



Making sense of executive recruitment in the context of a changing recruitment environment: an explorative study

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Helsinki

2018

HANKEN SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

Department of: Management and Organization	Type of work: Master's thesis
Author: Krista Allinen	Date: 14.03.2018
Title of thesis: Making sense of executive recruitment in the context of a changing recruitment environment: an explorative study	
<p>Abstract: Both in the academic and popular literature there are discussions of how recruitment is changing due to technological advances. The academic literature has presented eHRM, and the relating terms; e-recruitment and e-selection, as well as examined the role of social media in recruitment. Recently, the popular literature has brought up speculations of how executive search companies are threatened by these developments in the recruitment field. However, it is unclear how much the executive recruitment environment has changed. As recruitment is linked with organizational performance, it is important to examine how the challenges from technological advances, the Internet, and social media affect the executive recruitment environment.</p> <p>To explain this somewhat messy situation of executive recruitment, this qualitative study aims to explore how executive recruitment is changing by making sense of the recruitment environment through the perceptions of HR Directors. The study is influenced by the sense-making perspective presented by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). Despite research of sense-making in organizational contexts, the literature needs more support for broader contexts, and environmental sense-making.</p> <p>The research is done by interviewing ten HR Directors from ten Finnish companies. The focus in the analysis is on how the respondents make sense of the changing executive recruitment environment, and further, which elements of executive recruitment arise in the sense-making of the changing recruitment environment.</p> <p>The study presents a counterintuitive finding, where the executive recruitment environment is not affected by the technological advances, as much as it initially was expected. The key elements in executive recruitment are presented, linking them with two main aggregates; a conservative, and a liberal approach to executive recruitment. The findings point towards a more conservative perspective on executive recruitment, emphasizing managing risks and quality in executive recruitment.</p> <p>Despite the concern for executive search actors, the findings show that the changing environment is presenting new demands and challenges for the executive search field, rather than making it fade.</p> <p>Contributing to the recruitment literature, the study presents key elements in executive recruitment. These elements lack emphasis in the HRM and recruitment writings. Further, this study contributes to the sense-making theories, by approaching a field-specific sense-making, influenced by the environmental sense-making perspective. However, as the study is limited to focus on a small number of Finnish companies, the findings need more support from further research.</p>	
Keywords: Executive search, executives, e-recruitment, e-selection, headhunting, recruitment, selection, sense-making, social media, top management	

PREFACE

This Master's thesis has been done as a part of the Management and Organization Master's program at Hanken School of Economics, and is supported by a Finnish Executive Search company, JFP Executive Search Oy. JFP Executive Search has not assigned me to do the research, however, as I work for the company it has affected my interest towards the topic.

The initial idea with this research was to bring perspectives to the executive search field, as it is facing challenges in the changing executive recruitment environment. This thesis will hopefully give relevant insight for JFP Executive Search Oy, and other actors in the executive recruitment field. Further, I hope that this thesis will help in developing executive search services to meet the challenges and demands in the changing recruitment environment.

I would especially like to thank my supervisor at JFP Executive Search, Research Manager Tuija Oinonen (MBA), who has supported me with eye-opening discussions, and given me time to work on the thesis, when needed.

Further, I would like to thank Hannele Seeck (PhD) Professor in Management and Organization University of Turku, School of Economics, who has guided me through this writing and research process.

Krista Allinen

Helsinki 14.3.2018

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1 INTRODUCTION

“Nothing develops an organization as much as new people” (Soikkanen et al., 2015:11). New people and new talent are found by an organization through various recruitment methods. In the more and more competitive business environment we live in today, finding the right talent is crucial for a company’s performance and survival. Businesses are active on a gradually globalized marketplace, where the intangible assets become more important (Augier & Teece, 2009). Especially managers are the ones who create new ways of doing (Soikkanen et al., 2015), and managers play a key role in organizational performance, leading operations and distributing resources in accordance with strategic decisions (Augier & Teece, 2009). Finding and recruiting the right talent for managerial positions is a key factor for a company’s success.

Recruitment has gained a lot of attention in the Human Resource Management (HRM) literature. It is noted that recruitment is a critical feature for a company and its success (Taylor & Collins, 2000; Fish & Macklin, 2004; Roberts, 2005; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005; Schmitt & Kim, 2007), and Guest (1997) has argued that careful selection will enhance high skills and abilities, which further are linked to performance quality. Also, the strategic relevance and the value-adding view of recruitment and selection comes forward in the HRM literature through discussions of recruitment and selection as HRM processes, and HRM linked with performance (Taylor & Collins, 2000; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005; Orlitzky, 2007; Schmitt & Kim, 2007; Hollenbeck & Jamieson, 2015).

Due to technological advances, and socioeconomic developments and trends, HRM processes have changed and developed. The literature about people assessment and recruitment from the year 2000 onwards often show the term Facebook and corporate social behavior (Markoulli et al., 2017), and some people claim that recruitment processes have changed and even become more engaging and easier, due to social media (Tyagi & Tyagi, 2012). Different social media channels, like LinkedIn and Twitter, allow HR departments to more aggressively find potential candidates for certain job positions (Tyagi & Tyagi, 2012). On the other hand, according to a recent survey from Finland, made by Duunitori Oy (2017 – 1), it has become harder to find potential job applicants and experts, even though social media as a recruiting channel has become more popular.

Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) argues that the most efficient way of recruiting new people to an organization is by headhunting and using executive search services. The executive search field has its origins already before the Second World War, and it has

had to react on changes in the socioeconomic dynamics in the past (Soikkanen et al., 2015). Now the field is facing another challenge, the pressure of technologic advances, the Internet and social media.

Recruitment has already changed in many ways, and the terms eHRM, e-recruitment and e-selection are coming up in the HRM and recruitment literature (Felman & Klaas, 2002; Strohmeier, 2007; Stone & Dulebohn; 2013; Stone et al., 2015; Arjomandy, 2016). How much the recruitment to executive positions has changed, especially through executive search, however, is not as clear, which will be further discussed in this thesis.

1.1 Problem background

Hill (2013) has discussed that just as the travel agents and insurance brokers, executive search is the next in line to be swallowed by technological advances, new competitors and structural changes. Now, a few years later, others are talking about the threats for executive search and the future of the field. Ruuska (2017) reflects over speculations, according to which the field should have died many years ago, after companies started posting job ads online. However, the executive search services are still used. According to Luukkonen (2016) the executive search companies in Finland have had a steady growth in the past few years. Luukkonen (2017) writes one year later that social media is taking an even bigger slice of the recruitment firms' work, and a research made by Duunitori Oy (2017 – 1) shows that the growth of Executive Search companies has stopped. The executive search business is a lot about personal networks and connections (Soikkanen et al., 2015), and nowadays business in general is a lot about person branding (Larkiala, 2017). The executive search field traditionally manages the business discretely (Lim & Chan, 2001), and now, social media is pushing all businesses and companies to be more open on social media.

Already in the beginning of 1990's Britton and colleagues (1992) discussed the executive search industry. The discussion was about whether the theory is imperfect or the industry intractable. They argued that the industry has low barriers to entry, and faces a growing demand, and further there is little regulation for the industry. (Britton et al., 1992)

Of course, times have changed since the beginning of the 90's, but now, as the channels to recruit are increasing, the barriers to entry are not only low for new executive search companies, but also for companies themselves to do the recruitment in-house, using the

great variety of recruitment tools. This comes forward in discussions within the Finnish executive search industry, where for example Ahlroth (2018), author at Duunitori Oy, discusses in a talk show *Develop or Die, three quarters of an hour about executive search* (translated from Kehity tai Kuole, kolme varttia suorahausta) about how headhunting nowadays is done both by executive search companies, but also in-house within organizations.

There is some attention to how digitalization and the internet affects HRM and its processes in the researches about eHRM. However, even if eHRM has shown efficiency improvements, especially in e-recruitment, there are some deficiencies and gaps in the research (Strohmeier, 2007). The eHRM studies so far has focused on how to implement the electronic processes in a company's HR, instead of focusing on if eHRM enables organizations to achieve the basic goals for HR (Stone et al., 2015). In recruitment, the basic goal is to successfully place a new person to a specific position, and the goal for selection is to find the most talented and diverse workforce (Stone et al., 2015). As the eHR field is anticipated to grow in the future, the need for research also increases (Stone et al., 2015). Further, even if there is research and discussion about social media and recruitment, there is still a clear research gap in how it actually affects players in the recruitment field, and here the focus is on executive recruiters.

Kryscynski and Ulrich (2015) have suggested that strategic HRM studies have room for research combining practical phenomena and theories of strategic human capital. They say there is not much theory about for example how a company's critical human capital can be redirected to tackle changing demands a company faces (Kryscynski & Ulrich, 2015), and a critical group in a company's human capital, is the top management. Kryscynski and Ulrich (2015) state that there are many theoretical conversations that suffer from a theory-practice gap, especially in the strategic human capital area, which is why this thesis will focus on finding practical opinions on the phenomena in executive recruitment.

As said, there is some research made on the effect of social media in recruitment, and there have been discussions about the executive search field, and its existence in the future (Hill, 2013; Luukkonen, 2017; Ruuska, 2017). However, most of the discussions about the executive search are mainly in the popular literature, lacking academic support. Moreover, despite the great variety of research in recruitment (Barber, 1998; Fish & Macklin, 2004; Roberts, 2005; Orlitzky, 2007; Hollenbeck & Jamieson, 2015), as well as research of CEO and top management succession (Menz, 2012; Hamori &

Koyuncu, 2015; Bragaw & Misangyi, 2017), there is not much focus on executive recruitment practices and processes per se.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore a phenomenon of a changing recruitment environment, and more specifically explore the executive recruitment environment. The study aims to provide understanding, using sense-making theories, of how technological advances and social media affects executive recruitment, and possibly the executive search field. The focus is on what HR directors, who often are involved in management recruiting, present as key issues in executive recruitment, and how their perceptions can be used in making sense of the changing executive recruitment environment. With this thesis, I want to answer the following questions:

1. *How do HR Directors make sense of the changing recruitment environment?*

- *What are the key elements in executive recruitment, that arise in the sense-making of the recruitment environment?*

Now, that companies can engage social media in their recruitment processes, it might seem easier and cheaper to find new employees to the company through these channels. Yet, as there are many more people to choose from using LinkedIn and other social media channels, it is hard to find exactly the right talent. Especially, when recruiting top-level managers, finding the right talent and receiving high-performing managers affects the company's performance and can have an economic impact, thus it includes some risks.

There is a worry about the executive search field and its future (Hill, 2013; Luukkonen, 2017; Ruuska, 2017), and it seems that social media has affected the executive search field, and anyone can nowadays use social media as a recruitment tool to find the potential talent. The new challenges and trends once again affect the executive search field, and it is important to keep up with the changing demands to hold a position in the business world.

Executive search companies can also utilize the technological possibilities that are offered. However, at the same time, these possibilities challenge the players in the industry. It is vital to make sense of these dynamics, and where the field is going. Thus,

the research focuses on HR Directors sense-making of the changing recruitment environment.

This research is inspired by the work of Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), and Gioia and Thomas (1996). Gioia and Thomas (1996) have examined the dynamic environment of the higher education industry, with the focus in sense-making during strategic change. Multiple scholars have later used the sense-making perspective, and a more environmental sense-making approach is presented by Nigam and Ocasio (2010). The sense-making theories still lack research in more environmental contexts, and according to Maitlis and Christianson (2014:98) “quite overlooked, or certainly underplayed, are the social, cultural, economic, and political forces that shape what groups will notice, how they can act, with whom they interact, and the kinds of environments that can be collectively enacted”. This study aims to apply the sense-making perspective on an environment, in which actors react and make sense of a specific retrospective phenomenon, simultaneously contributing with knowledge about a specific current environment of executive recruitment.

1.3 Limitations

The most important limitation in this thesis is the focus on executive recruitment. Here, I refer to the selection and recruitment of top-level management, people for executive positions in Finnish companies. The focus is on employees in corporate and company management teams and employees reporting to the management team.

Further, social media is sometimes described as a buzz word, and is used in many different contexts and discussions. In this thesis I will limit the term to solely refer to a platform, which recruiters, headhunters and companies can use in their recruitment processes. Social media might refer to any social media platform, through which information can spread fast, and in which specific target groups can be reached. Nevertheless, the word in this thesis is mostly related to LinkedIn and Twitter.

The research is done by interviewing HR Directors from Finnish companies, of which most of them have used executive search firms. This limits the overall view of how the current trend is affecting the executive search field. As the focus is on Finnish companies, the results might be different if the study would be made in another country. The executive search field is ahead, especially in the U.S., but also in other European

countries (Soikkanen et al. 2015), and also behavior on social media might differ in Finland versus other countries. As the study is limited to a specific time and place, it is striving to make sense of the current situation.

1.4 Definitions

Table 1 presents the key definitions, which are relevant for this thesis. These will be presented in the theoretical framework in different contexts regarding the role of executives, recruitment, and executive search.

<i>eHRM</i>	“eHRM is the (planning, implementation and) application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities.”	Strohmeier, 2007:20
<i>e-recruitment</i>	The use of Internet-based sources and technological management practices, also called electronic recruitment. Processes and activities that are time- and space-independent, collaborating and interacting, to identify and attract potential competence.	Holm, 2012
<i>e-selection</i>	Different forms of technology to evaluate how well an applicant’s knowledge, skills and abilities fit with the requirements for a certain position. These selection methods can for example be web-based job applications, tests and interviews.	Stone et al., 2015
<i>Executive search</i>	“The business or activity of finding suitable managers and executives for companies.”	Cambridge University Press, 2017
	A process, where an executive search company searches for the right candidates for a certain management position, the candidates are presented and lured to the possible position, compared and then one is chosen for the position.	Soikkanen et al., 2015
<i>Headhunter</i>	An executive search consultant.	Lim & Chan, 2001

<i>Headhunting</i>	"To persuade someone to leave their job by offering that person another job with more pay and a higher position."	Cambridge University Press, 2017
	Using a headhunting firm to find candidates for a certain job position, while executive search is using a headhunting or executive search firm to find the right people for management.	Soikkanen et al., 2015
<i>Recruitment</i>	Practices and activities that identifies and attracts potential employees, and are done by the organization.	Barber, 1998
<i>Selection</i>	Selection is linked with recruitment, and refers to the process of choosing more potential candidates.	Orlitzky, 2007
<i>Senior Executives</i>	"Members of the highest formal <i>executive</i> decision-making body of a company, other than CEOs."	Doms & Knyphausen-Aufseß, 2014
<i>Social media</i>	Different Internet-based applications that allow users to share and create content. Social media builds on blogs, social networking sites, virtual social words, collaborative projects like Wikipedia, content communities, and virtual game worlds.	Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010
<i>Social networking sites</i>	Web-based services that enables networking by allowing individuals to create public or semi-public profiles within different systems and connect with other users.	boyd & Ellison, 2008
<i>Top management</i>	Executives with the following titles: chairman/chairwoman, chief executive officer, managing director, president, executive directors, and executive vice-presidents. The top management is responsible for the entire enterprise.	BusinessDictionary, Web Finance Inc., 2018

Table 1 Definitions

1.5 Structure

The following chapter will present the theoretical framework and go through relevant literature to support the research, including the following themes: sense-making; the importance of executives; recruitment and selection; and executive search. These parts include necessary subchapters about top management succession, recruitment linked with performance, social media in recruitment, eHRM, among others. The theoretical framework is followed by the methodology chapter, presenting the research design and structure, and the strategies for data collection and analysis. Further, the thesis moves on to the findings and analysis, inspired by the work of Gioia and colleagues (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996), identifying first- and second-order findings, and connecting them with aggregate concepts. The final part discusses the findings, relating them to the research question and purpose of the study. Additionally, conclusions and suggestions for further research are presented in the final part. Chapter six presents a summary of the whole thesis in Swedish. This chapter will not include any additional findings or information, but summarizes the main parts from the thesis.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As presented in the introduction, this thesis explores and makes sense of the changing executive recruitment environment, by examining the perceptions of HR Directors of executive recruitment. Thus, the theoretical framework starts with presenting the theory and literature of sense-making and sense-giving. To gain insight in executive recruitment, this chapter also presents the role of executives, recruitment as part of HRM and eHRM processes, recruitment linked with performance, and social media in recruitment. Further, as the aim is to explore how executive recruitment actors, such as executive search companies, are affected by the changes, this chapter presents the concept of executive search.

2.1 Sense-making and sense-giving

Sense-making as a concept has been brought to wider organizational research literature by Weick in 1995, in his book *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Despite earlier research and literature about sense-making, the work of Weick from 1995, has gotten a lot of attention in recent organizational sense-making literature (Weber & Glynn, 2006).

“The concept of sensemaking is well named, because, literally, it means the making of sense” (Weick, 1995:4). Weick (1995) has presented sense-making as an activity or a process, which is about placing items into frameworks, understanding, redressing surprise, constructing meaning, interacting to attain mutual understanding, and patterning. Sense-making is grounded in both individual and social activity, and is built on mental models, which a person has acquired from earlier experiences, and part of understanding sense-making is to comprehend how interruptions are coped with. (Weick, 1995)

The first question in sense-making is “what is going on?” which is followed by “what to do next?” which is presented by Weick and colleagues (2005), who say that sense-making is about action. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) has presented sense-making together with sense-giving. Sense-making refers to the construction of meaning and understanding, and reconstruction of meaning by the parties involved in the change, while sense-giving is about attempting to influence the sense-making and how others construct meaning to redefine the reality (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Further, Weick and colleagues (2005)

say that sense-making is about categorizing, labeling, and bracketing events, for individuals to find a mutual ground.

Weick (1995) has defined seven properties of sense-making: grounded in identity construction; retrospective; enactive of sensible environments; social; ongoing; focused on and by extracted cues; and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy, which are explained next in more detail.

Sense-making is *grounded in identity construction*, which refers to the fact that individuals need to make sense of identity, but individuals do not act alone as ‘sensemakers’. Moreover, sense-making is *retrospective*, as an experience can be made sense of only after it has happened, and sense-making refers to a “reality as an ongoing accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of situations in which they find themselves and their creations” (Weick, 1995:15). In other words, people create an explanation that is reasonable, to support the thought of why they have experienced a certain thing and why they have made certain decisions. Maitlis and Christianson (2014) have discussed that also other temporal perspectives like future-oriented sense-making, are more recently studied.

The perspective of grounded in identity construction and the retrospective perspective explain the part of ‘sensing’, and to explain the part of ‘making’, Weick (1995) discusses sense-making being *enactive of sensible environments*. This refers to that sense-making consists of ongoing codetermination, and involves individuals in relation to their environments.

Further, Weick (1995) has presented sense-making as a *social* activity, which is also supported by Maitlis (2005), and Weick and colleagues (2005). The social nature is explained by that a person’s acts are defined by socialization background and how an audience perceive conclusions in sense-making (Weick, 1995). According to Weick (1995) organizations’ languages and symbols have an impact in sense-making, and Weick and colleagues (2005) have stated that a central function in sense-making is communication, and organizing by communicating. Sense-making is “an issue of language, talk, and communication”, and further “situations, organizations, and environments are talked into existence” (Weick et al., 2005:409). Also, Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) have said that one key consideration in sense-making is the importance of shared meanings, regardless whether the sense-making is about strategy, identity change, perceptions of social justice or other implications for change.

Sense-making is *ongoing* and does not have a clear start, nor an ending, and interests during the process might change (Weick, 1995), and furthermore, sense-making is *focused on and extracted by cues*, which means that the process of sense-making needs something in the surroundings that triggers the sense-making process (Weick, 1995). What triggers sense-making has been discussed in many articles, and Weick and colleagues (2005) say that sense-making occurs when a state or happening occurs differently than expected. Also, Weick (1995:105) has said “interruptions are consequential occasions for sensemaking”, which refers to the fact that when there is a disruption, there is a need for sense-making. Sense-making requires a sensation, where the process of sense-making constructs the sensible factor (Weick, 1995), and Weick and colleagues (2005:411) have said that “sensemaking starts with chaos”. However, any disruptions in an environment or an organization can trigger the sense-making processes, and Louis (1980) has emphasized that any surprises or unexpected events initiate a sense-making process with the need for an explanation.

Finally, Weick and colleagues (2005:415) say “sensemaking is not about truth and getting it right”, rather “it is about continued redrafting of an emerging story so that it becomes more comprehensive, incorporates more of the observed data, and is more resilient in the face of criticism”. This is in line with what Weick (1995) has counted as one of the seven properties of sense-making, referring to that sense-making is *driven by plausibility rather than accuracy*.

Now, that the meaning of sense-making is explained, the following part will look different settings for sense-making, to support and explain the sense-making setting in this thesis. Sense-making has gained attention in various fields of academic research; this thesis examines sense-making in an organizational context.

2.1.1 Settings in sense-making research

Weick (1995) discusses different views of earlier scholars of sense-making, saying that there are many different perspectives on sense-making theories, where some discuss it more on a framework-level, and others look at it from a multiple activity perspective. Further, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) have presented various forms of sense-making, and they say that are two approaches to sense-making: ontological, where it takes place; and temporal, when it takes place. Further, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) have explored the different research done of sense-making, and they note that sense-making

has traditionally been examined as a retrospective process, looking at something that already has happened. Future-oriented and prospective sense-making research has, however, gotten more attention in the recent years.

Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) have said that top managers have a key role in managing change in organizations, and several scholars have noted that sense-making activities are key functions for top managers in organizational strategic decisions (Thomas et al., 1993; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) have argued that sense-making and sense-giving, in particular, are part of the key practices that top executives use to support their strategic and appropriate decisions. In other words, sense-making processes are strongly linked with strategic decision making. The literature has recently given more attention to middle managers during change, which is also apparent in the work by Balogun and Johnson (2004), and Lüscher and Lewis (2008). Balogun and Johnson (2004) have studied sense-making during changes within an organization, and have a more individual focus on middle managers sense-making.

Even if most of the literature is focusing on intra-organizational sense-making, on a more micro level (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Weick et al., 2005; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), sense-making could also be drawn to inter-organizational sense-making, examining how different actors and their strategic choices affect other actors in a specific industry. A more macro perspective on sense-making is discussed by Weber and Glynn (2006) who look at institutional sense-making, and say that institutional sense-making has received very little attention in academic literature. They say that research of institutionalism is rather extra-subjective and has a macro level focus, while sense-making is more local, subjective and done on a micro level. Institutional perspective on sense-making function as a contextualizing frame, constraining the sense-making actors within the institutional frame. In an institutional sense-making the substance is more stable, yet being an inter-subjective process among actors. The institutional frame gives a symbolic code, and the sense-making is a practice of using the code. (Weber & Glynn, 2006)

Weick (1995) suggest that institutions are present in sense-making processes, and Weber and Glynn (2006) build on this, saying that the institutions supply the substance for the sense-making process, thus affecting the sense-making activities. However, they say that even if sense-making can act on institutional templates for action, or script, the connection between internal structures of institutional elements and sense-making remain unclear. Further, they say that institutionalized sense-making strives to answer

both the identity focused question “who am I?”, as well as the situational question of “what is going on here?” (Weber & Glynn, 2006).

