as the most funniest and most boring companies. This helped to develop the actual stimulus material for the main experimental setting.

**Background questions**

1. What is your main field you are studying?
   ( ) if economics, specify: _____________________ ( ) engineering
   ( ) medicine ( ) natural sciences ( ) other

2. What is your education?
   ( ) primary school ( ) secondary school graduate
   ( ) Master’s degree or higher education

3. What is your current status in working life?
   ( ) Student ( ) Student with a part-time job
   ( ) Mainly in working life, with a part-time student

4. What do you like your current status in working life?
   I do not like it  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  I like it

5. Have you applied a job during the last 30 days?
   ( ) Yes, ( ) No

6. Do you think you will apply a job during the coming 30 days?
   Not likely at all 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Very likely

7. The role of job and job seeking in your life?
   Do not agree at all  Agree completely
   The job where I am working is important to me 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   Seeking a job play a significant role in my life 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   I spend much time looking for different
   job ads in internet 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Are you male or female?
( ) male, ( ) female

How old are you?
I am _____ years old

*Describe what is the most fun type of company to work for(e.g. sector, size, atmosphere, public/private)?* ______________________

*Imagine that you are seeking a job. You would like to find a job for a trainee.*
**How fun do you think it would be to work as a trainee...**

...in a company making toys for children
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

...in a company making computer games
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

...in a company making comic books
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

...in a IT company in high tech industry
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

...in an amusement park
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company making sport equipment
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company selling consumer electronics
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company making mechanical engineering tools
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company making software for electronic industry
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

...in a public sector
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company in media industry
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

...in an investment bank
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company making beauty cosmetics
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a food restaurant
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company making health care services
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company doing financial analysis
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company making rock drills for mining industry
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company making account systems
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

... in a company making investment in industrial estate
not fun at all  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10 very much fun

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Fun Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movies for the film industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone sales work</td>
<td>not fun at all</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process machinery for the paper industry</td>
<td>not fun at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>not fun at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Original publications


Original publications are not included in the electronic version of the dissertation.
79. Keränen, Anne (2015) Business leaders’ narratives about responsibility in leadership work
80. Ruopsa, Leena (2016) Kerrottu identiteetti organisaatioruutuksen kontekstissa
82. Lehto, Irene (2016) Narratives of international opportunities in entrepreneurial selling
83. Nuutilainen, Rikka (2016) Essays on monetary policy in China
84. Iivari, Marika (2016) Exploring business models in ecosystemic contexts
85. Nadeem, Waqar (2016) Examining consumers’ acceptance of social commerce in clothing e-retail
86. Nykänen, Risto (2016) Emergence of an energy saving market : the rise of energy service companies
87. Wang, Fan (2016) From relational capital to venture capital : financing entrepreneurial international new ventures
88. Rantakari, Anniina (2016) Strategy as ‘dispositive’ : essays on productive power and resistance in strategy-making
89. Henttu-Aho, Tiina (2016) The emerging practices of modern budgeting and the role of controller
90. Koivuranta, Matti (2017) Studies on macroeconomics and uncertainty
91. Hylykoski, Jenni (2017) Strategic change emerging in time
92. Conlin, Andrew (2017) Essays on personality traits and investor behavior
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Eeva-Liisa Oikarinen

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UNIVERSITY OF OULU
OULU BUSINESS SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING, MANAGEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

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