Weber and Glynn (2006) suggest a model that adds adjustments to the contextual mechanisms by which institutions affect sense-making. These are the following: institutions lead sense-making, by providing social cues; institutions edit sense-making through social feedback processes; and institutions trigger sense-making, creating dilemmas for sense-making through endogenous institutional conflict and inconsistency. Together, they allow us to show a fuller view of the role of context in sense-making. (Weber & Glynn, 2006)

2.1.1.1 *Organizational sense-making*

Maitlis (2005) has presented a model of *four forms of organizational sensemaking*, including different levels of sense-giving related to sense-making, between stakeholders and leaders. Her findings divide sense-making in four categories: guided, restricted, fragmented, and minimal organizational sense-making. *Guided organizational sense-making* refers to sense-making, where the leader is an active sense-giver, explaining and enhancing the understandings of an event. Similarly, the stakeholders in this category are also engaged in the sense-giving process. *Fragmented organizational sense-making* refers to a sense-making process where stakeholders raise issues and argues for potential solutions, and leaders comprehend these, but do not act on these issues in sense-giving matters. *Restricted organizational sense-making* refers to a form where leaders are more active in the sense-giving process, than the stakeholders. The final form, *minimal organizational sense-making*, refers to a situation, where each party is expecting the other party’s action, before acting upon the issue themselves. Typically, in this form, the trigger is something external. (Maitlis, 2005)

The research done by Maitlis (2005) shows that organizational sense-making is not a singular standardized process, nor a random and diverse process. In other words, sense-making connects to different types of organizations and actions. Also, Thomas and colleagues (1993) have discussed the relationship between cognition, action and performance, and more specifically, their findings show that sense-making processes are linked to organizational performance.

Beliefs are related to organizational sense-making, as beliefs are present in ideologies, cultures and traditions. Further, these beliefs relate to actions. Action driven sense-making is researched from two perspectives: first, behavioral commitment; and second,

manipulation. Sense-making starts with an action; either an action which one person is responsible for, or an action that is caused by a change in an environment, which needs explanation. The former is related to behavioral commitment, and the latter is related to manipulation. Sense-making as manipulation refers to sense-making where people understand and manage environments, which are created, and the key question is what has occurred? Rather than why did something occur, which is relevant for behavioral commitment. (Weick, 1995) This research approaches sense-making from the manipulation perspective, exploring a change in an environment, looking at what has occurred in the context of recruitment.

2.1.1.2 Environmental sense-making

The environmental perspective on sense-making is present in the basic sense-making idea, where sense-making is *focused on and extracted by cues*. This refers to that sense-making is triggered by cues from the environment. (Weick, 1995) Nigam and Ocasio (2010:823) have presented environmental sense-making as a “representation of change through exemplars and environmental features”. Their study contributes to the academic research in institutional logics; organizing principles for institutionalized practices, which are socially constructed. They present that field-level logics can be created from contextual sense-making processes, where new logics can be generated in situations where field participants attend to specific events. The authors present that environmental sense-making includes making sense of not only an event, which has triggered the process, but also the broader organizational field. (Nigam & Ocasio, 2010)

2.1.2 The sense-making process

Having explained sense-making and different approaches to sense-making, the following part explains the processes of sense-making.

The sense-making and sense-giving process is a situation where one party starts the process and then shares it to others (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). It is often related to either crisis or change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), which can be for example due to some unexpected events or strategic changes in an organization. In this research, it is related to the changes affected by technological advances, the Internet, and social media.

Changing conditions can trigger strategic change and organizational changes, which involves efforts to change current ways of reasoning or acting, in a way that the organization can take advantage of opportunities or manage potential threats (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Further, organizational changes are needed for a firm's short-term competitiveness, as well as long-term survival (Lüsher & Lewis, 2008), which is also linked with sense-making, and central in this thesis. Strategy is usually an output of a sense-making process (Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

Top management team (TMT) members go through sense-making processes in changing environments in a way, where their perceptions of identity, image, and desired future image are key factors in their interpretations, and which they categorize to certain themes (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) explain a CEO's role in activating strategic change with the terms *sensemaking* and *sensegiving*, and they argue that sense-making is imperfect without sense-giving. "The initiation of strategic change can be viewed as a process whereby the CEO makes sense of an altered vision of the organization and engages in cycles of negotiated social construction activities to influence stakeholders and constituents to accept that vision" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991:434).

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) has explained strategic change initiation in four phases which are: envisioning, signaling, re-visioning, and energizing, which are further linked with sense-making and sense-giving. To summarize, they have presented a figure and explained the following steps:

1. Envisioning: developing understandings of the organization and its environment, forming a vision of the strategic changes – *sense-making*
2. Signaling: influencing and sharing the vision about the change – *sense-giving*
3. Re-visioning: understanding the vision, reasoning – *sense-making*
4. Energizing: responding to the proposition, influencing a realized form of the vision – *sense-giving*

(Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991)

Figure 1, on the following page, presents the circulating action in sense-making and sense-giving, influenced by the four phases of Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991).

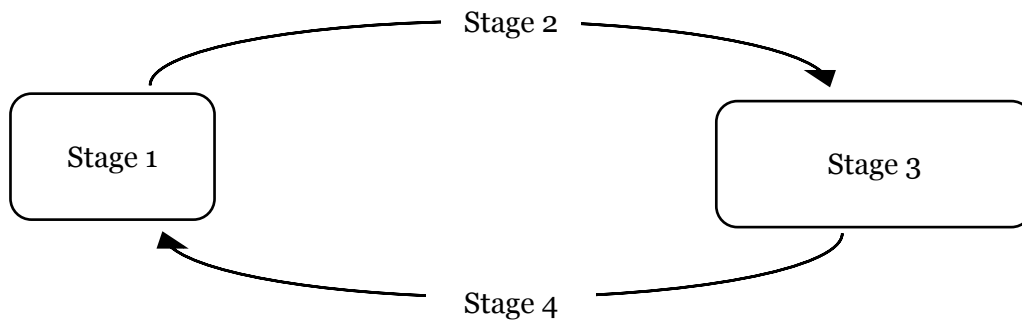


Figure 1 **Sense-making and sense-giving process**

Another way of presenting the sense-making process, is presented by Lüscher and Lewis (2008), who draw *a collaborative process of working through paradox*. In this process, sense-making includes the following parts: a mess, a problem, a dilemma, a paradox, and a workable certainty. The mess presents the issue, which further is formulated to a more clearly stated problem. Based on this problem, it is possible to issue an agenda for the solution and further resolution. The next step, dilemma, focuses on solving the problem and further identifying more complicated essential dilemmas. Being aware of the dilemmas is a valuable stage of the sense-making process, as it lies the base for the solution. The paradox refers to a stage, where there are no resolutions found for the dilemma, as there are opposing thoughts about the solution within a group. (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008)

When managers examine the mind-set that they have constructed during the sense-making, they can rethink it and envision an alternative outcome, which further leads to the workable certainty (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). Also discussed by Weick (1995; Weick et al., 2005) sense-making does not result in accuracy, rather in plausibility. This process of sense-making is presented in figure 2, on the following page.

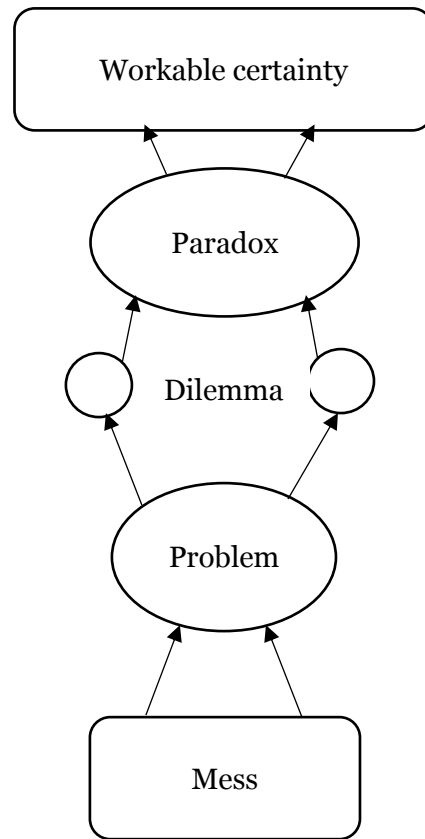


Figure 2 **Lüscher and Lewis (2008) sense-making**

In this explorative study, the purpose is to make sense of the changing recruitment environment, and more closely see at how *executive* recruitment is changing. The research aims to explore the sense-making of HR Directors of how executive recruitment is changing, and how this might affect executive search companies, offering a service for recruitment. Thus, the next part will present the recruitment and selection literature, as well as discuss factors like eHRM and social media, which are affecting the recruitment processes.

2.2 The role of top executives

Human resources of a firm, and their strategic role in a company's success, is one of the basic ideas in the strategic HRM (SHRM) literature (Allen & Wright, 2007; Torrington et al., 2008). Top management teams (TMT), their impact on organizational performance, company strategy and outcomes, have gained attention in the SHRM literature (Collins & Clark, 2003; Hambrick et al., 2005; Hambrick, 2007), however, also

the role of individual executives is noted (Gupta, 1992; Guthrie & Datta, 1998; Blettner et al., 2012; Menz, 2012; Doms & Knyphausen-Aufseß, 2014; Hamori & Koyuncu, 2015).

This thesis will focus on the recruitment of top management, here referring to the CEO and Senior Managers, which are presented in figure 3, below.

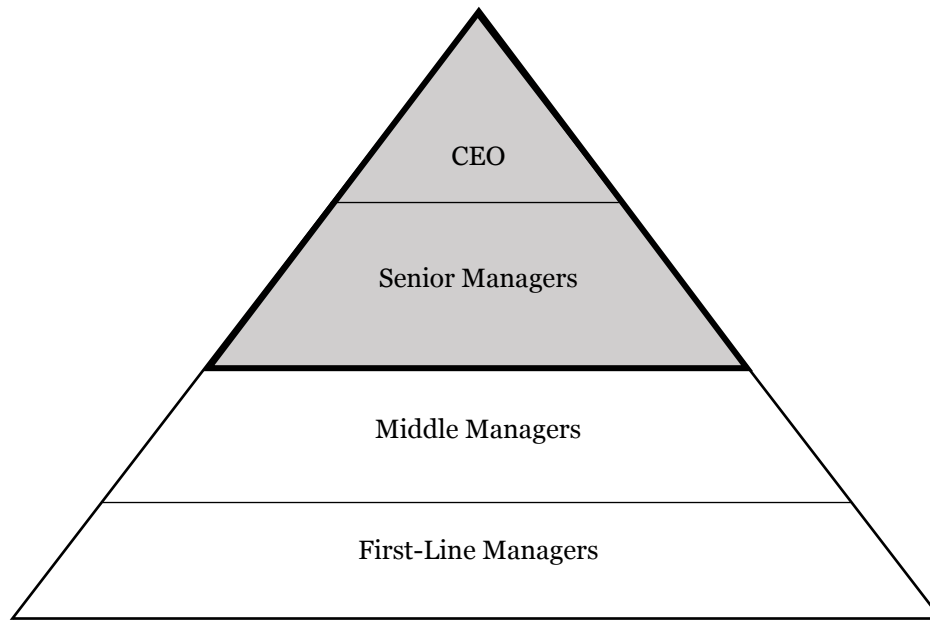


Figure 3 **Types of Managers (Meyer et al., 2007)**

According to Chattopadhyay and colleagues (1999:765), *executive* as a term has different meanings in the management literature, and they define executive as “the chief administrative officer of a strategic business unit, the chief operating officer, and all managers who report directly to either of these two executives”. In this thesis the term executive refers to those managers in the top management team, which can include the CEO and senior managers.

The top management team usually consists of the CEO, the Managing Director, and the department heads of an organization (Meyer et al., 2007). The team’s primary function is to plan, organize, lead and control the operations in an organization, to achieve organizational goals. The team is in the end responsible for the organization’s success or failure (Meyer et al., 2007), and managers play a key role in organizational performance (Augier & Teece, 2009).

Hambrick (2007) has pointed out that leadership is a shared activity, and thus the top management team as a group affects the strategic behavior of an organization.

Hollenbeck and Jamieson (2015) has discussed, that understanding what kinds of people can maximize the team potential in an organization is an important measure for how an organization can perform in the future, and this brings a strategic advantage to a firm. Further, Hambrick (2007) has said that understanding the top management teams will help in explaining organizational outcomes. Understanding how top executives make their strategic decision is necessary for understanding why organizations function in a certain way (Hambrick, 2007). In other words, the strategic decision of top executives is a key factor in organizations' operations, and further for organizations' performance.

How top management teams affect performance is somewhat discussed in the management literature (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990; Collins & Clark, 2003), however, as this thesis focuses on recruiting executives and the research looks at individual directors' perceptions, it is important to examine the more individual perspective on the role of executives.

"Finding a CEO is one of the most important hiring events in organizations" (Hamori & Koyuncu, 2015:23), and it is studied that CEOs affect strategy and performance (Blettner et al., 2012). Executives are seen as a source of competitive advantage, and the selection of CEOs has strategical implications and significance to businesses (Gupta, 1992; Guthrie & Datta, 1998). A CEO strives to lead an organization to a direction, where customer demands are met, so that operations are done according to rules, regulations, and codes of practice (Meyer et al., 2007). This refers to organizational performance, which measures how well executives can utilize resources to achieve organizational goals (Meyer et al., 2007). How CEOs use their time and resources is critical for a company (Geletkanycz & Boyd, 2011).

A lot of the more individual level literature discuss the role of CEOs, and Hamori and Koyuncu (2015) say that the CEO position is exceptional in the required competencies, where the CEO manages the board of directors, as well as the shareholders. A lot of the literature discusses the importance of top managers, focusing solely on the CEO (Doms & Knyphausen-Aufseß, 2014). Senior executives are, similarly to a CEO, members of a company's executive decision-making group (Doms & Knyphausen-Aufseß, 2014), and are as relevant as CEOs in this research. While CEOs lead a whole organization (Meyer et al., 2007), senior managers are often responsible for some explicit operations or areas in an organization (Menz, 2012). More closely, the senior executives refer to *functional TMT members*, who direct a functional area within an organization (Menz, 2012). Senior executives might have a stronger impact on intermediate outcomes, and a fit between the

senior executive and CEO is a key factor to achieve organizational performance (Menz, 2012).

A lot of the literature focuses on how well executives are compensated, related to the firm financial performance, and it is noted that compensation of the CEO is in correlation with firm performance (Sanders, 2001; Arnolds & Boshoff, 2002; Carpenter & Sanders, 2002). Carpenter and Sanders (2002) focus on both CEO and TMT member pay, and show that especially the TMT pay correlates to future organizational performance. Arnolds and Boshoff (2002) have also noted that top managers are motivated by challenging working environments and higher-order needs, where they have opportunities for advancement, growth and self-fulfillment.

There is a lot of literature on CEO selection and performance (Biemann & Wolf, 2009). Most of the literature focuses on single elements affecting the performance or selection, yet, there is also research of selection and performance attributes on a wider basis (Biemann & Wolf, 2009; Blettner et al., 2012).

2.2.1 Top Management Succession

Top management succession has been studied, and literature about succession in top management has focused mostly on CEO succession. There has been an increasing trend recruiting former CEOs to CEO positions in companies, which is expected to be due to the risks in hiring novice CEOs (Hamori & Koyuncu, 2015). However, the assumed benefits of hiring an experienced CEO have not been supported (Hamori & Koyuncu, 2015; Bragaw & Misangyi, 2017). Williams and colleagues (2016) have explored how recruitments from different levels to top management teams impact on strategic renewal in companies. They focus on how the level of prior experience affect the integration of new executives, focusing on rookies, executives who does not have prior experience of top management, and on seasoned executives, who are experienced in top management (Williams et al., 2016).

According to Williams and colleagues (2016) rookies bring new operational and functional knowledge, which brings a refreshing point of view, and they integrate easier to the existing top management team. Seasoned executives have a more high-level strategic perspective, but also more challenges in integration. Their authority and commitment is reflected by earlier top management team specific dynamics. Further,

Williams and colleagues (2016) study suggests that hiring rookies from outside the company will result in faster growth, compared to hiring seasoned executives from outside, or rookies within the company. However, they also say that seasoned executives, who are outside the specific industry, also enhance growth when joining a high tenure top management team. (Williams et al., 2016) They say that “the acquisition of top executives is a critical mechanism” for a strategic renewal in and organization (Williams et al., 2016:1391).

Williams and colleagues (2016) indicate that when desiring a dramatic strategic change, the management should be hired outside the organization. Examining CEO's and top managers in strategic change, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) have noted that top management is a facilitator for strategic change, and their sense-making and sense-giving are key factors in managing the strategic change.

Gupta (1992) has noted that due to increasing competition and modern technologies, companies have been pushed to concern the strategic future needs in terms of succession planning, and further, Guthrie and Datta (1998) have argued that there has been an increase in the research and literature about strategic staffing. Despite a lot of research in CEO selection and performance, CEO succession, as well as recruitment on a general level, there is a gap in the research of succession of senior executives (Menz, 2012), and there is not much literature combining the recruitment processes and practices of executives. Guthrie and Datta (1998) have said that the actual process of recruiting a CEO has not been clear for companies. Further, the focus in CEO and other management team members succession focuses more on their tenure in a company, or experience and background, rather than looking at the process of finding the candidates. This thesis will significantly focus on *executive recruitment*, discussing it as processes linked with a company's recruitment practices. Thus, the following part will present recruitment and selection as part of HRM and SHRM.

2.3 Recruitment and selection

Recruitment is defined as practices and actions through which a company identifies and attracts potential employees (Barber, 1998). The term is further linked with selection, which refers to the process of choosing more potential candidates for the organization (Orlitzky, 2007). The ultimate meaning of the selection is to find a candidate who matches the position (Roberts, 2005). As discussed in the introduction, recruitment is

regarded as one of the key practices in HRM (Barber, 1998; Fish & Macklin, 2004; Roberts, 2005; Hollenbeck & Jamieson, 2015), and thus it is important for organizational performance.

Recruitment is a way of expanding the candidate pool for an organization, and from this pool the suitable candidates can be selected (Orlitzky, 2007). Selecting the more potential candidates can make the talent pool more valuable. A valuable human capital pool is an important foundation for a company to gain competitive advantage (Wright et al. 1994, cited in Allen & Wright, 2007:92). Especially the quality of those candidates who are attracted to a certain position, is an important factor in recruitment (Wilkinson et al., 2010).

Recruitment needs to be aligned with the organization's other HR-practices, supporting and enhancing benefits of other HR-functions, which are compensation, selection, and performance appraisal (Taylor & Collins, 2000). Stone and colleagues (2015) discuss that recruiting qualified candidates and gaining a motivated applicant pool is the first step to attract talented workforce, which is one of the primary functions of HR. Furthermore, the competition in today's business environment pressures companies to find talent and skills to their work pool (Huselid, 1995; Soikkanen et al., 2015), and the recruitment strategy is important when trying to identify talent that is rare in the labor market (Taylor & Collins, 2000).

According to Barber (1998), there used to be little knowledge about the organizational agents in recruitment practices, and little knowledge about the activity of defining a target population. Traditionally recruitment includes five dimensions, which are players, activities, outcomes, contexts and phrases. The *players* are normally the applicants, the recruiting organization and the organizational agent, and outsiders. *Activities* refer to what the actors do in the process, what tasks and procedures are gone through, and in which way the recruitment is done. (Barber, 1998) As we discuss about a changing recruitment environment, the source of change involves naturally the actors, but mostly the activities that the actors choose.

Finding the right talent for an organization is the main objective of recruitment (Barber, 1998; Orlitzky, 2007), and thus an important aspect of the process is the *outcome*. Barber (1998) says that defining outcome is not clear, as the outcome may vary depending on the organizations starting point, but it refers to how successful a recruitment process is for a company. Some companies might value long-term relationships, which is not

measurable right away, while others want a new person to show clear results from the beginning. Also, the outcome most likely depends on the level of position, for which the candidate is being recruited.

The internal and external factors that might affect recruitment are categorized behind the term *context*. Internally a company might need new actors for certain tasks depending on economic situations and strategic aspects, while externally the labor market can affect recruitment. (Barber, 1998) In this thesis, context can refer to social media and digitalization, which affect recruitment and is discussed later in this chapter. Barber's (1998) last recruitment dimension is *phases*, which refer to the multiple stages and categories in the recruitment process.

Holm (2012) has pictured the traditional paper-based recruitment process using job advertising, based on earlier scholars. Her findings identify four main tasks, which are further explained by subtask and activities. The first task is *identifying applicants*, and the subtasks are preparing a job description and identifying the appropriate pool of applicants. The second task, *attracting applicants*, include selecting recruitment sources, and preparing and placing the job announcement. The third task is *processing incoming applications*, and the subtasks are receiving, sorting and registering the incoming applications, and pre-screening and evaluating the applicants. The fourth, and last, task is *communicating with the applicants*, informing them about the pre-screening results and arranging interviews with the shortlisted candidates. (Holm, 2012)

Similarly to Holm's (2012) presented process, Fernández-Aráoz and colleagues (2009) have done a frame for recruiting top executives, and this process includes the following steps: anticipating the need; specifying the job; developing the pool; assessing the candidates; closing the deal; integrating the newcomer; and auditing and reviewing. These are similar to the processes in executive search, which will be presented later on in this chapter.

Decision-making in a recruitment process, selection, is done based on the information gained during the interview, and the applications from the applicant. (Torrington et al., 2008) When selecting a candidate, there are some common mistakes, which might occur: ignoring the specification; over-reliance on a single element; the halo effect; stereotyping; mirroring or similarity-identity bias; prejudice; and non-involvement of clients. (Roberts, 2005) These are presented below.

Ignoring the specification might be a situation where no candidates match the specific profile, and the selection should not be made. *Over-reliance on a single element* is also a risk, and short-comings should not be ignored in selection processes. *The halo effect* refers to when positive attributes hide the negative sides, like appraising a candidate based on the university s/he attended or the company s/he has worked for, rather than focusing on the actual competencies. *Stereotyping* is also an issue in selection, and this might have a positive, as well as a negative effect on the decision. The risk is that a person is categorized based on certain attributes, such as gender, ethnicity or social background. *Mirroring* refers to when a candidate is being favored, which usually occurs subconsciously, and this happens when a selection is based on how well the recruiter and the candidate get along. *Prejudice errors* are also a mistake that might occur, and is negative for the candidate, who might be rejected based on age, social background or ethnicity, among other reasons. This happens either consciously or unconsciously, but does still cause an error in the selection. Finally, the *non-involvement of clients* refers to when an external consultant does not involve the client in the decision making. The interpersonal connection between the employee and the employer is an important success factor in the recruitment process and in the integration of the new employee, thus the client needs to be involved in a process. (Roberts, 2005)

Selecting employees with great networks, both within and outside of the company, can help organizations develop capabilities to identify areas of highly skilled and potential employees (Hollenbeck and Jamieson, 2015). Sutton and Watson (2013) suggest that employees should be developed within an organization, rather than bringing talent outside, as they say that understanding the business is vital for performing in a certain organization. However, as presented earlier, Williams and colleagues (2016) have suggested that hiring from outside the company will enhance growth in the company.

2.3.1 Recruitment linked with performance

Careful selection is one practice in HRM that enhances high skills and abilities in an organization (Guest, 1997; Schmitt & Kim, 2007), which further links to quality (Guest, 1997). When recruitment is done according to a company's situation, needs and strategy, it is expected to contribute to the company's financial performance (Orlitzky, 2007). Banerjee (2012) has argued that the hiring process is a key factor that decides whether a recruiter has achieved to find a good performer or not. The divergent functions of

recruitment can affect organizational performance (Orlitzky, 2007), which is relevant when recruiting executives.

There has been a lot of discussion about how HRM is linked with performance, and about how recruitment and selection, as a part of HRM, affects performance in a company (Guest, 1997; Barber, 1998; Orlitzky, 2007; Schmitt & Kim, 2007), and there is an increasing interest towards how organizational outcomes are affected by the human capital that an organization attracts (Schmitt & Kim, 2007). Management has become more directly liable for organizational performance (Khurana, 2002), which highlights the importance of finding capable candidates executive recruitment.

Orlitzky (2007) presents a table with previous research made during 1992–2004, of how recruitment affects organizational performance. According to these studies, the recruitment practices have a strategic relevance to the company, and some results show a link between recruitment intensity and organizational performance. Recruitment intensity may impact labor productivity positively, as well as different financial performance outcomes. According to Huselid's study made in 1995 (cited by Orlitzky, 2007) there is empirical evidence of the link from recruitment, as a factor for employee motivation, to productivity, which further relates to the corporate financial performance. The recruitment process needs to fit the organization and its operations, to have a positive impact on the company's performance, and there are contextual variables that play a role in the strategic recruitment (Orlitzky, 2007). In other words; recruiting to high performance positions in companies requires a well-planned recruitment process.

Additionally, looking at outcomes of recruitment; it also affects the organization's financial situation. The whole recruitment process and the introduction process to an organization takes time and introduces costs. In addition to the new person's salary, there are costs for the work done for the recruitment process. (Jones, 1989, Catasús et al., 2012)

2.3.2 eHRM: e-recruitment and e-selection

The recruitment function has changed due to especially the Internet, which has cut down on other forms of recruitment (Feldman & Klaas, 2002). There are studies about how technological advances affect HRM and the discussion goes around the term eHRM, which refers to using information technology (IT) and the Internet as a part of HR

processes, and as an organizational communication tool (Strohmeier, 2007; Stone & Dulebohn, 2013; Stone et al., 2015; Arjomandy, 2016). E-recruitment and research about it, refers to the using the World Wide Web for recruitment in general (Feldman & Klaas, 2002; Stone & Dulebohn, 2013), and it is argued that this pushes away the traditional ways of posting job opening in newspapers (Boehle, 2000).

In the 1990s there was a shift towards using the World Wide Web for HRM, and in the early 2000s the web-based recruiting systems started to emerge (Stone & Dulebohn, 2013). Today, recruitment is one of the most common eHRM practices, and especially LinkedIn seems to be a very popular among the social media sites (Arjomandy, 2016). Holm (2012) has shown many advances in e-recruitment, which for example has made the recruitment process more efficient regarding the rapid transfer of information, the detailed tracking of the process, and the vast amount of detailed information that is possible to involve. Even if eHRM has shown efficiency improvements in e-recruitment, this needs more research as support (Strohmeier, 2007).

Key questions in e-recruitment and e-selection, and concerns for these functions are the following: does IT help an organization to increase the number of successful placements; does e-recruitment attract the talented and diverse applicants, who are needed for the company; and does e-selection help organizations to employ the most talented and diverse candidates? (Stone et al., 2015).

There are some studies about e-recruitment, and the outcome of the studies show that e-recruitment has an impact on the number of applicants (Galanaki, 2002). However, some studies show that it does not result in more qualified applicants, compared to traditional recruiting technologies (Chapman & Webster, 2003). According to Stone and colleagues (2015), many scholars have rather focused on how e-recruitment attracts applicants, than examining how e-recruitment has affected the performance and success of job placements. When recruiting top-level management, it might be more important to look at how the candidates perform in their job, rather than the amount of applications that the company receives. Further, Stone and colleagues (2015) note that the current research does not clarify if e-selection systems help organizations to hire the most talented candidates or increase diversity in their workforce.

Wilkinson and colleagues (2010) suggest that proactive approaches in recruitment should be emphasized in future research and Stone and colleagues (2015) point out that, e-recruiting can become much more proactive thanks to social media, as it enables

scanning individual profiles, identifying talented employees, and contacting them about job openings. Further, Hollenbeck and Jamieson (2015) say that with technological improvements companies can develop social network analysis systems, which help them understand the social and knowledge networks, and which in turn brings the companies a competitive advantage with human capital. However, Stone and colleagues (2015) have raised the issue that if HR and its processes become technology-focused, the focus on employees decreases. A consequence for this is that HR becomes a tool for management, rather than a strategic partner that supports the strategic decisions and functions in the organization (Stone et al., 2015).

Recruitment and selection are some of the most outsourced HR practices (Ordanini & Silvestri, 2008), and executive search is a way of outsourcing recruitment, which will be presented later in this chapter. Ordanini and Silvestri (2008) discuss that when a HR practice is more transactional or non-strategic it should be outsourced, and in situations where competitive advantage is gained by a high skilled human capital pool the recruitment and selection should not be outsourced. Further, Ordanini and Silvestri (2008) also discuss that efficiency pressures and risk of losing control over key assets outline the intensity of outsourcing recruitment.

As technological advances and the Internet have brought changes to the recruitment field, the recruitment trends are emphasizing social media and open platforms (Holm, 2012; Tyagi & Tyagi, 2012).

2.3.3 A current recruitment trend: social media in recruitment

According to Dunn (2009, cited in Tyagi & Tyagi, 2012) the recruiting process nowadays is more engaging and easier, and Holm (2012) says that traditional recruitment processes have become time- and space-independent, and collaborative, as a consequence of e-recruitment. Tyagi & Tyagi (2012:58) say, “social media now allows human resource departments to aggressively seek out potential applicants”. Just like companies use social media for marketing (Calvasina et al., 2014), social media is used for recruitment (Arjomandy, 2016), and for employer branding (Banerjee, 2012).

Social media is linked with social networking sites, which boyd and Ellison (2008) defines as web-based services that enables networking by allowing individuals to create public or semi-public profiles within different systems, and to connect with other users.

Social networking sites further allow people to connect with others beyond their known network, finding others with similar interests, and the sites also includes sharing different content (boyd & Ellison, 2008). Similarly, to the definition of social networking sites, social media refers to Internet-based applications that allow users to share and create content, as also defined in the introduction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media makes it easy to announce and distribute job openings, both nationally and internationally, and strategically it makes recruitment more proactive, as also employees can help employers find the most potential candidates among their networks (Arjomandy, 2016). As announcements spread fast around the Internet, it might reach the perfect candidate for a position, and researchers have argued that a company can find the right person for a certain position through social media, saving money and time (Calvasina et al., 2014; Arjomandy, 2016). Announcements on social media are often cheaper than through traditional media (Arjomandy, 2016). The question of costs come forward by many scholars, when discussing social media in recruitment (Calvasina et al., 2014; Arjomandy, 2016; Jeske & Shultz, 2016). It is said that recruiting through social media keeps the costs low, and is an advantage particularly for smaller sized firms (Jeske & Shultz, 2016).

As social media, including Facebook and LinkedIn, attracts users it also attracts employers, and some job candidates do not use traditional channels for recruitment and job search anymore (Calvasina et al., 2014). Tyagi and Tyagi (2012:58) claim that for example LinkedIn can be used by HR professionals “to instantly determine if there is anyone they should extend a job offer immediately, without the need to resort to expensive headhunting services”.

According to Clyne (2010, cited in Tyagi & Tyagi 2012), HR departments can easily find online who is a cheater and who is not, and by this they can be picky and get the best possible candidates. However, there might be those who exaggerate their talent or come up with characteristics, which are not true, and boyd and Ellison (2008) point out that the accuracy of created profiles varies, depending on people on social networking sites. Thanks to social media both companies and individual job seekers can make themselves more visible and attractive to the public (Larkiala, 2017). Further, an additional advantage with social media is the ability to create employer-employee relationships over time, with people who are potential for future job openings (Calvasina et al., 2014).

A lot of researchers show the benefits of using social media as a part of recruitment, but when recruiting top-level management, it is not clearly stated that social media is efficient enough. Even if Calvasina and colleagues (2014) say that social media enables recruiters to reach higher-quality candidates, they question whether social media is enough to find the right talent, as the sources for the search might not make the total labor pool available for a certain position. Moreover, it is noted that some people are not on social media (Jeske & Shultz, 2012). Calvasina and colleagues (2014) say that it is necessary to use different recruitment methods and not emphasize only the use of social media. Further, Banerjee (2012) shows with her study that still many regard recruitments through social media as non-reliable.

2.3.3.1 Ethical discussion around recruitment and social media

Despite the multiple positive aspects and opportunities presented of social media, there are also challenges, and one challenge is the ethical perspective. A company might be tempted to use social media during a recruitment process, as it contains a lot of information and details about individuals.

A specific example of why companies use social media is to do background checks during recruitment (Arjomandy, 2016). A recruiter can for example use a social media account to determine the cultural fit with the potential employee (Calvasina et al., 2014). However, there are regulations and legislations saying that it is not allowed to search a person on for example Facebook, as a part of a recruitment process (Calvasina et al., 2014), like there are privacy regulations on how private questions to a candidate can be in a recruitment process (Khurana, 2002). Further, Jeske and Shultz (2016) say that the content on a person's social media account might not truly reflect on how well that person would fit with the employment settings.

Jeske and Shultz (2016) also note that the recruiter's social values might affect the decision. Additionally, they point out that the concerns for data protection and access are missing, when discussing how employers screen social media in employment processes (Jeske & Shultz, 2016). Clark and Roberts (2010) have also discussed the ethical aspect, when using social media for screening candidates' profiles and backgrounds, and they note that despite rules and regulations, companies use social media to do background checks more often.

2.4 Executive search

Presented in the introduction, this research explores the executive recruitment environment, where one group of actors is the executive search companies. There have been speculations about how executive search will face the challenges because of technological advances, and thus this part will present the concept of executive search.

Executive search is finding candidates that fit to a company's management position (Soikkanen et al., 2015). Traditionally headhunting has been finding and choosing people for boards and management (Jenn, 2005; Soikkanen et al., 2015) and this thesis focuses on recruiting people to management positions, headhunting executives.

The executive search field was born in the 40's in the U.S., and since it has expanded to Europe, Africa and Asia. (Jones, 1989; Khurana, 2002; Soikkanen et al., 2015) The first executive search companies in Finland were founded in the late 70's (Soikkanen et al., 2015), and since, the field has grown to a 60 million € business, including around 50 actors on the field (Duunitori, 2017 – 2). It is estimated that executive search firms do four out of five top-level management recruitments (Soikkanen et al., 2015).

Brooke (1967) has argued that the expansion of the executive search field to the U.K. in the 60's, was because of the need to seek the best management in a competitive economy. The more competitive and demanding business environment is still one argument for why executive search services are still used (Soikkanen et al., 2015). Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) argue that is important to find the right talent and leaders in the business environment today, where demands need to be answered faster with new technologies and opportunities.

The executive search field also grew when companies noticed the competitive advantage they gained through using the services (Jones, 1989; Soikkanen et al., 2015). Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) have explained that for example the increase in international trade has pushed the competition further, and companies realized that they needed international competencies to keep up with the international growth. The executive search field and its growth have been affected by socioeconomic developments and trends (Soikkanen et al., 2015), and the field is largely affected by economic events, like the collapse of the IT-bubble in the early 2000's caused significant drops in the industry (Jenn, 2005). The field in the U.S. has had a steady growth the last few years (Barnes, 2017), and the global turnover for the industry has also shown a growth. According to

estimates presented by Soikkanen and colleagues (2015), the turnover has globally gone up from 8,3 billion USD in 2000, to 11,7 billion USD in 2014.

As the competition on the field is tough, it is quite normal that companies specialize in a certain industry. This means that a consultant or a firm has a certain industry, for which a consultant has done many searches for, possibly worked for earlier, and has a wide knowledge of that particular industry. (Soikkanen et al., 2015) The most common industries are financial services, industrial and manufacturing industries, consumer goods, technology, and health services (AESC, 2017 – 2). Some executive search companies might focus on a specific industry, while others might have a broader range of searches. Otherwise, the executive search actors are very much like each other, regarding ownership, operational functions and ethics, and additionally all companies today have the same possibilities to use technological tools as help (Soikkanen et al., 2015). The homogeneity of the field makes it hard to diversify from competitors. Britton and colleagues (1992) discuss that diversification in service fields are more difficult than in traditional production. In the executive search field, the diversification is often done by offering other support services, such as management consultancy (Britton et al., 1992).

2.4.1 Key factors in executive search services

The executive search business is strongly linked to valuable relationships and networking, and the reputation of an executive search firm, the firm's professional image, is something that client companies value (Britton et al., 1992; Soikkanen et al., 2015). Customer loyalty is an important aspect in this industry, and the industry's key characteristics are personal recommendations, reputation and past experiences (Britton et al., 1992). Furthermore, contacts and networking are important (Soikkanen et al., 2015), and the important terms relating to the field are: quality, relationship quality, trust, confidentiality, interactions, mutual confidence, and competence (Brooke, 1967; Britton et al., 1992; Tienari et al., 2001; Soikkanen et al., 2015).

Quality is an important aspect in executive search, from more traditional as well as a critical perspective (Tienari et al., 2001; Soikkanen et al., 2015). A company relies confidential information to an executive search consultant, which is relevant for producing the service. The quality of the process is important, as it might affect the company's business and performance later. Consulting is based on intense information

and expertise, and success is further determined by the *relationship quality* and *trust* between the consultant and the client (Tienari et al., 2001). Also, the trust between the consultant and the candidate is important. Skokic and Coh (2017) show in their research that the trust between the consultant and the candidate affects the candidate's decision of either rejecting or considering a career opportunity. Besides being a key factor in recruiting a manager to an organization, executive search firms also contribute to stimulating the pool of executive candidates. By building a good relationship with a candidate, it can help the candidate to activate him or herself in the future executive career paths. (Skokic & Coh, 2017) Further, Brown and Swain (2012) have argued that it might be necessary to attract candidates from competitors and people who are not actively looking for jobs. This highlights the importance of trust from the individual's perspective.

Further, as trust is an important issue in executive search services it is interesting to see, how social media for example affects the trust, as social media allows people to share information to the public (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to an article in the publication "Executive Talent 2020", by the AESC Association of Executive Search and Leadership Consultants (2017), the candidates trust executive search consultants. Making a move on one's career path includes a risk (AESC, 2017 – 1), which also emphasizes the importance of trust.

Linked with trust, also *confidentiality* is important both from the client's side, as well as from the candidate's side. Keeping information confidential from the client's side, allows the client company to make needed changes without getting affected by the opinions around, by for example stock markets (Soikkanen et al., 2015).

Skokic and Coh (2017) also say that key factors are the relationship, and the amount and content of *interactions* in a process. A process with active interactions between all the three parties (client, consultant and candidate) affects the outcome of the process (Soikkanen et al., 2015). The interactive process excludes unnecessary risks and problems. Interaction helps in finding out whether the person fits to the organization or not, and whether the expectations are similar from each party. Further, interaction minimizes the risk of failing the process, which can lead to a sudden end in the new employment relationship. (Soikkanen et al., 2015) Interaction might also enhance the *mutual confidence* between the parties, which refers to the confidence at both the candidate and the hiring company, that the candidate is potential to succeeding the new task (Brooke, 1967).

As the industry is very homogenous, one major factor for an executive search company's success is the *competence* of the consultant and the research team (Fish & Macklin, 2004; Soikkanen et al., 2015). This business requires good understanding of the client organization and its needs (Fish & Macklin, 2004), and a good search consultant has good interpersonal and communication skills, some experience of recruitment work, and contacts (Britton et al., 1992). Clark (1992) has argued that the evaluative standards for executive search consultancies are the expectations of clients; role of consultants; qualifications of candidates; impact on the candidate's insights; and the characteristics being assessed. These standards can all be affected by the search consultant's competent approach. Additionally, this industry requires a well-established reputation, which links to that personal recommendations are important (Britton et al., 1992).

2.4.2 The executive search processes

The executive search process includes three main players: *the client*, *the consultant* and *the candidate*. The *client* is the ordering party, looking for a person for an executive position, who assigns a *consultant*, who is responsible for the client relationship and the process from the executive search firm's point of view. Further, a *researcher* or a *research team* often assists the consultant. The *candidate(s)* refers to the potential people for the specific position. (Soikkanen et al., 2015)

Referring to Barber (1998), which is discussed earlier in this chapter, the actors in a recruitment process are the players in the executive search process. Further, the companies from which the candidate is leaving to the new company can be categorized as outsiders. Barber (1998) has defined the outsiders as actors who react on the recruitment process. Also, the public who follow the company's social media for example, are outsiders.

For an executive search firm to succeed in a process, an executive search firm needs to understand the client's situation and needs, find the potential candidates and assist in making the selection decision (Soikkanen et al., 2015), which naturally are key steps in the executive search process. FEX Ry, the Finnish Executive Search Firms's Association (2017), has presented the executive search process as illustrated in figure 4.

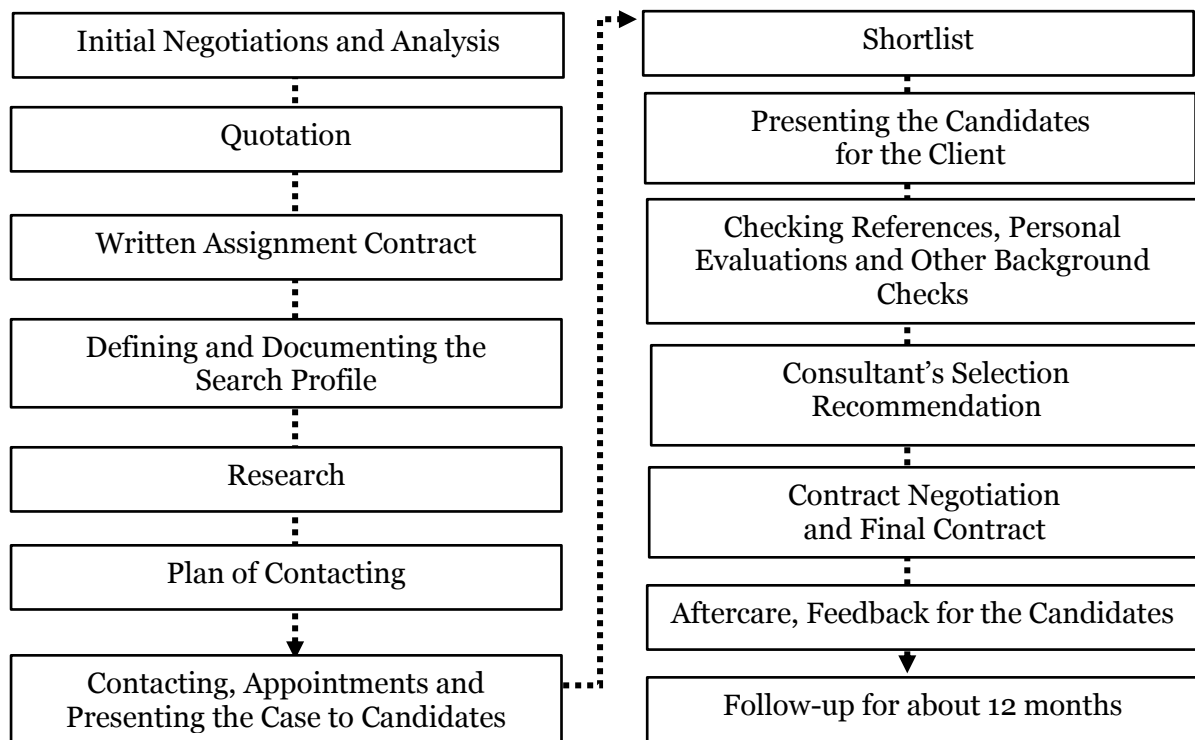


Figure 4 **The executive search process (FEX Ry, 2017)**

In the beginning of the process it is important to acknowledge the level of risk in the process. Usually the risk is higher, if the search is for a position during organizational or functional changes, and there are expectations to increase performance. (Soikkanen et al., 2015) A consultant takes in to account the client's requirements and environment. It is important that client and the consultant discuss and define what a potentially successful candidate is working with at present, and what would be most appropriate for the new task (Brooke, 1967). For example, when recruiting a sales director for a hotel chain it is not ideal to search for a sales manager in the fashion industry. A consultant can minimize and eliminate any risk, when bringing senior and qualified executives to mature companies, and the consultant brings people, who have a proven record of success in a similar task in a relevant industry and a relevant background (Brooke, 1967).

The process is quite standardized and done similarly by all actors in the field (Khurana 2002; Jenn, 2005), but Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) point out that the projects are different regarding to the needs and contextual factors specific for a company and a certain position. Previous projects improve upcoming projects (Brooke, 1967), and consultants can gain knowledge in certain industries and areas.

2.4.2.1 Pricing the executive search services

Britton and colleagues (1992) have said that the more customer-oriented a service is, the less standardized is the price. Price is perceived as a measure of quality (Britton et al., 1992), but if a client does not have any earlier experience of an executive search firm, it does not know the quality of the service. Still, also the pricing indicates to the importance of quality and further, to the importance of references. There are different pricing principles for services (Britton et al., 1992), also in the executive search field (Soikkanen et al., 2015).

In Finland, there is usually two different pricing methods for executive search consultants (Soikkanen et al., 2015). The first one is based on the selected candidates first year income, where the remuneration for the consultant is about a third of the candidate's first year salary (Soikkanen et al., 2015). This is also quite common on international grounds, and Finlay and Coverdill (2007) say that the headhunter's fee usually stands around 20 to 30 per cent of the chosen candidate's first-year salary. Britton and colleagues (1992) have presented this as the percentage fee, which already in the early 90's appeared to be 33 percent of the candidate's first year remuneration package. This pricing, however, can be difficult as the salary is set in the end of the process, when the client and the candidate agree on the amount (Soikkanen et al., 2015).

The more common method in Finland is based on a fixed price. Here price is linked with the value that the consultant brings to the client. (Soikkanen et al., 2015) A fixed fee according to Britton and colleagues (1992) is based on the resources needed for the assignment, the salary level, and the complexity of the assignment.

2.4.3 When are executive search services used

Brooke (1967) lists situations, when a client might need an executive search company's services: if industry specification is tight; if functional-cum-experience specification is tight; if the client, either because of internal morale or external prestige, is unwilling for his identity to be generally known; and if the client is entering a new market (industrial or geographical) and wants to recruit specialized management, without warning the existing competition in the new market, to affect the potential entry.

Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) have listed situations and reasons for when executive search services are used. These situations are: when a new manager is needed for a new

task; when a company is creating new business, and needs a leader for the process; or when a company is expanding and developing a new geographical unit, rearranging the organizational structure or developing support functions. In these situations, the consultant's knowledge in a specific industry is important, and thus executive search firms often specialize in certain industries, or have different consultants offering services for different industries (Soikkanen et al., 2015). Further, a company might also use the services from a more individual perspective, either when a manager is resigning, or when the company wants to have a new manager in the position (Soikkanen et al., 2015).

Using executive search services refers to outsourcing the executive recruitment. Ordanini and Silvestri (2008) say that the two key features, which influence the decision of outsourcing, is the internal conditions under which recruitment and selection activity is run, and the capabilities in the organization versus a service provider. Outsourcing recruitment should be done, when recruitment is non-strategic and does not need as much effort (Ordanini & Silvestri, 2008). Soikkanen and colleagues (2015), who argue for using executive search services, state that when recruiting people for key management positions in organizations, there are some risks included. The risks are bigger if change and improved performance are expected (Soikkanen et al., 2015). A recruitment process might also include mistakes, and there are some common mistakes that are done, for example stereotyping and ignoring the important specifics that are needed (Roberts, 2005). Thus, recruiting to a higher position is more crucial for a company, and Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) say that executive search should be used as a recruitment method, when the performance of the new manager is vital for the company's performance.

2.4.3.1 Advantages with the executive search services

Lim and Chan (2001) have discussed a survey from Singapore in 1996, which showed that back then executive search was perceived as the third most efficient recruitment method, after employee referrals and college recruitment. However, its efficiency and suitability probably depends on what level the recruitment is for, and there is room for more academic support of the efficiency in different recruitment methods.

Lim and Chan (2001) have examined several earlier researches, and have said that the executive search field's popularity might depend on a few central factors. One factor is that the headhunters can attract potential candidates and talents more discreetly, without competitors' getting to know about the process, keeping the process more

private. Also, confidential details can be held more private within the organization, to which a new person is being recruited. Lastly, one of the headhunters' advantages is the depth of search services, breadth of their networks, and experience in executive assessment. (Lim & Chan, 2001)

Reiter (2009) has stated that because of all the resumes and job applications that are flowing on the Internet, it is difficult to find the interesting and valuable ones. With the technologies today, the unsolicited resumes have increased, and these increasing resumes are a good reason to consider using executive search services (Reiter, 2009).

Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) have listed a few important reasons, for why executive search services are beneficial. The first reason is, that the method is time efficient. Usually, a process takes around eight to ten weeks. The advantage here is especially that time is only used on those candidates, that have the right qualifications for the position, and the higher in the organization the recruitment is for, the more important this is. Compared to an announcement search, where the open position is announced on some channel, there might come so many non-qualified applications for a job, which takes a long time to go through for nothing. (Soikkanen et al., 2015)

Second, the process is interactive between all parts (Soikkanen et al., 2015). This was also discussed in the key characteristics of the field (Skokic & Coh, 2017). Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) say that interaction excludes risks and expands the pool of potential candidates. With open discussions already from the start, unnecessary risks and complications can be eliminated in an executive search process. Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) mention as one example the expected salary, which might be a key aspect for a candidate; if the salary discussion comes up in the end of a recruitment process, and the salary expectations and what is offered are far from each other, the recruitment might crash on this one aspect. Third, the anonymous nature of the process makes it *subtle for the candidate and the client*, which also was mentioned before (Soikkanen et al., 2015).

In international recruitments, the international network is important, when finding the right candidates for a position (Soikkanen et al., 2015). For example, if a Finnish company is recruiting a country director to India, it is a huge advantage if the executive search firm has a co-operating office or company in India, who can give the local understanding and expand the network.

Finally, executive search firms have broad databases, which they have worked with earlier, and thus they have good starting point to identify the candidates (Faulconbridge et al., 2009). Finding the right talent quickly can be important in a recruitment process, as time pressure is very common in the business world. Time is seen as a valuable and limited resource, so time efficient recruitment is important (Soikkanen et al., 2015).

2.4.3.2 Critique towards the field

In the 90's Clark (1992) did a research, based on which he argued that executive search firms use selection techniques with low validity, referring to unstructured interviews and references. This was, according to Clark (1992), contradictory to their objective selection techniques, which minimize the differentiation between candidates based on personal characters.

Faulconbridge and colleagues (2009) have argued that executive search firms control elite labor market recruitment processes by two major power-relations. The first one is in the labor management process, where power resources control the relationship between the client and consultant. The second one is the power-relation in the labor market itself, where the executive search firms define talent and by this determine who is classified as a talented individual and included in the talent pool for elite executive positions. (Faulconbridge et al., 2009) Thus the executive search firms can affect the "ideal type" of executives, which is also discussed by Meriläinen and colleagues (2013).

Lim and Chan (2001) discussed the ethical perspective on executive search, based on for example discussion whether it is ethical to lure an executive from one firm to another, or not. Despite the critical approach for headhunters' ethical motivations in their work, Lim and Chan (2001) show that headhunters are inclined to follow most ethical values, and that they can reassure their professional standards by these high ethical values.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter will explain the methods of the study, and present the research process. First, the research design is presented by following *the research onion*, originally presented by Saunders and Lewis (2012). Further, the data collection and data analysis are presented. Finally, the quality of the research and research ethics are discussed.

This study is classified as a research, as the intention is to contribute to knowledge (Patton, 2002), and it is intended to reach out to actors in the executive recruitment field, exploring the changing recruitment environment.

The research onion (Saunders & Lewis, 2012), illustrated in figure 5, is a route map that goes through all the methodological parts in a research: philosophies; approaches; strategies; choices; time horizons; and techniques and procedures.

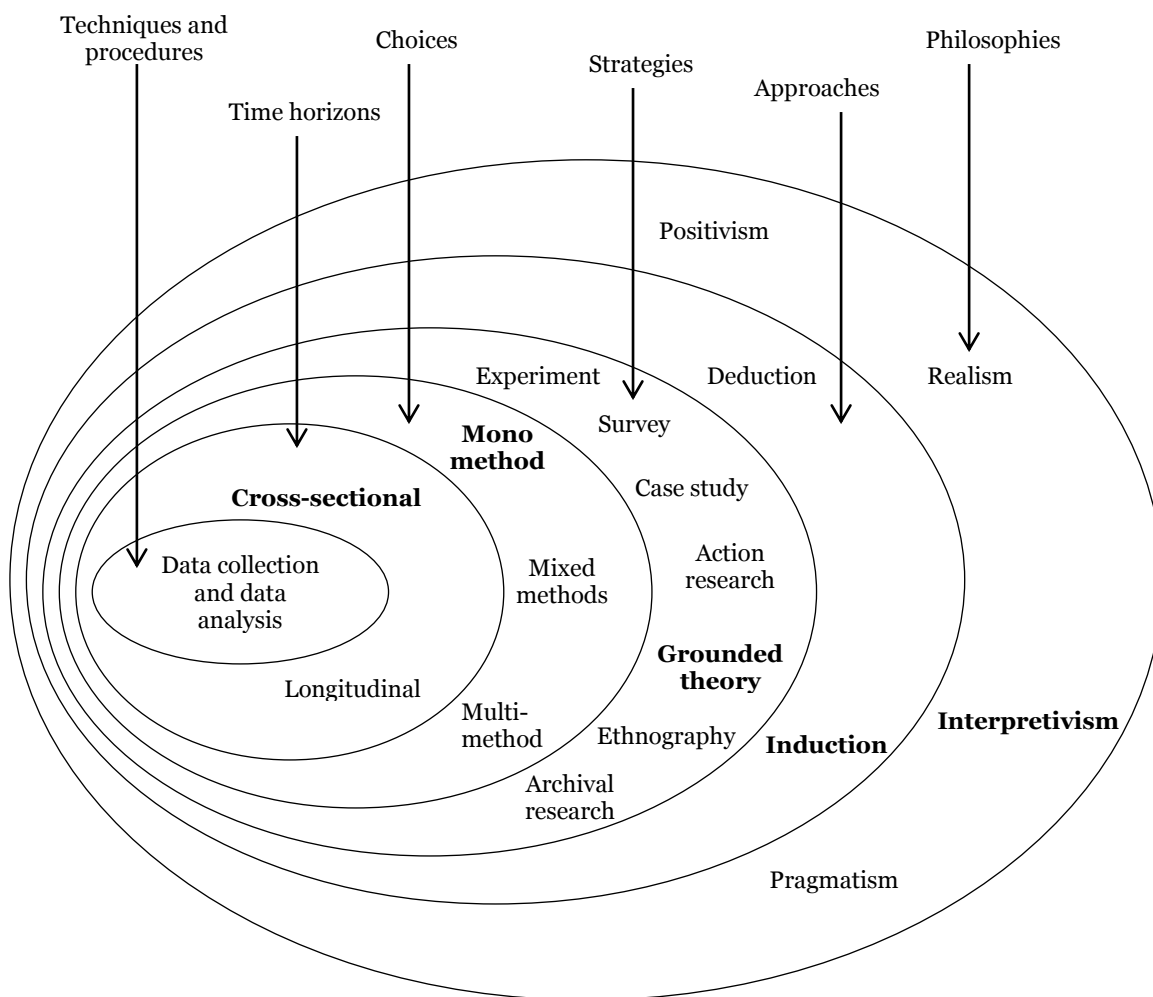


Figure 5 **The Research Onion (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:103)**

When following the research onion, it simplifies the methodology of this study, and supports simultaneously the quality of the research, which is also discussed by Saunders and Lewis (2012), who argue that the research design has an impact on the research quality.

3.1 Research philosophy

Research philosophy refers to “the critical analysis of the fundamental assumptions or beliefs held by an individual”, and the research philosophy reflects essential assumptions about how a person perceives the world around him- or herself. (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:104). Saunders and Lewis (2012:104) also define research philosophy as “overall term that relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge in relation to research”, which support the research strategy and data collection methods in a research. In other words, the philosophy lies as a foundation for the approach to the research.

Instead of following a positivism or realism philosophy, which apply methods from natural sciences to study social sciences, (Bryman & Bell, 2015), this study follows an interpretive philosophy, as it is looking at social phenomena and interpretation, being done in the frame of sense-making. As Prasad (2005) has noted, all interpretive traditions are rooted in an academic point, where human interpretations is an initiating step to develop knowledge about the social world. In this research, individuals reflect their thoughts about executive recruitment, social media, the executive search field, and other trends in recruitment. As Saunders and Lewis (2012) have said, the interpretive philosophy is socially focused, and is about studying and understanding social phenomena in natural environments, looking at the differences between humans as social actors. Additionally, Bryman and Bell (2015) says that interpretivism is about grasping a subjective meaning of social action. The sense-making approach, presented by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), also relates to the individual interpretation of a certain phenomenon, and thus this interpretive approach is suitable in this research.

3.2 Research design

This research is a qualitative research with an inductive approach. As Saunders and Lewis (2012) has presented, the inductive approach is about developing a theory from

explanations based on the research. The research partly builds on theory and earlier research done on recruitment and sense-making, yet, it is a study about making sense of a changing environment, focusing on executive recruitment. Thus, the research design is inductive, where the findings explore and further present a framework of key elements in executive recruitment, which can be utilized in further research.

The study falls in to the category of an exploratory study, while it is explaining a phenomenon that is happening: the changing recruitment environment. An exploratory study provides new insights to assess the topic in a new light (Saunders & Lewis, 2012), which is what this study is aiming for. Also fitting to the exploratory study is how it will be conducted. Exploratory studies are often done by conducting interviews and searching in academic literature (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Further, the study falls into a category of grounded theory and has an iterative strategy, which refers to circulating between theory and data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Case studies are often linked with exploratory research, and it gives a better understanding for the researcher of the context and activity in that context (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Also going hand in hand with this study, case studies often explain social phenomena and are built on a mixture of data collection techniques, using interviews, observations and questionnaires (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The grounded theory links to the development of data based on interviews, which is also connected with an inductive approach (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Kryscynski and Ulrich (2015:367) have proposed that it is important to “tie theoretical explanations to observable phenomena”, and this study will discuss the theoretical framework of sense-making in the observable phenomena of social media in recruitment, and result in a frame for key elements in executive recruitment, which help in making sense of how the changing dynamics affect executive recruitment.

As this study is a master’s thesis conducted within a study year, the research has a cross-sectional time frame, presenting the situation of this particular time.

3.3 Data collection

According to what Patton (2002) has presented, this research has a purposeful sampling strategy. The sample is selected by the informative nature for this specific field; executive recruitment. This study is not about an empirical generalization, but about getting an

insight about a phenomenon, a changing environment. Further, Patton (2002) describes different sampling strategies, according to which this study would fall in to both the typical case sampling, but also in to the category of criterion sampling, in which all the people in a sampling meet some criteria.

The data collection is based on a non-probability sampling technique, which refers to the fact that there is no great population and no sampling frame (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The interview data is collected with purposive sampling, which refers to a sample that includes a set of people who are best to answer the research question, according to the researcher's judgement (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The sample consists of ten Finnish companies' HR Directors, presented later in this chapter. The sample technique falls in to the category of a typical case, for which the sample is descriptive and considered to represent certain characteristics, however, not statistically. Further, the sample is typical of that population. (Saunders & Lewis, 2012)

The interviews present the qualitative data collection, and as Patton (2002) has presented, it is about a deeper inquiry that captures the personal perspectives and opinions of people, and gives a more detailed description of the case. The interviews are semi-structured interviews, which refers to an interview with a specific set of questions, which are broad and there is room for follow-up questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This technique is suitable for this study, as the companies have differing strategies and values in executive recruitment, yet are familiar with executive search services. The questions are thus to some part the same, as the research focuses on a certain phenomenon in a certain setting, simultaneously leaving room for unexpected acknowledgements. These open-ended responses provide an understanding, which is according to how the respondents perceives the world (Patton, 2002), in this case, executive recruitment.

The interview guide, attached as appendix 1, provides the topics within which the interviews were held: recruitment methods; executive search services; social media in recruitment; risks in recruitment; and the future of executive recruitment. According to what Patton (2002) has presented as different types of questions, the interviews included *opinion and values question*, asking questions like "what is your opinion about social media in executive search", or "what do you believe that future executive recruitment will look like". Further, following the questions presented by Patton (2002), the interviews also included *knowledge questions*, focusing on the strategies and methods that are currently relevant in the companies' executive recruitment.

3.3.1 The data sample

The thesis examines how technological advances and social media is affecting recruitment in the higher levels in an organization, focusing on top-level management recruitment. Thus, the qualitative data has been collected by interviewing ten HR Directors from ten different companies working in different industry sectors in Finland. As the thesis is done anonymously, the respondents are presented below in the tables. The personal and company information is not presented together. This is done to maintain both the companies and the respondents anonymous.

The personal information, presented in table 1, is arranged according to the orders of the interviews. The positions are all presented as HR Director or Group HR Director, but the sample also included the following titles: Senior Vice President, HR; Vice President, HR; and Chief HR Officer. The average age of the respondents is 51,2, and the mean is 50,5. Eight out of ten of the respondents are female, and two are male. The average years of experience in a HR Director position is 13,2 years, and the mean is 15.

Interview	Age	Gender	Position	Education	Years in the company	Years of experience (similar position)
1	40-45	Female	HR Director	M.A.	< 1 year	1-5 years
2	50-55	Female	Group HR Director	M.Sc. (Econ.)	< 1 year	10-15 years
3	60-65	Female	HR Director	M.Sc. (Tech.)	> 10 years	10-15 years
4	45-50	Male	HR Director	M.Sc. (Econ.)	1-5 years	10-15 years
5	35-40	Female	HR Director	M.Sc. (Econ.)	1-5 years	10-15 years
6	50-55	Female	Group HR Director	M.Sc. (Econ.)	< 1 year	10-15 years
7	55-60	Female	HR Director	M.A.	1-5 years	15-20 years
8	50-55	Male	HR Director	M.Soc.Sc.	5-10 years	10-15 years
9	50-55	Female	HR Director	Lic.Sc. (Tech.)	5-10 years	> 20 years
10	45-50	Female	HR Director	M.Sc. (Econ.)	1-5 years	10-15 years

Table 2 Data sample, personal details

Below, table 2 shows the company information, which is arranged according to the company turnover, and then arranged by the number of employees. The companies are from industries like banking, industrial machinery, industrial processing, technology and aerospace. The companies' turnover varies from 75 million Euros to 850 million Euros. The variation of companies by size and industry gives a wider view of how different sized companies recruit top-level management.

Company turnover	Amount of employees	Industry
> 100 M€	100-500	Technology
100-500 M€	100-500	Technology
100-500 M€	100-500	Technology
100-500 M€	500-1000	Industrial manufacturing
100-500 M€	1000-5000	Aerospace
100-500 M€	1000-5000	Technology
500 M€ - 1 billion €	100-500	Oil & gas
500 M€ - 1 billion €	500-1000	Industrial processing
1-5 billion €	> 10 000	Banking
1-5 billion €	> 10 000	Industrial machinery

Table 3 Data sample, company details

Each interview followed an interview guide, consisting of main themes: executive recruitment; executive search; social media recruitment; and risks and other aspects in recruitment. Each interview was around 60 minutes. The interviews were held between December 29th, 2017 and January 25th, 2018.

I contacted all together 16 people, of whom four did not reply, two replied that they did not have time to participate, and the rest I got to interview. As the interviewees were HR Directors from remarkable companies in the Finnish industry, I expected that finding a time for the interview would be difficult. However, most of the interview times were decided quickly, and there was only a few that dragged on the time.

The interviews were all quite different, and the discussions had different flows depending on the company background. However, quite soon I noticed that the main themes and important key issues were similar in all interviews. This was suitable for the data collection, which was done in accordance to the interview guide for semi-structured interviews. There were no significant changes that needed to be made in the original interview guide. Some interviewees took the discussion deep, and really gave the topic a thought, while others discussed more on the surface, despite the same, or similar, questions. The number of interviews and the similar themes that arose highlight the important factors, which are presented in the findings and analysis. The interview guide can be found as an appendix, after the references.

3.4 Data analysis

The analysis is inspired by the analysis method presented by Gioia and colleagues (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996), and is based on a context sensitivity strategy, in which the focus is to look at social and temporal findings in the context, which might be possible to generalize and carefully adjust to new situations (Patton, 2002).

The qualitative data consisted of interview recordings, which were first transcribed, and then coded according to the thematic frame in the interview guide. Then the data was analyzed by recognizing key elements in executive recruitment from the interviews, which were grouped to the first-order findings. Further, the first-order findings were categorized into the second-order findings, the main themes in executive recruitment. Finally, the first- and second-order findings were grouped to present the findings more in detail. This is in accordance with Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) work, where the first order findings provide an explanation of key elements in a certain context. The findings do not result in a generalizable theoretical framework, but provide a basis for the second-order findings, which tie the first-order findings to a more generalizable frame (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). The second-order findings are further classified to two aggregate concepts, which are purposeful in further research.

This analysis strategy and theoretical frame work was chosen, as it strives to describe a phenomenon in a changing environment, and as Weick (1995) has presented sense-making is an activity or a process that placing items into frameworks, understanding and constructing meaning, interacting to attain mutual understanding, and patterning. This exploratory research will present main keys in making sense of the changing executive recruitment environment.

A lot of the literature about sense-making discuss the dynamics on a micro-level, (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Weick et al., 2005; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010) focusing on situations between top management, or top and middle managers, during changes within an organization. This research, however, strives to explore the key factors in executive recruitment, to contribute to the sense-making and sense-giving theories, by bringing sense-making to a field level; here focusing on the dynamics between the executive search companies and the client organizations.

3.5 Quality of the research

According to what Patton (2002) has proposed, the quality of this research is evaluated against the *social construction and constructivist criteria*, while approaching the study from an interpretivist perspective. Constructivism is about gaining multiple perspectives, rather than seeking a particular truth (Patton, 2002). Despite this research aiming to frame a more generalizable picture of executive recruitment, and more deeply acknowledging particular elements in this environment, rather than hypothesizing generalizations, as also Patton (2002) has presented as a validation for constructive and interpretive research.

Bryman and Bell (2015) have discussed how to evaluate the credibility and validity of a qualitative research. As complete objectivity is difficult to maintain in business search (Bryman & Bell, 2015), I have strived to act in good faith, not letting any personal opinions, knowledge from the theories and literature, nor from the company, affect the quality of research. To support this the interview guide has been constructed in a way that examines all the themes in the literature part, not emphasizing on one over the other, and additionally, letting the respondent lead the discussion.

The credibility of the research can also be examined in accordance to what Patton (2002) has presented: rigorous method; credibility of the researcher; and philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry. Examining from a perspective of rigorous method, the research is done through interviewing ten HR Directors in Finnish companies. These present those persons in organizations, who are involved in the executive recruitment processes, and thus their responses include high-quality information and perspectives.

Further, the credibility of the researcher is examined by looking at the training, experience, track record, status and presentation of self (Patton, 2002). Here we must note that as it is a Master's thesis, the track record and experience in academic research is not yet comparable with professional researchers. Relating this to the field of executive recruitment and executive search, the experience here is not either strong from practical situations, and is based on the academic knowledge gained during the studies. Additionally, I, as the analyst, might have been affected by biases and predispositions, which have been formed during reviewing the literature, but also as I work for an executive search company, which is also discussed by Patton (2002).

Finally, the philosophical belief in the value of a qualitative inquiry refers to for example the appreciation of qualitative methods and inductive analysis (Patton, 2002), which are

supported highly by both the literature in the thesis, as well as the starting point for the whole study, where the aim has been to objectively study executive recruitment in a changing recruitment environment.

Common errors in survey based interviews which are structured, according to Bryman and Bell (2015:212), are: a poorly worded question; the way the question is asked by the interviewer; misunderstanding on the part of the interviewee; memory problems on the part of the interviewee; the way the information is recorded by the interviewer; and the way the information is processed, either when answers are coded or when data is entered into the computer. The semi-structured interviews followed an interview guide to support the interviews and helping in asking the questions in the same way with all the interviewees, and further process the information from the interviews in the same way. As social media has affected recruitment on lower levels already in many ways, the respondents sometimes wandered away from the executive level, and discussed lower level recruitments, despite the clarification of the level several times during the interviews.

As originally intended, the research was supposed to include a mixed method approach, which quite fast was changed to a purely qualitative approach. Here, I believe that a mixed method approach could have given a more thorough insight of how executive recruitment is changing. Mixed method approaches are discussed by for example Saunders and Lewis (2012), who say that with variety in data collection a research can focus on different aspects. However, an issue already during the interviews was keeping the focus in executive recruitment, rather than recruitment in general, and this was easier to acknowledge and tackle, while doing face to face interviews. Further, as Patton (2002:12) has noted “there can be no single, ideal standard”, when choosing a method.

Further, testing the validity in this research, according to the discussion by Saunders and Lewis (2012), I have examined the research from the conclusions backwards. The theory and the conclusions flow logically, and there are several aspects linking them with each other. The summarized findings, which are presented in the following chapters, are consistent with the data. Further, the data is collected according to the presented methods, and following the research design and sampling. Finally, the research strategy is coherent with the research questions and objectives of the study.

The aim with this inductive and exploratory study, is to present a framework within executive recruitment, which is based on the findings in the research, and which can

further be used in the sense-giving processes for actors in the executive recruitment environment. Additionally, the findings can support further research both within executive recruitment, as well as in environmental or field-level sense-making.

4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The following chapter presents the research findings and analysis, following an analysis structure influenced by Gioia and colleagues (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996), presenting elements from the interviews, which are divided into the first-order and second-order findings, further linking to the aggregate concepts. First, I will frame the situational findings into a sense-making structure, after which I will present the first-order and second-order findings more in detail, connecting them with the aggregate concepts.

The explorative study focused on HR Directors' perceptions of executive recruitment, and how recruitment is changing, linking to the literature both in the academic field (Boehle, 2000; Feldman & Klaas, 2002; boyd & Ellison, 2008; Tyagi & Tyagi, 2012; Hill, 2013; Calvasina et al., 2014) and in popular literature (Duunitori, 2017 – 1; Luukkonen, 2017; Ruuska, 2017). The focus has been on how social media and other technological advances affect executive recruitment.

The assumption was that executive recruitment is changing, and this will affect executive search actors. However, a surprise and a counterintuitive finding is that even if recruitment in general is changing, and companies utilize the new technologies and social media for these processes, *executive* recruitment is not as highly affected by the changes, which will be explained in detail in the following parts.

Sense-making is a suitable approach to study this somewhat messy field, which includes high uncertainty in how the environment is changing, and how it will affect different actors in executive recruitment. To frame the current situation, I have used the figure, originally presented by Lüscher and Lewis (2008) to explain the executive recruitment environment.

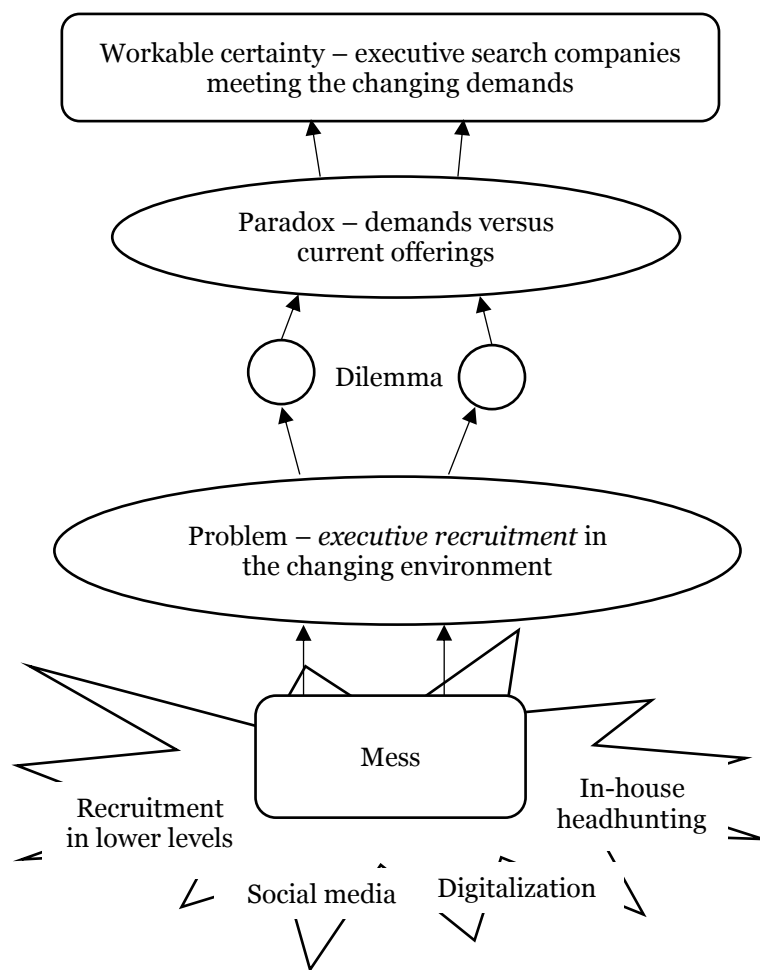


Figure 6 **Sense-making of executive recruitment in a changing environment**

As discussed by Lüscher and Lewis (2008), the *mess* presents the issue, which in this thesis has been the emerging critique and questioning of the executive search field and how recruitment is changing due to technological advances. The *problem* is then here, how these technological advances, like e-recruitment and social media, actually have affected *executive* recruitment, and by this affected the executive search industry. The problem gives an agenda for the solution, which further links to the *dilemma*, solving the problem and identifying more complicated and essential dilemmas (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). The dilemma is the most valuable stage in a sense-making process (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008), and is also in focus in this thesis. The dilemma in this research includes identifying the key issues in executive recruitment, which are presented by the first-order findings. Here we strive to find a clear explanation to solve the problem, but as presented later in this chapter, there are controversial elements to how the environment is changing.

According to Lüscher and Lewis (2008), the *paradox* refers to a stage, where there is no resolution found for the dilemma. If we regard phenomenon and situation from a broader perspective, we can see that we lie in a paradox, where the executive search companies who, according to both discussions in the media and the literature (Hill, 2013; Luukkonen, 2016; Ruuska, 2017; Ahlroth, 2018), and to the respondents, need to find solutions to meet the changing demands. On a more micro-level, the paradox is linked with the second-order findings. These show the main categories in executive recruitment, which have different perspectives on the executive recruitment. These are further linked to the aggregate concepts, which summarize the second-order findings to more generalizable perspectives; a conservative perspective on executive recruitment, and a liberal perspective on executive recruitment. To reach a *workable certainty*, the actors on the field should acknowledge the contradictory elements, and find a solution among these.

Despite the political tone, I have decided to use the terms *conservative* and *liberal*, to explain the perspective towards changes in executive recruitment. The conservative perspective refers to an executive recruitment environment, which is regarded more risky and sensitive, and where quality is emphasized. This perspective also supports more the traditional headhunting services, which highlight quality, relationships and trust (Soikkanen et al., 2015). On the other hand, there is a more liberal perspective on executive recruitment. This perspective does not highlight sensitivity, rather shows a need for openness. It is more focused on exploiting the new technologies within companies, rather than outsourcing the recruitment to an executive search company.

The first-order and second-order findings, together with the aggregate concepts, are presented next. First, a figure linking all three stages is presented, following a more in-depth analysis and discussion, structured according to the relevance of the findings.

4.1 First- and second-order findings

The first-order findings provide an explanation of key elements in executive search, but does not result in a generalizable theoretical framework. They provide the basis for creating a framework, and thus the second-order findings tie these first-order findings to a more generalizable frame, presenting the key themes in executive recruitment. This follows the analysis presented by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). The second-order findings show what factors is causing the changes or stability in executive recruitment,

and these are: the risks in executive recruitment; the quality in executive recruitment; the discreteness and openness in executive recruitment; activating passive candidates in executive recruitment; the resources in executive recruitment; and the efficiency aspect in executive recruitment. Further, these are according their nature grouped into two aggregate concepts: conservative perspective on executive recruitment; and liberal perspective on executive recruitment. The foundation for the findings are presented as quotes in the following parts of this chapter.

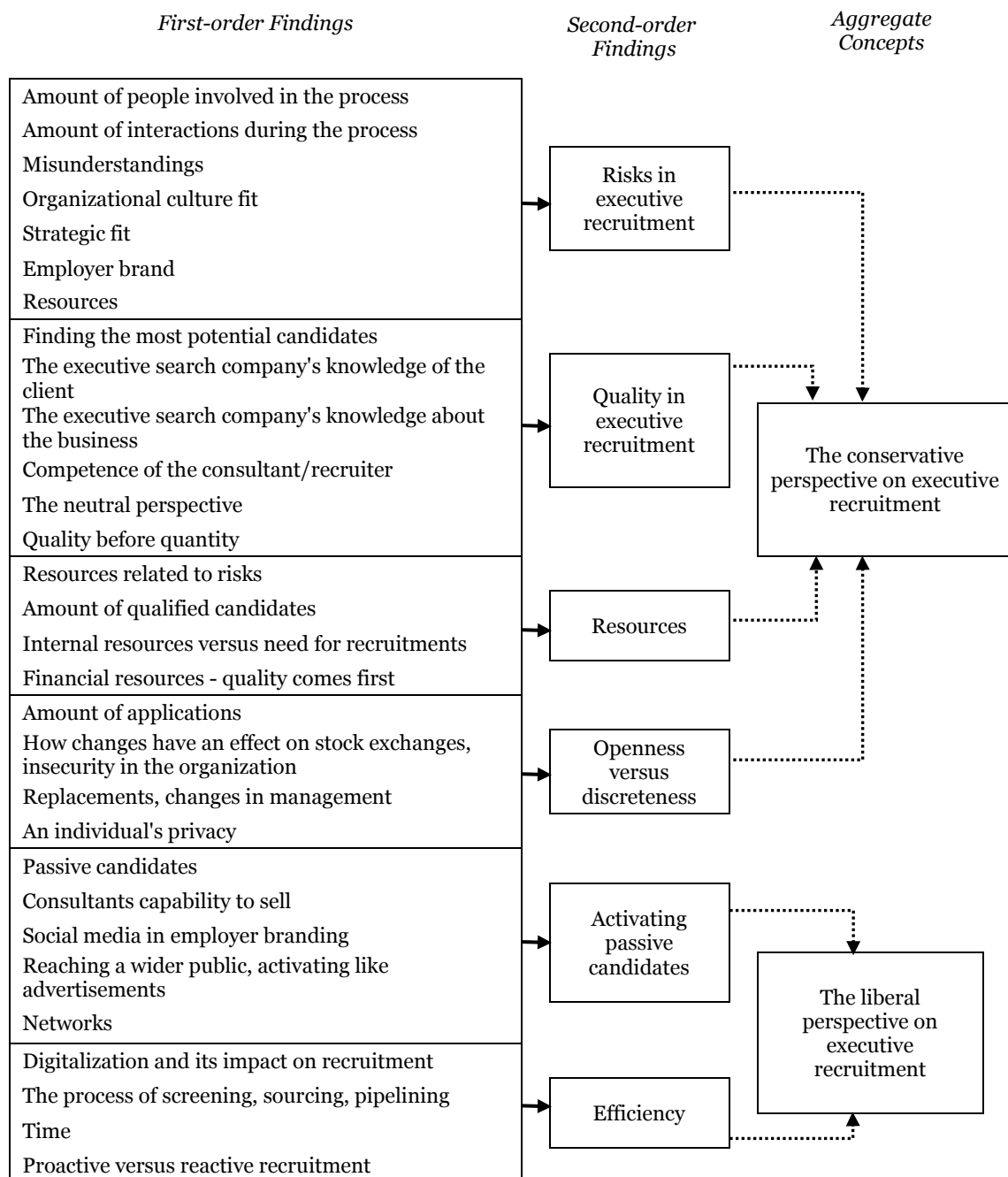


Table 4 First-order findings, second-order findings, aggregate concepts

As the interviews were done in Finnish, all the quotes are own translations from the Finnish transcriptions.

4.1.1 Making sense of the risks in executive recruitment

There are different perspectives on risks in executive recruitment. The main risks that were mentioned in the interviews were the following: the candidate withdraws his participation last minute; the candidate quits during the first months; the candidate does not fit into the organizational culture; or the profile is misunderstood, among others. When a recruitment process is unsuccessful, it uses company resources. Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) have said that the risks are higher when the search is done during organizational changes and there are expectations to increase performance. Further, when change is needed and improved performance is expected, the risks are bigger (Soikkanen et al., 2015), which also comes forward in the interviews.

“Recruitment is always a risk. The process always takes up to 18 months, and it gets expensive if you calculate a price tag for it. First, it takes six months to recruit, then it takes six months for the person to understand the business, and then it takes another six months for the person to make changes, which is a sidetrack. It affects the business continuity.” (Interview 4)

The respondents highlight that a recruitment process, when going wrong, uses company resources, and also Catasús and colleagues (2012) have discussed that recruitment processes are costly. Additionally to having risks related to resources and financial aspects, risks were linked with reputation.

One of the most mentioned issues in executive recruitment, related to the risks and to the quality of the recruitment, was finding a candidate that fits to the organizational culture.

“There is always the risk of making the wrong decision. It usually has to do with the culture fit, and not that much depend on the track record, or the ‘what’ side, what a person concretely is capable of doing. Sometimes it is just hard, no matter how deep going the interviews have been, to create and understanding of the culture or the values in a company”. (Interview 5)

In these recruitments, on the executive level, the problem is usually not their competence or their experience, as it has been checked in the early stage of the process. The issue comes in the organizational culture and person fit.” (Interview 6)

The importance of culture fit is also presented in the research by Duunitori (2017 – 1), where the employees fit to the team, values/fit to the organizational culture, and the character fit to the position are highlighted. The respondents in this thesis say that having an external consultant can help in determining the cultural fit, and also many

interviewees pointed out that with executive search companies it can be easier to tackle risks and challenges that relate to competencies, and selling the position.

“The consultant must have emotional competence and ability to match the cultures.” (Interview 5)

“When a consultant is working on a client company’s goal, the work is done thoroughly and the references are checked, which helps in assuring the candidates competencies and characteristics”. (Interview 7)

However, some also note that building a strong employer brand through social media, can help in attracting suitable candidates, who fit into the culture. Social media is a tool for communicating the employer brand (Wilkinson et al., 2010; Banerjee, 2012), and it can help showing the organizational culture, which would further be messaged to the candidates and determine a culture fit.

In addition to the cultural fit, the strategic fit was highlighted. Often behind executive recruitments lie a need for a change in either strategic execution, or other relevant changes, which requires a certain competence.

The more people are involved, the less risks there are, and the amount of interactions in a recruitment process was regarded important, whether it is done through external services or not, which is also noted in the literature (Brooke, 1967; Soikkanen et al., 2015; Skokic & Coh, 2017). The amount of interactions in a recruitment process affects the employer relationship (Skokic & Coh, 2017), and enhances mutual confidence, which is linked with the potentials to succeed in the new position (Brooke, 1967). Further, Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) have said that the amount of interactions minimizes the risks of failing a recruitment process. The respondents point out that more people can better determine the commitment of the candidate. Risks can be eliminated by having more people involved in the recruitment, examining the candidates and the situations, and the process is also done in accordance to the initial agreement. Further, it was said that a consultant can question, support and challenge in a process, which leads to a better outcome.

As many discussed the risks of a candidate withdrawing in the last minute, or quitting during the trial period, the trust and relationship between the candidate and consultant was seen important. Relating to this, some highlight the importance of candidate care, which is related to the employer brand and willingness to work for the company, which is also discussed by Skokic and Coh (2017).

“A consultant can better manage the candidate care.” (Interview 7)

Further, misunderstandings are regarded as a big risk in executive recruitment. Many respondents point out that for example same job titles might mean different things in other organizations. Also, assumptions are risky, and one respondent gives an example:

”One concrete example of a failed recruitment is, when during the interviews both us as the employer, and the candidate, emphasized the need of change. We were striving for a change, and we wanted that the person who was going to take the new position, would be willing to make the needed changes. The candidate agreed and underlined that s/he is motivated by change. However, once the person started and had worked with us for a while, it turned out that we had totally different perspectives on the speed and scope of the change. The result was that the person did not continue with us.” (Interview 8)

Below, in table 5, the first-order and second-order findings are presented together with the relevant quotes.

<p>“When more people examine the situation and evaluate the candidate, the potential risks are better noticed.” (Interview 9)</p> <p>“The risk management is easier if you have more people involved”. (Interview 8)</p> <p>“With a consultant, the candidate’s commitment can be better checked.” (Interview 7)</p>	Amount of people involved in the process	Risks in executive recruitment
<p>“The more you meet the candidate, the better you can determine the fit”. (Interview 5)</p>	Amount of interactions during the process	
<p>“it turned out that we had totally different perspectives on the speed and scope of the change” (Interview 8)</p> <p>“There is always the risk that you make the wrong choice, like in any other recruitment.” (Interview 5)</p>	Misunderstandings	
<p>During the process it is always not possible to determine the culture fit, or if the working methods are in accordance with the company’s methods”. (Interview 2)</p> <p>“Organizational culture is such a buzz word, but it is still extremely important.” (Interview 8)</p> <p>“The biggest risk is that the person does not fit into the organization.” (Interview 2)</p>	Organizational culture fit	
<p>“The strategic relevance of executives in a company is high, and thus the quality of the search is important.” (Interview 6)</p>	Strategic fit	
<p>”If we recruit internally we have a million things to manage, and then we don’t take care of the candidates, which gives a bad picture of us.” (Interview 10)</p>	Employer brand	
<p>“Recruiting executive with in-house resources, there is the risk with settling to someone just because of the lack of energy or resources.” (Interview 9)</p>	Resources	

Table 5 Making sense of risks in executive recruitment

Making sense of the risks related to executive recruitments give a more conservative perspective, emphasizing the risks a company takes, and highlighting the importance of quality, which is also noted in the executive search literature (Brooke, 1967; Soikkanen et al., 2015). The more conservative executive recruitment supports the more traditional ways of recruiting executives, as it emphasizes the risks involved, which is linked with the quality in executive recruitment.

4.1.2 Making sense of the importance of quality in executive recruitment

Quality before quantity, in its simplicity, is one of the main findings and a key factor in executive recruitment, which also comes forward in the literature, where it is discussed as an important factor in executive search (Tienari et al, 2001; Soikkanen et al., 2015).

“The goal is to find the most suitable candidate for the certain situation, matching the company’s needs, the role, the team and the organizational culture.” (Interview 2)

The key element in executive recruitment is finding the most potential and suitable candidate for an organization. Roberts (2005) have noted that the ultimate goals is to find a candidate who matches the position, and some writers have said that it affects the company’s business and performance (Tienari et al., 2001; Soikkanen et al., 2015). This is further linked with the recruitment literature, where it is presented that recruitment, as one of the key functions in HRM (Barber, 1998; Fish & Macklin, 2004; Roberts, 2005; Hollenbeck & Jamieson, 2015), is linked with performance (Guest, 1997; Barber, 1998; Orlitzky, 2007; Schmitt & Kim, 2007), and Khurana (2002) has argued that management has become more liable for the organizational performance, in accordance with scholars who have noted that top management affects the company performance (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990; Collins & Clark, 2003; Williams et al., 2016).

“The quality is based on the fact that the person’s motives are sincere, and that a person comes to the organization because s/he wants to come.” (Interview 4)

The interviewees highly value the executive search company’s insight in the client organization. All respondents, who use external services, highlight the involvement in the client company, and further point out that understanding the client’s need and organizational culture is a vital aspect in the industry.

“In general, it is important that you have a relationship with an executive search company, who knows your needs and your culture, so that you don’t have to worry about that part. Everything

else is possible to write down on paper, but you can't sense the culture from the paper." (Interview 6)

A consultant with good knowledge of the company, can better determine the culture fit and strategic fit, which is said to be very important in recruiting top managers. Further, the consultant also must determine the competence and demand match. The consultant's competence is also discussed in the literature (Britton et al., 1992; Clark, 1992; Fish & Macklin, 2004; Soikkanen et al., 2015).

Further, understanding the business, where the client operates, is important and also Fish and Macklin (2004) have noted that understanding the business is vital, which is also discussed as a factor of quality. The initiating meeting is regarded as a key element for a quality process, and is important for finding a common ground for the process. This is also discussed in early literature by Brooke (1967).

"The initial briefing is important and how the consultant has understood the situation. Quite fast you see whether s/he understood it or not." (Interview 6)

"We simply compare the profile from the beginning with the final potential candidates." (Interview 6)

Not only is the competence of the one consultant, but the whole team working on the assignment vital, which is also discussed by Fish and Macklin (2004).

"The research process is the most value-adding part, as it is that part, which gives the consultant the elements to work on." (Interview 8)

Whether the executive recruitment is done in-house or by outsourcing it to executive search companies, the recruiter's competence is vital. Similarly, the competence is shown through the consultant's judgement skills of personality factors, and the importance of human touch in recruitment is emphasized.

"The consultant must have emotional competence and ability to match the cultures." (Interview 5)

Cooperation and the consultant's competence, linking with understanding the client organization, its needs, business and culture, further related to the importance of the consultant to sell the position. This was also regarded as a key element in attracting the potential and right kind of employees. Two respondents say that they determine the success of the process, and how well the consultant has succeeded by the match with the profile.

Linked with quality, reliability, confidentiality and the relationship with the consultant is regarded as important, which is also presented in the executive search literature

(Britton et al., 1992; Tienari et al., 2001; Soikkanen et al., 2015; Skokic & Coh, 2017). The relationships between both the consultant and the client, as well as between the consultant and the candidate, are regarded to be important. Skokic and Coh (2017) have said that the relationship with the candidate might affect his/her decision of considering the job, and this is supported by the respondents.

Roberts (2005) has noted that the common mistakes in selection are: ignoring the specification, over-reliance on a single element; the halo effect; stereotyping; mirroring or similarity-identity bias; prejudice; and non-involvement of clients. The final element linking to the consultant's competence, is the neutral standing point, which s/he can bring to the process. Some of the respondents mention that variety is important in the workforce, also in management positions. Using social media increases the risk of recruiting similar persons to oneself, which minimizes variances in a company.

"We strive to remove all the irrelevant aspects, and focus on the main criteria that is relevant for the position. By using an external consultant this is possible, and highlights the competence of the consultant. If you think about social media, we delete all filters, which we have added earlier, and the focus might direct on all irrelevancies." (Interview 8)

This respondent highlights that variances are important and a company needs various kinds of people with different competencies to work best. However, Meriläinen and colleagues (2013) have argued that the executive search firms can affect the "ideal type" of executives. This is not directly linked to organization-related types of people, but more to the whole labor market, where also Faulconbridge and colleagues (2009) have argued that executive search companies control the elite labor market recruitment processes.

A key finding from the interviews was the emphasis of *quality before quantity* in executive recruitment. Especially linking to social media and its opportunities and challenges, the quality of candidates and the number of qualified candidates seemed to be an issue, which is also discussed in the literature (Chapman & Webster, 2003; Reiter, 2009).

"Of course quality comes first, that we find the most potential person. The more channels we use, the better we might reach those candidates, or if the executive search companies have good researchers. Likewise, they utilize social media." (Interview 7)

"To simplify this, quality is the number one factor." (Interview 8)

Reiter (2009) has noted that it is difficult to find the interesting and valuable candidates among all the applications and people that are available online. A few pointed out that executive search companies have traditions and techniques in finding the potential candidates among the large pools of people. If the recruitment would be done with an

open announcement, the amount of applications would be huge, and the amount of irrelevant applications would be a challenge. Further, Stone and colleagues (2015) have raised the question, if e-selection helps an organization to employ the most talented and diverse candidates, which is also questioned by some of the interviewees.

Some respondents note that to enhance quality in executive recruitment, executive search companies could offer companionships, where an executive search company would be more involved in the client company's recruitment and assessments overall.

Table 6 presents the first- and second-order findings connected with relevant quotes.

<p>"The goal is to find the most suitable candidate for the certain situation, matching the company's needs, the role, the team and the organizational culture." (Interview 2)</p> <p>"These recruitments [referring to executive recruitment] are so critical and strategic, so it is important to find the most suitable candidate, no matter how long it would take." (Interview 6)</p>	Finding the most potential candidates	Quality in executive recruitment
<p>"If you have a good company working on your goals, you benefit from it, but the company really needs to understand the needs and the ways of working, which requires a lot from the consultant's side." (Interview 1)</p> <p>"When determining the culture fit, it comes down to how well the consultant knows the client company ... if there is a long cooperation behind, the consultant or the executive search company knows the organization, which benefits the client." (Interview 2)</p>	The executive search company's knowledge of the client	
<p>"Especially if we are looking for someone that is hard to find, the consultant must have an exceptional access to a certain talent pool, otherwise we search them ourselves." (Interview 4)</p>	The executive search company's knowledge about the business	
<p>"The consultant must have emotional competence and ability to match the cultures." (Interview 5)</p> <p>"A reason to use executive search services is the consultant, who has the capability to focus on certain key characteristics, which are discussed in the initial meeting." (Interview 3)</p>	Competence of the consultant/recruiter	
<p>"Using social media, we move on these gray areas, which have increased. A great danger is that we start striving for similarity, which is a big risk in an organization." (Interview 8)</p>	The neutral perspective	
<p>"In the end the price of the service should not matter, because it is still quality before quantity that matters when recruiting top managers." (Interview 8)</p>	Quality before quantity	

Table 6 Making sense of quality in executive recruitment

Similarly with risks in executive recruitment, quality in executive recruitment can be linked with the aggregate concept of a conservative approach to executive recruitment. Especially the factors like quality, reliability, confidentiality and the relationship with the consultant is regarded as important, and is presented in the executive search literature (Britton et al., 1992; Tienari et al., 2001; Soikkanen et al., 2015; Skokic & Coh, 2017). The findings in this category also supports the use of executive search services.

4.1.3 Making sense of the required resources in executive recruitment

All interviews discussed resources in executive recruitment, looking at either how much resources their executive recruitment requires currently, or how much resources it would require using other forms of recruitment.

Recruitment requires resources, both time, financial and human capital. Many of the respondents say that there is a lot at stake in executive search. They say that the process takes a lot of resources, and also the financial input and risk that goes in recruitment processes are discussed. Also, Jones (1989), and Catasús and colleagues (2012) have noted that the recruitment process, and the introduction time takes a lot of financial resources and time. Further, recruitment to a key position also affects the business continuity.

”Executive recruitment requires the management team to commit or participate in the process, or another person, who would manage the search of a person on the side of his/her own job. Not many organizations can afford to having the management doing the recruitment and focusing on that. I would say that it is extremely important to either have the right resources to work with this, making a good ground research, making shortlists and longlists, or then outsource it.” (Interview 1)

“The process always takes up to 18 months, and it gets expensive if you calculate a price tag for it.” (Interview 4)

Some respondents clearly state that executive search companies are used, due to the lack of internal resources.

“The need of external services probably depends on the size of the company. Sometimes the recruitment needs might get to a level that you just can’t handle them internally. Of course, if a company is large enough, you might have an internal recruitment team or a talent acquisition team, but our company is not big enough for such things.” (Interview 6)

However, a clear opinion of which methods requires more or less resources is not found. Some of the respondents argue that especially social media generates a lot of work, which requires a lot of resources. This is due to the amount of applications that come, or due to the screening processes. Controversially, respondents and scholars discuss that social

media is making recruitment more efficient. Calvasina and colleagues (2014), and Arjomandy (2016) have argued that recruiting through social media saves both time and money, and also Jeske and Shultz (2016) have argued that social media recruitment is cheaper. The respondents argue that social media might bring cost savings and be more time efficient.

“It would be great if there would in the future be those actors, who would screen and source executive candidates, could also screen people to lower level specific positions, because we do not have the resources to do this. Of course we could add resources in-house, but the recruitment needs are not consistent to these expertise areas, so it would be great to outsource this.” (Interview 2)

Some of the respondents experienced that social media could bring cost savings, and further assumed that recruitments through social media would be faster. Social media, however, also seems to bring other challenges, when it comes to resources, and some respondents argued that it is a question of where you use your resources, whether you manage things internally or outsource them. The biggest issue that seems to come forward, when discussing social media in executive recruitment, is the number of applications and managing all of them. All the respondents say that open announcement would result in a large amount of applications. Most of them point out, that a large amount of these applications would probably be irrelevant. The problem is when facilitating all the applications that come from outside the company, but also in how to facilitate the pipelines, which could be done in-house and enhance a proactive recruitment. Galanki (2002), and Chapman and Webster (2003) have looked at how e-recruitment affects the number of applicants, which has had an impact on the number of applicants, yet not resulting in more qualified candidates.

“It would probably be a lot faster, but then again it could generate a lot of irrelevant applications. But the speed. It takes a few seconds to share the announcement to a wide pool of people, and from experience, we got only in a few weeks a large amount of applications.” (Interview 9)

Executive search processes were regarded to be standardized, yet efficient, regarding the use of resources. The time efficiency was one positive element, and especially a set schedule was seen important in a process. Also, Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) emphasize time efficiency, and argue that executive search services are time efficient, compared to announcement search, where the amount of irrelevant applications increases.

“One specific benefit with executive search is the schedule. You can set the schedule already in the beginning, how long is the research phase, when do you meet the candidates, when is it time for person assessments, etc. So you have a schedule to rely on.” (Interview 8)

“If you use an executive search company, you have the resources to do the search and a company working actively on your goals.” (Interview 1)

It was noted that the executive search firms have very little variation in the price ranges, and most of the respondents, despite using executive search services, perceived that pricing models of the services are outdated.

“What we wish for, is more creative pricing models. Despite the fact that the pricing has been the same until now, it needs to be updated. Some recruitments, which we would like to use headhunting for, are done in-house due to the pricing, for example for more demanding lower level tasks.” (Interview 2)

“The price is not any more arguable, and further, the processes take a long time.” (Interview 9)

The respondents say that technological advances are making executive search more efficient. Thus, executive search services should come with new pricing models, and be more related to assignment specific details. The efficiency aspect will be discussed later in the findings, but here it is related to the financial resources that a company puts in the executive recruitment.

According to Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) each executive search assignment is different, and there are many contextual factors affecting the nature of the assignment. Still, both the literature (Finlay & Coverdill, 2007; Soikkanen et al., 2015), as well as the interviewees show that the pricing models are very standardized, and the respondents point out that the price should be decided case by case.

Despite the dissatisfaction with the pricing models, most of the respondents still argued that the quality is more important than the financial resources lost. Some of the respondents especially pointed out that candidate care is regarded to require resources, which was also discussed earlier linking to the risks that are involved in a recruitment.

“If the candidates are held up to date it gives a good picture of the company, and affects the employer brand. The candidate experience is important. If we get 100 applications, all these 100 people get some sort of picture of us as an employer. We strive to pay more attention to it, and take care of the candidates. This can also be done by an external firm, because it takes a lot of time and it is necessary to acknowledge what you use your time for.” (Interview 7)

Candidate care is regarded also a noteworthy factor in executive recruitment, according to some of the respondents. Linking candidate care with resources in executive recruitment, the interviewees pointed out that a consultant can take better care of the candidates, rather than them doing it in-house. The relationship between the consultant and candidates is, according to Skokic and Coh (2017), important as it might affect the candidate’s willingness to consider the position. This also relates to what a respondent mentioned about the employer brand, where all those, who send an application to a

company, gets some sort of picture about the company, depending on how their response is perceived.

Executive recruitment usually includes people from the management team, and it is pointed out that they do not have time to go through all applications. Thus, executive search services are used, where the initial screening and scanning is done externally, and references can be checked more thoroughly.

"The problem is what resources would be needed for collecting those potential candidates from the communities, who would be interested in working for us. Should we do it in-house, or outsource it to some other actors?" (Interview 4)

Some respondents discussed also the possibility to do in-house headhunting by using social media, but said that it would either need a lot of resources or would not be efficient in the long-run. The arguments were that there are not enough on-going recruitment processes, or there are too many processes for only one or two recruiters to handle. Managing executive recruitment internally versus externally also depends on company size. As the executive recruitment is usually done by the management team, managing the executive recruitments in-house is seen as an issue. The executives in the management teams do not have time to go through all applications, or manage other parts of the recruitment process, like candidate care and checking for references.

"Of course if we do the recruitment ourselves, it requires resources. Then, even if we check references also, it usually is not done as thoroughly if for example a consultant would check them. Also, if we have had a research that has dragged out on time, if we do it in-house we might at some point settle, just because of the lack of vigor, which is clearly a negative thing, and of course a risk." (Interview 9)

As a third category, linking to the conservative approach, there are the resources related to executive recruitment. Despite the arguments of social media making recruitment cheaper and faster (Arjomandy, 2016; Jeske & Schultz, 2016) the findings point towards a more critical aspect of how this would work in executive recruitment. Even if the respondents also believe that social media is useful in lower level recruitments, the question of managing executive recruitments processes done through social media, or even done in-house, rise a concern for how managerial resources are used. Table 7 show the findings related to the relevant quotes.

<p>"Recruitment always requires resources. Executive search services require out participation to brief the case and make the decisions, and it would require a very thorough briefing and a competent consultant, if we would fully rely on the company." (Interview 3)</p> <p>"We recruit through two channels mainly, our contacts and traditional headhunting. Or at least that has been the case until now. In the near past we've been recruiting through our own networks, and see that we find people best through them. These recruitments are faster and do not require too much resources. But there are more risks, when relying on someone, who wants to hire their friend or a person they once knew." (Interview 9)</p>	Resources related to risks
<p>"It would probably be a lot faster, but then again it could generate a lot of irrelevant applications." (Interview 9)</p>	Amount of qualified candidates
<p>"The scheduling of an open executive recruitment is probably the first problem that comes to my mind. Like any other advertising, when you try to create a transaction, it is unpredictable how fast the interest rouses. Further, how fast the people, who would be potential for the position, starts to apply for the job." (Interview 8)</p> <p>"We believe that it is useful for us that there are executive search companies, which have the methods and the networks to find the people. It takes a lot of time to find the most potential candidates, and we do not want to give them to our in-house recruitment specialists, because they also need to be attracting and selling. Here the consultant comes in hand." (Interview 7)</p> <p>"If we recruit internally we have a million things to manage, and then we don't take care of the candidates, which gives a bad picture of us." (Interview 10)</p> <p>"In-house recruiters might not be efficient, for companies to benefit from social media, as the amount of applications or potential candidates become huge, and the screening becomes more difficult." (Interview 4)</p>	Internal resources versus need for recruitments
<p>"Even if the pricing models are outdated, and could be updated, the main thing is still the quality of the process." (Interview 2)</p> <p>"The price does not matter because executive recruitments are huge investments any way, and should not be something where the company saves money." (Interview 8)</p> <p>"The pricing should be decided case by case." (Interview 10)</p>	Financial resources - quality comes first

Resources

Table 7 Resources in executive recruitment

4.1.4 Making sense of the openness and discreteness perspectives

A key element in executive recruitment is confidentiality and managing the recruitment processes discretely. Many of the respondents argued that the biggest difference with recruiting top executives, compared to lower level recruitments, is the discrete nature of the process. Management recruitment is often done through executive search services, due to the sensitivity and need to keep information secret.

"The executive positions are always searched under the surface. In these it is a lot about the background work and sourcing." (Interview 1)

"Traditionally, the searches are 'secret', especially in such a small country as Finland, where many people know each other." (Interview 7)

The respondents do believe that executive recruitment will not be as discrete in the future as it has been.

"We have had these more secret recruitments, but not in the last few years. Earlier it was more that the organization did not know when an executive was recruited, before the decision was made. Now it has not been as strictly confidential anymore, even if it relates to sensitivity and confidentiality." (Interview 3)

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) have noted that it is interesting to see how social media affects the trust in executive recruitment, as people can easily share information publicly online. The openness of executive recruitment in social media was listed as an opportunity, but also regarded as a challenge, mainly linking to the amount of irrelevant applications or the unpublished future changes. Social media is said to affect executive recruitment, making it more open. However, discreteness is still seen to affect the choice of method, and executive recruitment continues to be done discretely for the most part.

"Then there is also the reputation risk, we have had some movement in the management team during the last years. Especially as a listed company, we need to emphasize that the people are committed and capable of doing the tasks." (Interview 5)

According to Brooke (1967), and Soikkanen and colleagues (2015) executive search services are needed if the client's identity should be held unknown, if the company is entering a new market, if a company is expanding or developing, or if a company is making organizational rearrangements. These are all situations, which are similar to what is discussed in the interviews; executive search services are used for example due to sensitivity issues, during organizational and strategic changes, and when a company needs talent that is not found in-house.

"It is often that when someone needs to be replaced, it is done discretely, and the changes are announced later, when the process is on the finish line. The process might take three to four months, and sometimes up to six." (Interview 7)

According to the interviews, the main reason for keeping a recruitment out of sight is if someone is replaced, and other reasons that arise are the insecurity it brings among employees, how it might affect the stock exchanges for listed companies, and that open applications would generate too many applications, of which many would be incompetent for the position in question.

” When there are changes in management, they are usually not common information, so putting an announcement online would not go hand in hand with not telling about the changes.” (Interview 2)

”Internally it brings a lot of uncertainty, if for example the finance director would be leaving. Why is s/he leaving now? This could affect the situation on the stock market, if anyone from top management would be leaving. So of course, sensitivity is an issue.” (Interview 5)

When talent is not found in the company, and when it is searched from the outside, companies prefer using executive search. This has usually to do with strategic changes, or changes in the business environment.

Also, the discreteness is seen to be suitable for the candidates.

“A candidate might want to keep it a secret that s/he is participating in a recruitment process.” (Interview 6)

”The candidate might want to maintain the recruitment process secret, until the decision is made.” (Interview 7)

The anonymous nature of the executive search process is also subtle for the candidate, who might work for another company (Soikkanen et al., 2015). Lim and Chan (2001) have said that headhunters can attract potential candidates and talent more discretely, without competitors getting to know about this. This is related to both the openness and the risks in executive recruitment. Further, confidential information about the company can be held more secret, while using executive search services (Lim & Chan, 2001), and confidentiality is regarded as a key aspect in executive search (Soikkanen et al., 2015).

This category is related to the conservative perspective on executive recruitment. The more conservative perspective comes forward in the sensitive nature of executive recruitment, which is related to risks, resources and individuals' privacy. The conservative perspective is more dominant, however, some also discuss that they would enjoy more openness in the recruitments, and thinking about state-owned companies in Finland, they are obligated to announce the job openings on open channels. Table 8, below, shows a strong relation to the conservative approach.

"There is also the problem that if we publish an announcement in some media about an executive position, we would get over thousands of applications, including all kinds of people who would think that they could somehow get the job." (Interview 4)	Amount of applications	Openness versus discreteness
"The risks with telling about the open position would, additionally to generate a lot of applications, cause insecurity and frustration among employees." (Interview 5)	How changes have an effect on stock exchanges, insecurity in the organization	
"reasons are mostly that there is a situation that the organization does not know about the change. That someone is either resigning or being replaced." (Interview 2)	Replacements, changes in management	
"A candidate might want to keep it a secret that s/he is participating in a recruitment process." (Interview 6)	An individual's privacy	

Table 8 Making sense of openness versus discreteness

4.1.5 Making sense of the candidates' passiveness or activeness

The problem with executive recruitment, and announcing the positions publicly, is the passivity of the desired candidates. Usually the people, who are potential candidates for company's top-managerial positions, are often not looking for jobs, and executive search consultants often attract candidates from other companies, which is also presented by Brown and Swain (2012).

"Well, often the executives are passive, and not looking for jobs." (Interview 7)

"If you have a very experienced HR expert with great networks, and s/he knows the people on the market, you can recruit executives internally. The problem, however, comes when you need to get people on the move, who work for other companies. In that case it might be easier to have an external party. The technologic advances makes it possible to do even more things in-house, like using LinkedIn, which is a great tool, but the problem is the candidates who might not be actively seeking for a job. We need to get them on a move." (Interview 6)

Some respondents believe that an external consultant is needed to find the passive talent that is potential for the position, and note that only being active on social media, will not activate the passive candidates. Brown and Swain (2012) have said that it is necessary to lure candidates from competitors. This links to the consultant's competence to sell a position and find the right people, which is also presented in the first-order findings.

"There is that certain glamour, when you get a call from a headhunter." (Interview 7)

However, some of the respondents wonder if the passivity issue would be possible to tackle with social media. First, they discuss the possibility with *employer branding*, and by this attracting people who find the culture intriguing, also related to the culture-fit. Second, they play around with the idea, that employer branding and being active on

social media is more aggressive towards people, forcing the brand to be known, as any other advertisement.

“What we believe is important in it [using social media in recruitment] is building an employer brand” (Interview 1)

“We know that people are interested in us and in our business, so why would we not utilize this and tie them [candidates] to certain segments, similarly how we catch our investors or our clients.” (Interview 4)

Linking to the activeness or passiveness, the respondents discuss the possibility to reach a wider public, and possibly reach the scarce talent that is required. As Stone and colleagues (2015) have discussed, a key question in e-recruitment and e-selection is if it is possible to attract talented and diverse applicants through e-recruitment. Further, it is also mentioned that the message can reach a more international scope, using social media. Calvasina and colleagues (2014), as well as Arjomandy (2016) have said that social media enables a rapid and wide spread of announcements, and argued that it is a good way of finding the right person for a certain position. However, the HR Directors' perception of social media activating the passive candidates on social media remained uncertain. Some believed that social media can activate, while some respondents were clearly of the opinion that it is not sufficient to activate people on social media.

“In social media there is the challenge to sell the position or the company, and to attract the potential candidates, if they are not already somehow linked with the company.” (Interview 1)

“Executive level people are harder to lure to positions. There are many elements and aspects that need to be considered and researched. The person recruiting must be capable of selling the position. If you search for a general assistant or similar, everyone knows what the job includes, but the higher you go in an organization, the more complex it becomes, and the more the candidates also choose for who they want to work, with who they want to work, and how they want to work. In this situation it helps that you have a consultant, who first sells the position and then helps settling the details”. (Interview 7)

Stone and colleagues (2015) have said that many researchers focus on how e-recruitment attracts applicants, but the focus has not been on how these applicants further fit to the organization and the task. Social media allows people to more actively highlight their competences and make them visible for recruiters (Larkiala, 2017), and also discussed in the interviews is how peoples' activity in social media impacts on what information reaches them and what does not. Further, people's activity online is individual, also noted by the interviewees, and Jeske and Shultz (2012) note that not all people are on social media, which also comes forward in the interviews. Some of the respondents discuss if the passivity issue would be possible to tackle with social media, again relating the discussion with employer branding.

The technological advanced, which are discussed with all respondents, are suggested to tackle issues regarding passive applicants. Companies can themselves also try to utilize the technological opportunities and do internal and external pipelining in-house, as well as do executive search in-house.

Discussing the passivity and activity on social media, it is further related to networks. According to some respondents, networks are maintained easier through social media, and are an important source in executive recruitment. Hollenbeck and Jamieson (2015) have said that technological improvements can enhance social network analysis systems, which help understand the social and knowledge networks and enriches their human capital. Networks were especially discussed as a good source, especially if a consultant or a recruiter had exceptional access to a specific business area network. Especially having networks on an international level was seen as important, and is also presented by Soikkanen and colleagues (2015). Further, Calvasina and colleagues (2014) have said that through social media recruitment, it is possible to build employer-employee relationships over time, linking with networks.

“Often the consultant is experienced in a certain field, and has better networks amongst the people there, and can by that find the most potential candidates for us.” (Interview 3)

“The international contacts are important, because we can’t know who the best players abroad are, if we are not physically present in the location.” (Interview 5)

Networking, additionally to being part of the discussion of social media, is presented to be a key factor in executive search (Soikkanen et al., 2015), and is also discussed by the interviewees, who say that executive search consultants often have good networks in industry specific pools. Faulconbridge and colleagues (2009) have also noted that executive search companies have broad databases, which they have worked with for a long time, making their networks wider. Skokic and Coh (2017) have noted that executive search consultants also stimulate a pool of potential executive candidates, which is further related to the networks.

The passiveness of the potential candidates can be seen from a more liberal perspective, where social media is seen to activating candidates and enhancing the networks between potential candidates and the employers. This would point towards a more liberal view of either posting announcements on social media channels, or trying to lure potential candidates by being active on social media. Below, in table 9 the relevant quotes are presented in accordance with the first- and second-order findings.

<p>"One challenge is that executive recruitment requires human touch. Few directors take action just because of a tweet, post or a message on social media" (Interview 1)</p> <p>"Executives are more difficult to persuade" (Interview 7)</p> <p>"Not all potential candidates are on LinkedIn." (Interview 10)</p> <p>"Well, in this day, even if the job applicant are passive, they still follow their environment online. Of course it depends on the person, how active s/he is on social media, but it is possible." (Interview 7)</p>	Passive candidates	Activating passive candidates
"There is that certain glamour, when you get a call from a headhunter." (Interview 7)	Consultants capability to sell	
<p>"If we get this good vibe to spread outside the company, it will promote interest and make us more interesting. I still have difficulties to imagine that this would be suitable for executive recruitment, because there's still the sensitivity issue." (Interview 5)</p> <p>"If we [employers] can create communities with shared interest on digital platforms, we can use these pools to identify the potential candidates for our positions." (Interview 4)</p>	Social media in employer branding	
"It is similar to any other ad, like maybe I did not need new high heels right now, but if I see cute ones, then I probably want them." (Interview 10)	Reaching a wider public, activating like advertisements	
<p>"We must be sure that the consultant knows the most suitable people from the markets, and if they don't, then it's a challenge." (Interview 10)</p> <p>"No matter how wide our own networks are, we can't know everyone." (Interview 5)</p> <p>"In general it [social media in executive recruitment] will probably be more common, and there are positive sides especially with the networking possibilities." (Interview 8)</p>	Networks	

Table 9 Making sense of passiveness and activeness

4.1.6 Making sense of efficiency in executive recruitment

Digitalization and technological advances, as discussed in the literature review and linking to the purpose of the study, are affecting the recruitment environment. This was discussed also in the interviews, looking at how technological advances affect executive recruitment. The common idea was that technological advances make recruitment more efficient. Recruitment, thanks to e-recruitment is already more time- and space-independent, as well as collaborative (Holm, 2012). There were various opinions of how it will affect executive recruitment. Most respondents said that executive search companies must develop their processes, in relation to the technological advances, but only a few believed that the executive search field will wither.

"Well, first of all, I would like to get rid of all executive search consultants. I believe that if you are very dependent on someone else, you are not managing your own pipeline, both the internal and the external." (Interview 4)

"The processes of executive search companies are all so similar, which can be an advantage for the client choosing the company. However, when we talk about this social media era, it raises the question if the processes have developed enough? Are they answering the present demands?" (Interview 8)

Social media is expected to make recruitment more cost and time efficient, and recruitment is argued to be more engaging and easier nowadays, thanks to social media (Dunn, 2009; Tyagi & Tyagi, 2012). Tyagi and Tyagi (2012) say that using LinkedIn, for example, has decreased the needs for using expensive external headhunting services. As discussed, the pricing models are regarded to be outdated. However, controversially to Tyagi and Tyagi (2012) it is noted in the interviews that most companies still value executive search services over social media. Only a few respondents say that they would prefer to do the executive recruitment in-house, and believe that they could make it more efficiently, linking to better placements.

"They [executive search companies] need to develop on the time aspect. The processes are very long." (Interview 9)

Simultaneously, the respondents gave notice to the fact that digitalization also gives opportunities and challenges for executive search companies, multiplying the amount of people from which the candidates are searched.

Some respondents played around with the thought of in-house headhunting, however questioning the use of resources, as presented earlier. The technological opportunities might help in screening or assessing potential candidates, however, even if social media will affect also executive recruitment in the future, alongside with other technological advances, most of the respondents do not see this as an end for executive search companies. The technological advances have also brought software and programs, which executive search companies can utilize, and executive search companies have the techniques to interview and the competencies to exploit also social media in their work.

Time efficiency was simultaneously important, yet, most respondents emphasized that the goal is to find the best candidate, no matter the time it takes. Quality is still more important, and the recruitment processes are usually pretty long. Time efficiency was also said to be a lot depending on the case, and most respondent rather use more time to find the most potential candidate, than quickly try to finish a process.

“Well, executive search processes are usually a bit faster, when there is a project manager making the schedule work. Easily, if we have to do it ourselves, the process drags out on time.” (Interview 10)

“In reactive cases it is usually more time pressure. I have one position, where the process is starting now, but the need to fill the position is in one year from now. This is being proactive.” (Interview 4)

The efficiency aspect, however, is not only linked with the executive search processes alone. When discussing successful recruitment processes, some of the respondents said that the choice of recruitment method does not affect the success of a placement, and using more than one channel in executive recruitment is better than always relying on one.

“I do not in any way want to say that one channel would be better than another. The choice of channel has to fit to the organization’s culture and way of working.” (Interview 1)

“Regardless of to which level position someone is being recruited, the channel does not affect the success of a placement. A channel is only a channel. It is depending on the competence, and being capable of utilizing the channel correctly.” (Interview 6)

Despite the emphasis on social media and technological advances making recruitment more efficient, the executive search services are also regarded as efficient. Further, the channel used for recruitment is only regarded as a tool, and does not link to efficiency, neither to the success of a recruitment. The tool is only linked with efficiency, when discussing the competence of the recruiter.

“It might still be that it is about our incompetence to utilize LinkedIn fully.” (Interview 3)

A proactive approach to executive recruitment is argued to be important. The technological possibilities already allow recruitment to be more proactive, but there is a room for change in recruitment cultures and strategies. The reactivity is according to a company’s strategy and planning operations. Stone and colleagues (2015) point out that recruitment can become more proactive, thanks to social media, as it enables to scan individual profiles, identify talented employees, and further contact them.

“Recruitment should be more proactive, rather than reactive.” (Interview 4)

“It is clearly going towards a more proactive and dynamic way, and that companies like us would have a continuous discussion with certain candidate pools, in which there is a mutual interest. At some point that interest can become an employment relationship.” (Interview 4)

On the other hand, another points out that it is the company’s own planning and organizing that can determine the proactiveness or reactivity of recruitment. Wilkinson and colleagues (2010) have argued that proactive approaches to recruitment should be emphasized in future research, which relates to the discussion about proactive and reactive recruitment.

Despite the common opinion that technological advances might result in more automated recruitment processes in general, executive recruitment highlights the importance of finding a suitable individual. Thus, executive recruitment requires human touch, and despite some recruitments becoming more scientific, where people are seen as comparable numbers rather than individuals, executive recruitment it is more about finding the right person. Also, despite all the possibilities that technological advances bring, Stone and colleagues (2015) have questioned if the focus is too much on technologies, rather than employees.

Below, in table 10, the first- and second-order findings are presented, linking to the relevant quotes from the interviews.

<p>"Executive search processes are usually longer, but then again do not require as much effort from us as if we would do it ourselves. Then again, if we would use social media and spread the word fast, we could save some time. However, this would use more of our resources for going through the applications." (Interview 9)</p>	Digitalization and its impact on recruitment	Efficiency
<p>"If we decide to do openly these recruitments, we usually use an external office to manage the scheduling". (Interview 2)</p> <p>"There is already a software that through algorithms finds everything what you have written about yourself on social media, and then it creates a personality profile."</p> <p>"It might still be that it is about our incompetence to utilize LinkedIn fully." (Interview 3)</p>	The process of screening, sourcing, pipelining	
<p>"They [executive search companies] need to develop on the time aspect. The processes are very long." (Interview 9)</p> <p>"We used to keep track of the lead time, but not anymore. If a process takes time, there is usually a reason for that." (Interview 5)</p> <p>"Usually it [an executive search process] runs like a train, with fast schedules and so on. That's a positive side." (Interview 2)</p>	Time	
<p>"Recruitment should be more proactive, rather than reactive. In reactive cases it is usually more time pressure. I have one position, where the process is starting now, but the need to fill the position is in one year from now. This is being proactive." (Interview 4)</p> <p>"If we are in a reactive state, we are already too late" (Interview 6)</p>	Proactive versus reactive recruitment	

Table 10 **Efficiency in executive recruitment**

In the end, despite finding conservative elements, efficiency is more related to the liberal perspective, where social media and the technological advances are seen to make recruitment more efficient. Despite it giving room for changes in a recruitment

environment, this is also something that for example executive search companies can benefit from, Technological advances have also come to the executive search services, and can be utilized both by these companies.

4.2 Summarizing the findings

Executive search is regarded as conservative and old fashioned, a field that needs updates. The potential changes in the field, and in executive recruitment, however, are argued to be more open, and more proactive for client companies, and in a way more liberal. The aggregate findings are thus divided in to the conservative perspective on executive recruitment, and on the more liberal perspective on executive recruitment. These findings do not, however, give clear implications for the prospective changes in the executive recruitment environment. In the following part I will discuss the findings and present some conclusions, including suggestions for further research. However, to clarify the main finding from the interviews, which also will be concluded in the next chapter, one of the respondents said:

"I clearly remember the phase, when LinkedIn became a thing and started to grow. At that point, many thought that it would take a slice from the executive search field, because anyone could do searches on LinkedIn. This has turned out to be nonsense. It has probably forced executive search consultants to develop their processes, and has probably made the search phase a bit easier to a certain level. Or let's put it this way, the researcher can produce a greater amount of people and volume in the search process, but this does not in any way solve the criteria for quality, relevancy or essentialities. To sum up, I would say that this is a typical phenomenon in the sense that nothing new fully replaces old, but enriches and fragments the field." (Interview 8)

The key elements for making sense of this specific phenomenon are looking at sense-making of risks, quality, resources and efficiency in executive recruitment, as well as considering the passiveness of candidates, as well as the discrete nature of executive recruitment. These six categories can further be related to two main aggregate concepts; a conservative approach to executive recruitment, and a liberal approach to executive recruitment.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter of the thesis will present the discussion and conclusion, summarizing the main findings, answering the research questions, and finally, presenting suggestions for further research.

The key elements and findings, presented in the previous chapter, gives a basis for making sense of the changing recruitment environment. Some scholars have argued that Internet has cut down on other forms of recruitment (Boehle, 2000; Feldman & Klaas, 2002), and it is presented that e-recruitment increases the number of applicants (Galanaki, 2002). However, scholars like Chapman and Webster (2003), and Stone and colleagues (2015), have questioned if it helps organizations to employ the most potential and talented candidates. Social media might bring many opportunities for companies to do headhunting themselves, but as also presented in the findings, also executive search services can utilize the opportunities that technological advances bring. Most of the scholars have, however, focused on recruitment on a more general level, and social media is expected to affect more on lower levels of recruitment.

As presented in the finding, the counterintuitive and probably the most surprising finding was that despite the changing recruitment environment, and the discussions about how the executive search field is disappearing, social media and the technological advances have not yet affected executive recruitment significantly, and companies continue to outsource executive recruitment to headhunters.

Answering the research question, and relating to the findings, the key elements that lie as a ground for possible changes in executive recruitment are: risks in executive recruitment; openness and discreteness in executive recruitment; activating passive candidates; resources in executive recruitment; and efficiency in executive recruitment. These are further linked to the conservative approach and liberal approach to executive recruitment, which lie as foundations, when HR Directors and other decision-makers make the strategic choices of how to recruit executives.

5.1 Executive recruitment and the executive search field

The findings related with the literature of recruitment (Barber, 1998; Fish & Macklin, 2004; Roberts, 2005; Orlitzky, 2007; Hollenbeck & Jamieson, 2015) and executive search (Brooke, 1967; Khurana, 2002; Jenn, 2005; Soikkanen et al., 2015), provide a

basis for understanding the executive recruitment environment. Despite the assumptions that executive search will diminish (Hill, 2013; Luukkonen, 2016; Ruuska, 2017; Ahlroth, 2018), the findings point towards insignificant changes for executive recruitment, which also point towards a continued future for the executive search field.

The findings present some challenges and demands in executive recruitment for executive search companies. It is argued that executive search companies have outdated processes and are in a way unexciting, and simultaneously, the findings show an interest towards managing headhunting in-house. However, in-house headhunting is not seen as efficient uses of resources, as the recruitment demands are not static. Especially recruitment to executive positions is more unstable, than recruitment needs to lower level positions. As stated “nothing new fully replaces old” (Interview 8). To put this in another way; even if scissors are sold in stores, it does not necessarily mean that people start cutting their own hairs, which would result in hairdressing services to disappear. Further, despite companies being able to use social media and other platforms to do marketing in-house, it is probable that they rely on external marketing help to complete their marketing. Relating this to doing in-house headhunting, a recruiter would need to have experience and the competence to manage the headhunting, and further, commit to it. If headhunting would be done in-house, some respondents argue that the amount of headhunting assignments would then again periodically be too large, for one or a few persons to handle. Still, these demands and challenges push executive recruitment companies to think about their positioning, services and prices.

There are both opportunities as well as challenges with considering the use of social media in executive recruitment. For example, companies use social media for employer branding, as also discussed by Calvasina and colleagues (2014), and employer branding can help companies attract those potential candidates to their organizations, who would want to work for the company. In a long run, companies could manage pipelines of potential candidates also outside the organization through social media. Simultaneously, there is a concern for losing the human touch in recruitment (Stone et al., 2015), while recruitment is getting more technology oriented. The respondents highlight the importance of interactions, and finding a person who matches the organizational culture, linking it with the human beings in the organization, and their dynamic working environment. Recruitment is still argued to require human touch, especially in the critical positions where the cultural fit is important.

Stone and colleagues (2015), and Arjomandy (2016) have said that recruitment becomes more proactive through social media, and this also gives opportunities for companies, which is the threat for executive search. Calvasina and colleagues (2014) have also discussed the time and resource efficiency in using social media for recruitment. Still, similarly the executive search companies can benefit from this. What is interesting to note is how different the challenges and opportunities of social media were regarded. Some respondents only thought of social media as a platform for posting open job announcements, while a few regarded it as tools to do in-house headhunting. Nevertheless, what was similar in all discussions was that quality goes before quantity, and quality in executive recruitment is more important than the resources lost for a thorough recruitment process.

Finally, it is noted that the innovative technologies bring new positions. As innovative technologies arise and new competence is needed, headhunting might be needed for lower level positions to find the scarce talent, and executive search might become less exclusive. Thus, executive search companies could expand their services also to manage headhunting to lower levels, making it less exclusive.

To summarize; the respondents challenge the executive search companies to think about their positioning, their pricing methods and their strategies, to better respond to the demands. The executive search companies are still regarded as traditional, and some even say that they are “old fashioned”. Now they are in a breaking point, where it is time to change this image. Just as the field has faced challenges and gone through changes during the past years (Brooke 1967; Jones, 1989; Britton et al., 1992; Khurana, 2002; Jenn, 2005; Soikkanen et al., 2015; Barnes, 2017), this is yet another challenge to be tackled.

5.2 Additional findings

The market is shifting more from the employer’s market towards the employee’s market, while generations have different work ethics and appreciate other factors in working life. It could be beneficial to note that there is a shift in generations (Stone et al., 2015). The respondents discuss that there is a shift in what employees expect and appreciate in their working life, and soft values are becoming more important, like company ethics, corporate social responsibility and work-life balance. This leads to the fact that employees choose more specifically where they want to work, and recruitment is

becoming more based on the candidates wishes, who follows which company, and how actively they are involved. This is also something that comes forward in the literature, where it is said that applicants are more conscious of their work choices (Torrington et al., 2008; Duunitori, 2017 – 1; Soikkanen et al., 2015), and they are becoming more demanding and specific in for who they want to work with, with whom they want to work, and how they want to balance their working life. Furthermore, the literature brings forward the aspect of younger generations being more technology oriented (Stone et al., 2015), which can be related to the fact that more technology oriented positions arise, as well as more technology oriented methods for recruitment might increase.

Additionally, the employment relationship has changed, and nowadays it is normal to move from one job to another, while earlier people used to be more loyal to companies (Soikkanen et al., 2015). Nowadays people are more focused on their own career options, and Torrington and colleagues (2008:113) have said that “future employees will be less trusting of organizations, more inclined to switch jobs, and more prepared to relocate”.

It is interesting to note that a key factor in determining a successful placement was how the candidate fits to an organization’s culture. There is literature about how organizational cultures often are determined and influences by the management and the CEO (Meyer et al., 2007; O’Reilly et al., 2014). More recently the cultural fit has shown to affect the commitment to an organization (Kooij & Boon, 2018), which in turn has been linked with higher performance in job tasks (Meyer et al., 2007), and further, it is argued that the culture correlates to the firm’s performance (O’Reilly et al., 2014).

The technological opportunities also raise the question of ethics, whether the information is used according to ethical standards or not. The ethical challenges have also been discussed by several scholars in the literature part (Khurana, 2002; Clark & Roberts, 2010; Calvasina et al., 2014; Arjomandy, 2016; Jeske & Shultz, 2016), who note that a recruiter’s social values and opinions might affect recruitment decisions. Ethics are not regarded as a significant issue, but simultaneously it is said that all the information that is available online tempts recruiters to misuse the information, which again is against regulations and laws for example in Finland. Social media might harm the applicant, and as we go further in time, the more history will be found online about us. Furthermore, a recruiter’s own values might affect the recruitment decisions unconsciously, based on someone’s social media account. Even if it can help determine the organizational fit, there is the question about race, ethnicity, family status, age, sex, etc., which might reflect on other values that the recruiter has.

5.3 Theoretical implications

The findings also provide a basis for sense-making, relating to the findings of Nigam and Ocasio (2010), who look at environmental sense-making. Nigam and Ocasio (2010) propose that an event can trigger a bottom up process of sense-making, which result in theorization on a broader frame, and suggest that “theorization occurs through bottom-up processes, in addition to the top-down effects of both societal-level logics and the logics of identity groups [...]. Rather, theorization emerges in a piecemeal fashion as actors in the field abstract from specific exemplars and features to characterize specific dimensions of the organizational field.” (Nigam & Ocasio, 2010:838). The environmental context here is examining the phenomenon the social media, which triggers the sense-making and theorization to explain how this affects recruitment, and more closely, executive recruitment. This can be linked with how the elements in the second-order findings either trigger companies towards approaching executive recruitment from a more conservative or liberal perspective, choosing either executive search services, or try managing the executive recruitments in-house.

Despite the intuitive approach of growing changes in executive recruitment, clearly assuming that it will go more towards social media; the findings propose a more mixed set of reasonings. Supporting the findings of Maguire and colleagues (2014) on an entrepreneurial field, this thesis explores how exogenous shocks impact more mature fields, the executive search field. Maguire and colleagues (2014) discuss that exogenous shocks can disturb the stability of existing institutions and disrupting a constitution of a specific field. This study contributes to this discussion, by examining how the exogenous shocks, brought by technological advances and social media, affect the executive recruitment environment. This is triggered by the concerns of the executive search field, which play a substantial role in executive recruitment.

Supporting the findings of Mayson and Barret (2017), this study contributes to the academic research by developing understanding of how recruitment practices are changing, by exploring a phenomenon within executive recruitment. Mayson and Barret (2017) have contributed to theory by explaining how small firm owner-managers respond to employment regulations, in other word, they explain action of a subgroup as a response to regulations from external stakeholders. This thesis, supporting on the presented approach, strives to explore a similar phenomenon, where executive search companies as a subgroup, tries to respond to the changing environment and the

demands, which are affected by external stakeholders, the client companies, and the changes in technology.

Maitlis and Christianson (2014:98) have also proposed that sense-making would be regarded in a more “hyper-agentive environment”, and have suggested that sense-making could unfold an “environment, where individuals, drawing on identity resources, notice, and act on cues, freely share their emerging accounts with available others, and enact new, sensible environments as they do so”. This environmental approach to sense-making is present in this study, and aims to provide a starting point for a sense-giving process between actors involved in executive recruitment; companies that show recruitment demands, and the executive search actors, who supply the services to fulfill the demands. The sense-making and sense-giving process, as described in the theoretical framework, could also be applied to inter-organizational contexts in changing environments. In other words, the earlier research presented in the thesis discuss changes within organizations, on a micro-level (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Weick et al., 2005; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), however, it could also be regarded on a more macro level to explain situations between organizations or dynamics within a certain context.

Now as recruitment and executive recruitment is changing, executive search actors need to answer to the change requirements and, thus, a sense-making and sense-giving process between the executive recruiting companies and executive search companies is necessary to acknowledge. Similarly, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) have suggested that sense-giving attempts to influence others’ sense-making about an institution, where the HR Directors in this study contribute with sense-giving to the actors in the executive recruitment field.

Additionally, this thesis contributes to the academic work by giving more insight on executive recruitment in the recruitment literature, rather than in the literature of top management succession. The findings give a foundation for executive recruitment, based on these ten HR Directors’ perceptions. The key elements in executive recruitment support recruitment literature, and especially, if further research would be done on a broader longitudinal scale, the findings could be generalized to present executive recruitment as a part of recruitment in companies HR processes.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) have proposed that embodiment of sense-making is an important next step in the literature, just like the explored aspects of embodiment in decision making. Further constructing on this, I suggest that sense-making embodiment could also advantage the research of inter-organizational sense-making, which can be linked with strategic decision-making in organizations, and how changing dynamics in business environments are tackled. Building on Weber & Glynn (2006) I suggest that the research on sense-making should go towards a more macro level, rather than focus on the micro level within organizations. Also, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) have argued that despite the existing research done between organizational stakeholders and the political processes, there is room for researching the macro-social structures of sense-making.

Regardless of having an individual perspective on sense-making in this thesis, exploring how HR Directors make sense of the recruitment environment, another approach is a collective sense-making perspective (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). To clarify the changing recruitment environment, I suggest that this setting could be researched as longitudinal case studies, gaining insight in how the phenomenon is fluctuating in the recruitment processes. Further, research should be done both within organizations, to examine their executive recruitment, but it would also be interesting to focus on the executive search field, exploring more closely how this phenomenon is affecting the field.

As also Maitlis (2005) has proposed, I suggest that researchers develop a more thorough understanding of the different forms of organizational sense-making in different contexts. Additionally, the forms of sense-making discussed by Maitlis and Christianson (2014) should be supported by further research. Especially implementing the above mentioned inter-organizational perspective. Further, Maitlis (2005) has suggested that it could be value-adding to examine how different forms of organizational sense-making impact on organizational outcomes and results.

Another interesting approach, discussed by Maitlis and Christianson (2014), is the temporal orientation of sense-making. As noted, sense-making is traditionally examined in a retrospective manner. However, scholars have brought other temporal orientations in to the field, looking at future-oriented sense-making and more prospective approaches (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Despite sense-making here being similarly retrospective, exploring a phenomenon that has started already in the early 2000's, the executive

recruitment could be examined by a more forward-looking approach. Leaning on Maitlis and Christianson (2014) suggestion of examining sense-making from a temporal perspective, the recruitment environment should be examined by longitudinal approaches, to gain a more thorough understanding of the sense-making processes in recruitment.

Finally, as noted, the recruitment and e-recruitment literature does not discuss executive recruitment per se, and this gap could be filled by further researching companies' executive recruitment practices and processes, as a part of the recruitment literature. Additionally, as theories emerge for e-recruitment, it is noteworthy to examine how e-recruitment affects the performance and success of job placements, as also Stone and colleagues (2015) have presented. This needs to be examined especially on the executive level, where the performance is even more crucial for a business.

5.4.1 Limitations

The study is limited to focus on a small number of Finnish companies during a specific time, which does only give a glance of the executive recruitment processes. Despite presenting generalizable findings in Finnish companies, the findings might differ if conducting the research in an international setting. Values and work ethics might differ in other cultures, which might affect the findings.

A longitudinal study could give a more prospective perspective and give a better insight to how the executive recruitment is changing. This study has scratched the surface and presented the key elements in executive recruitment, which have so far affected the minor changes and the reasons for why the field has not changed. However, due to technological developments and other factors, such as generation changes, the executive recruitment field might change more in the future.

Moreover, this study only presents the findings from past changes and technological developments. More recent and trendy developments, like artificial intelligence, are not included. Including a discussion of artificial intelligence could result in more colorful findings of how the future executive environment could change.

6 SAMMANFATTNING

Denna del är en sammanfattning av magisteravhandlingen som skrivits på engelska. Sammanfattningen kommer inte att komma fram med några nya aspekter och kommer enbart på ytan tangera de olika delarna i avhandlingen. Först presenteras inledningen, varefter sammanfattningen redogör för den teoretiska referensramen. Därefter sammanförs metoderna och sedan presenteras resultaten samt analysen. Till sist summeras helheten i en kort diskussion och slutsatser.

6.1 Introduktion

Organisationer utvecklas bäst genom kompetent personal (Soikkanen et al., 2015) och speciellt chefer och ledningsgruppen har en viktig roll i ett företags framgång (Augier & Teece, 2009). Ny kompetens söks genom varierande rekryteringsmetoder och rekrytering har fått mycket synlighet i litteraturen om HRM, vilket kommer från Human Resource Management och syftar på ledning och personalförvaltning. Rekrytering har visats påverka ett företags framgång och kan anses ha en strategisk betydelse för företag (Taylor & Collins, 2000; Fish & Macklin, 2004; Roberts, 2005; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005; Schmitt & Kim, 2007; Hollenbeck & Jamieson, 2015). Allt detta tyder på att rekrytering av chefer är en nyckelfunktion i ett företag.

Nya rekryteringsmetoder har utvecklats som en följd av teknologiska framsteg och på de senaste tiderna har *chefsrekrytering* (eng. executive search) i form av *headhunting* ansetts vara hotad på grund av sociala medier och andra teknologiska framsteg (Hill, 2013; Luukkonen, 2017; Ruuska, 2017). Dock finns det inte akademisk forskning om hur chefsrekryteringsbranschen har påverkats av dessa teknologiska framsteg och även litteraturen kring rekrytering till företagsledning är knapp. Företag själva kan ha möjlighet att utföra headhunting genom att använda sociala medier, samt andra teknologiska verktyg.

Syftet med denna avhandling är att skapa mening i hur rekryteringsomgivningen ändras, speciellt med fokus på rekrytering av chefer. Avhandlingen presenterar ett *meningsskapande* (eng. sense-making) perspektiv som ska trigga företag inom chefsrekrytering att svara på kraven i den förändrande rekryteringsomgivningen.

Avhandlingen svarar på frågorna:

Hur skapar HR-chefer mening i den förändrande rekryteringsomgivningen?

- *Vad är huvudelementen i chefsrekrytering som framkommer i meningsskapandeprocessen?*

Forskningen och analysen är inspirerad av analysstrategin presenterad av Gioia och Chittipeddi (1991), samt Gioia och Thomas (1996), där forskningen analyseras genom första- och andrahandsresultat, samt förknippas till huvudaggregat, vilka tyder på två huvudelement som kan generaliseras i ett större sammanhang. Akademisk forskning om meningsskapande har fått en hel del hänsyn (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), men meningsskapande ur ett perspektiv på omgivningar kräver understödande forskning. Utöver detta saknar bransch-specifikt meningsskapande akademisk forskning.

Avhandlingen avgränsas till att fokusera på rekrytering till ledningspositioner i företag, alltså personer som är del av ledningsgrupper och ansvarar över en helhet inom någon verksamhet. Dessutom är fokus på hur sociala medier påverkar rekrytering på denna nivå. Sociala medier syftar främst på LinkedIn och Twitter, men kan också hänvisa till andra webbaserade plattformar.

6.2 Teoretisk referensram

Litteraturgenomgången innehåller en översikt av tangerande ämnen, vilka kort presenteras här. Dessa ämnen ger en helhetsbild av de viktiga ämnena vid rekrytering av chefer och står som grund i meningsskapandet av den förändrande rekryteringsomgivningen.

6.2.1 Teorin om meningsskapande

Denna avhandling strävar till att bidra till de meningsskapande processerna i en förändrande rekryteringsomgivning. Till näst presenteras teorin om meningsskapande, vilket hjälper att förklara situationen i denna förändring.

Meningsskapandet (eng. sense-making) har presenterats i organisationsstudier av Weick (1995). Termen syftar bokstavligen på att skapa mening i både individuella och

sociala sammanhang (Weick, 1995) och handlar om att skapa mening och förståelse vid till exempel organisationsförändringar (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Vidare har termen *meningsgivande* (eng. sense-giving) uppkommit, som syftar på att influera hur andra parter skapar mening (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Meningsskapandet är en process som sätts igång som en följd av olika utlösande faktorer (Weick, 1995), till exempel då något oförväntat sker (Weick et al., 2005). Weick med kolleger (2005) framhäver att meningsskapande inte har som syfte att hitta en ultimat sanning, utan det handlar om att förklara och skapa mening i en pågående historia, så att den kan uppfattas och förstås med hjälp av den insamlade informationen. I organisationssammanhang är meningsskapande ofta en kombination av frågorna 'vad sker' och 'vad händer näst' (Weick et al., 2005) och Maitlis (2005) har påpekat att meningsskapande inte är en singular process, utan ansluter till flera organisatoriska handlingar.

Den meningsskapande processen har presenterats av flera skribenter, där Gioia och Chittipeddi (1991) har delat upp processen i fyra delar: tolka, signalera, omtolka samt driva. Dessa delar presenterar en cirkulering mellan meningsskapande och meningsgivande, där tolkning samt omtolkning tyder på meningsskapande, medan signalera och driva tyder på meningsgivande (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Lüscher och Lewis (2008) har presenterat processen som en kollektiv process av att verka i en paradox, där processen innehåller följande steg: en röra, ett problem, ett dilemma, en paradox samt en genomförbar visshet.

Röran är en trigger för en meningsskapande process, som formuleras till ett *problem* som ska tacklas. Problemet ger en ståndpunkt för att hitta en lösning, vilket leder till *dilemmat*, där fler problematiska detaljer framkommer. Nästa steg, *paradoxen*, syftar på en situation där ingen bra lösning tacklat problemen. Paradoxen orsakar en omformning av alternativa lösningar, vilket till sist leder till en *genomförbar visshet*. (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008)

Meningsskapande är ofta relaterat till strategiskt beslutsfattande (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Thomas et al., 1993; Gioia & Thomas, 1996) och har diskuterats mycket i sammanhang med organisationsförändringar (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). Största delen av litteraturen studerar meningsskapande på en mikronivå (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Weick et al., 2005; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), men meningsskapande

kan också ses på en makronivå, där Weber och Glynn (2006) har granskat ämnet ur ett mer grundläggande perspektiv.

6.2.2 Företagsledningens roll

Först diskuteras rollen av chefer och ledningsgrupper (eng. *top management team*). En av de grundläggande tankarna i strategisk HRM (SHRM, eng. Strategic Human Resource Management) är att det mänskliga kapitalet har en strategisk roll för ett företags framgång (Allen & Wright, 2007; Torrington et al., 2008) och speciellt där ledningen har en strategisk roll (Collins & Clark, 2003; Hambrick et al., 2005; Hambrick, 2007). Ledningen består oftast av verkställande direktören och övriga medverkande direktörer för organisationens olika avdelningar, där ledningens huvudsakliga uppgifter är att planera, organisera och kontrollera att ett företag verkar i enlighet med organisationens målsättningar och strategi (Meyer et al., 2007).

6.2.3 Rekrytering och selektion

Rekrytering syftar på att identifiera och locka potentiella arbetstagare (Barber, 1998) och hör till en av de huvudsakliga HR-processerna (Barber, 1998; Fish & Macklin, 2004; Roberts, 2005; Hollenbeck & Jamieson, 2015). En pool av lämpligt humankapital är en värdefull tillgång för att ett företag ska nå konkurrensfördelar (Wright et al. 1994, cited in Allen & Wright, 2007:92). Rekrytering måste gå hand i hand med ett företags andra HR-funktioner (Taylor & Collins, 2000) och då rekrytering görs enligt företagets behov och strategi kommer detta att bidra till företagets finansiella framgång (Orlitzky, 2007).

Valet i en rekryteringsprocess baserar sig på informationen som rekryteraren fått från bland annat ansökan samt intervjun (Torrington et al., 2008), men vid beslut kan det också ske misstag, vilka Roberts (2005) har ansett vara följande: att ignorera vissa specifikationer, att lita för mycket på enskilda faktorer, haloeffekten, stereotyper, spegling och benägenheten att rekrytera likadana människor som en själv, fördomar samt icke-involverande av kunder.

Rekrytering är kopplat till ett företags prestanda (Guest, 1997; Barber, 1998; Orlitzky, 2007; Schmitt & Kim, 2007) och Khurana (2002) har påstått att företagsledningen har

blivit mer direkt ansvarig för företagets prestation. Utförlig rekrytering stärker kompetens och kunskap inom organisationer (Guest, 1997; Schmitt & Kim, 2007), vilket vidare är förknippat med kvalitet (Guest, 1997). Rekrytering är en process som kräver resurser, där resurser går åt till själva processen, till introduktionen av personen till företaget och tar ytterligare en lång tid (Jones, 1989, Catasús et al., 2012), vilket tyder på att rekrytering ska göras utförligt.

Från början av 2000-talet har rekryteringslitteraturen fått ett nytt begrepp, *e-rekrytering*, vilket förknippas med eHRM och syftar på att använda informationsteknologi (IT) och internet som en del av HR-processer (Strohmeier, 2007; Stone & Dulebohn, 2013; Stone et al., 2015; Arjomandy, 2016). Enligt Boehle (2000) samt Feldman och Klaas (2002) har internet tagit över en del andra rekryteringsformer. Även om e-rekrytering har visat sig vara effektiv, behöver dess påverkan undersökas mer (Strohmeier, 2007). Stone med kolleger (2015) har bland annat sagt att nyckelfrågor inom e-rekrytering är ifall IT ökar antalet lyckade rekryteringsplaceringar i en organisation, samt ifall e-rekrytering lyckas att locka och vidare rekrytera de begåvade och potentiella arbetssökarna. Det finns forskning som tyder på att e-rekrytering ökar antalet sökande (Galanaki, 2002), men bevis på att e-rekrytering skulle resultera i mer kompetenta sökanden finns inte (Chapman & Webster, 2003).

Viss forskning tyder på att sociala medier och e-rekrytering gör rekryteringen mer proaktiv (Wilkinson et al., 2010; Stone et al., 2015) samt tids- och platsoberoende (Holm, 2012), vilket kan påverka också chefsrekryteringsföretag. Stone med kolleger (2015) har noterat att sociala medier tillåter företag att identifiera och kontakta potentiella arbetstagare enklare än förut, vilket med andra ord kan göra headhunting möjligt för företagen själv. Även andra forskare har påpekat att sociala medier möjliggör mer resurssparande rekrytering för företag (Calvasina et al., 2014; Arjomandy, 2016; Jeske & Shultz, 2016). Dessutom används sociala medier också arbetsgivarreklam (eng. employer brand), likväl som för marknadsföring (Calvasina et al., 2014).

Sociala medier har också hämtat fram en etisk diskussion inom rekrytering (Calvasina et al., 2014; Arjomandy, 2016), där Khurana (2002) bland annat påstår, att dra gränsen mellan privat och öppenhet är svårt. Också Jeske och Shultz (2016) påpekar att innehållet på sociala medier inte alltid är det mest beskrivande för hur en person skulle passa in i en arbetsomgivning.

Även om de nuvarande rekryteringstrenderna och diskussionerna lyfter fram sociala medier, anser Calvasina med kolleger (2014) att det är nödvändigt att använda en kombination av rekryteringsmetoder. I Finland har trenderna också visats gå mot att använda sociala medier, men samtidigt har det noterats att det är svårt att hitta de potentiella kandidaterna, samt även svårare att hitta de passiva kandidaterna i processerna (Duunitori Oy, 2017 – 1).

6.2.4 Chefsrekrytering – headhunting

Chefsrekrytering (eng. executive search), eller i mer vardagligt språk headhunting, syftar på att söka kandidater för företagsledningspositioner (Soikkanen et al., 2015; Cambridge University Press, 2017). Traditionellt har headhunting syftat på att hitta personer för styrelser och ledningsgrupper (Jenn, 2005; Soikkanen et al., 2015), vilket också är utgångspunkten i denna avhandling, även om headhunting också kan ske till lägre positioner.

Headhunting har fått sin början på 40-talet i USA och har sedan dess expanderat till andra delar av världen (Jones, 1989; Khurana, 2002; Soikkanen et al., 2015). De första headhunting-företagen i Finland startade i slutet av 70-talet (Soikkanen et al., 2015). Verksamhetsområdet har under åren påverkats av socioekonomiska och teknologiska framsteg (Soikkanen et al., 2015) och speciellt ekonomiska händelser har ansetts påverka headhunting-verksamheten (Jenn, 2005).

Headhuntingstjänsterna är rätt så homogena i processerna, ägarskapet och prissättningen (Khurana, 2002; Jenn, 2005; Soikkanen et al., 2015). Prissättningen har redan länge varit liknande och vanligtvis prissätts ett projekt enligt den nya positionens lön, där kostnaden är ungefär en tredjedel av första årets lön (Britton et al., 1992; Soikkanen et al., 2015). Vanligtvis brukar företag eller konsulter specialisera sig på ett visst verksamhetsområde. I processerna deltar kandidaterna, kunden och konsulten, där förhållandet mellan aktörerna är speciellt viktigt (Soikkanen et al., 2015).

Verksamheten grundar sig på relationer och nätverk, där viktiga egenskaper är kvalitet, kvalitet på förhållanden, tillit, förtrolighet, interaktioner, ömsesidigt förtroende och kompetens (Brooke, 1967; Britton et al., 1992; Tienari et al., 2001; Faulconbridge et al., 2009; Soikkanen et al., 2015; Skokic & Coh, 2017). Risken i en process är oftast högre då förväntningarna på positionen är högre (Soikkanen et al., 2015). En konsult tar i

beaktande kundens situation och krav samt verksamhetsomgivningen, där det är speciellt viktigt att konsulten får en helhetsbild av detaljerna (Brooke, 1967). Headhunting anses vara tidseffektivt och interaktivt mellan alla involverade parter (Soikkanen et al., 2015).

Enligt Brooke (1967) används chefsrekryteringstjänster i till exempel situationer där en kund vill hålla sin identitet dold, eller där en kund ska inträda på en ny marknad. Soikkanen med kolleger (2015) har dessutom tillagt att tjänsterna också är nödvändiga då en ny chef söks för en position som ansvarar för förändring eller skapandet av ny verksamhet, eller då någon i ledningsgruppen ersätts eller avgår. Lim och Chan (2001) har diskuterat, att headhunter kan mer diskret locka kandidater med i en process, där samtidigt organisationens ärenden hålls privata. Reiter (2009) har dessutom påpekat att det är svårt att hitta de mest potentiella kandidaterna av all den massa som finns tillgänglig på internet samt det antal ansökningar som kommer in via en öppen annons, vilket gör headhunter nyttiga.

6.3 Metodologi

Denna avhandling strävar till att skapa mening i en förändrande rekryteringsomgivning och undersöka vilka faktorer som påverkar förändringarna i omgivningen. Denna del presenterar kort forskningsfilosofin, forskningsdesignen och datainsamlingen.

Forskningsfilosofin syftar på utgångspunkten och en kritisk analys av de fundamentala antaganden som en individ har (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Denna avhandling baserar sig på en tolkande filosofi. Tolkande forskning är socialt fokuserat och studerar sociala fenomen i deras naturliga omgivningar (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015), vilket passar väl ihop med en meningsskapande infallsvinkel, vilket relaterar till individers tolkning av sociala fenomen (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Forskningsdesignen är induktiv, där teori byggs upp baserat på tidigare forskning (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Denna avhandling presenterar sociala medier som ett fenomen inom rekrytering och försöker komma fram med en ram om hur detta påverkar affärsverksamheten kring chefsrekrytering. Avhandlingen bygger på tidigare forskning där individuellt perspektiv av meningsskapande tillämpas på en mer allmän nivå. Saunders och Lewis (2012) har diskuterat att en explorativ forskning förklarar ett fenomen och görs oftast genom intervjuer och genomgång av akademisk litteratur.

Forskningsstrategin är vidare baserad på grundad teori, vilket enligt Bryman och Bell (2015) syftar på att cirkulera mellan teori och data.

Datainsamlingen har gjorts enligt avsiktlig sampling, vilket enligt Patton (2002), samt Saunders och Lewis (2012), syftar på att välja ett sampel som bidrar med information inom ett visst ämnesområde och som inte visar en empirisk generaliserbar helhet, utan fokuserar på ett visst fenomen. I samplet ingår HR-chefer från finska företag, vilka representerar ett så kallat typiskt fall (eng. typical case), där samplet är deskriptivt och representerar vissa karaktäristiska drag (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Forskningen är gjord med semistrukturerade intervjuer och är i och med detta rent kvalitativ. Denna kvalitativa metod strävar till att få en mer djupgående bild av personliga perspektiv och åsikter (Patton, 2002). Semistrukturerade intervjuer utgår från en intervjuguide med några fastställda teman och frågor, som även lämnar plats för följdfrågor och öppen diskussion (Bryman & Bell, 2015), vilket väl passar in i denna studie där respondenterna kommer reflektera över olika strategier och värderingar i olika företag.

Trovärdigheten av forskningen kan bland annat påverkas av kvaliteten på intervjuerna. Enligt Bryman och Bell (2015) är de största problemen med intervjuer bland annat dåligt formade frågor, missledande frågeställningar, respondenternas minnesproblem samt hur intervjuerna är inspelade och vidare behandlade. För att tackla problemen med intervjuerna, följde intervjuerna en guide för att ha samma utgångspunkt för alla. Dock var det individuellt bland respondenterna, hur de uppfattade frågorna. En ytterligare utmaning var att hålla fokus på chefsrekrytering, då sociala medier har påverkat rekrytering mer på lägre nivåer, vilket respondenterna enkelt blandade in i diskussionerna.

Vidare har validiteten granskats genom att se på avhandlingen i bakåtvänd ordning (Saunders & Lewis, 2012), där teorin och konklusionerna strömmar logiskt och resultaten från forskningen är konsistenta med data vilka är insamlade enligt de presenterade metoderna. Forskningsstrategin stöder forskningsfrågorna och syftet med forskningen.

6.3.1 Datainsamling

Samplet består av tio HR-chefer i finska företag, varav två är män och åtta är kvinnor. Titlarna för respondenterna är följande: HR Director, Senior Vice President, HR; Vice President, HR; och Chief HR Officer. Medelåldern är 51,2 och medianen 50,5. Respondenterna har i genomsnitt 13,2 års erfarenhet från HR Director positioner. Företagen som respondenterna presenterar kommer från olika verksamhetsområden och representerar olika storleks företag, där omsättningen varierar mellan 75 miljoner euro och 850 miljoner euro, samt antalet anställda är från 100 till över 10 000. Branscherna som finns representerade är från bankbranschen, teknologibranschen, maskinindustrin, förädlingsindustrin och luftfartsindustrin.

Intervjuerna följde en intervjuguide, vilken finns som bilaga på engelska, där teman var chefsrekrytering, rekrytering till ledningspositioner, sociala medier i rekrytering och risker samt övriga tankar om rekrytering. Alla intervjuer tog omkring 60 minuter och ägde rum under tiden 29.12.2017–25.1.2018.

6.4 Resultat och analys

Gioia med kolleger (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996) gav inspirationen för analysen, där data analyserades enligt förstahands- (first-order findings) och andrahandsresultat (second-order findings). Data analyserades i följande steg: transkriptioner, kodning, tematisk analys, förstahandsresultat och sist indelning i huvudteman, andrahandsresultat.

Forskningens fokus var på HR-chefers uppfattningar om chefsrekrytering och rekrytering till ledningsgrupper, där syftet är att bidra till meningsskapandet i den förändrande rekryteringsomgivningen.

Den mest intressanta iakttagelsen är att forskningen utgår från att chefsrekryteringen ändras i samband med en förändrande rekryteringsomgivning. Dock tyder observationerna från intervjuerna på att chefsrekrytering inte ändras i likadan takt som övriga rekryteringsprocesser. Ett meningsskapande perspektiv i forskningen är således passande, då forskningen skapar mening och undersöker vilka element i rekryteringsomgivningen ändras.

I tabellen på följande sida har jag presenterat förstahandsresultaten, vilka framhäver de viktiga elementen i chefsrekryteringsomgivningen. Förstahandsresultaten är kopplade till andrahandsresultaten, vilka förknippar elementen till sex huvudsakliga kategorier. Dessa kategorier är vidare kopplade till två huvudaggregat, vilka presenterar i större drag de bakomliggande orsakerna för varför chefsrekryteringsomgivningen inte har ändrats (de konservativa perspektiven), samt orsakerna för varför omgivningen redan har ändrats eller möjligen kommer göra det (de liberala perspektiven).

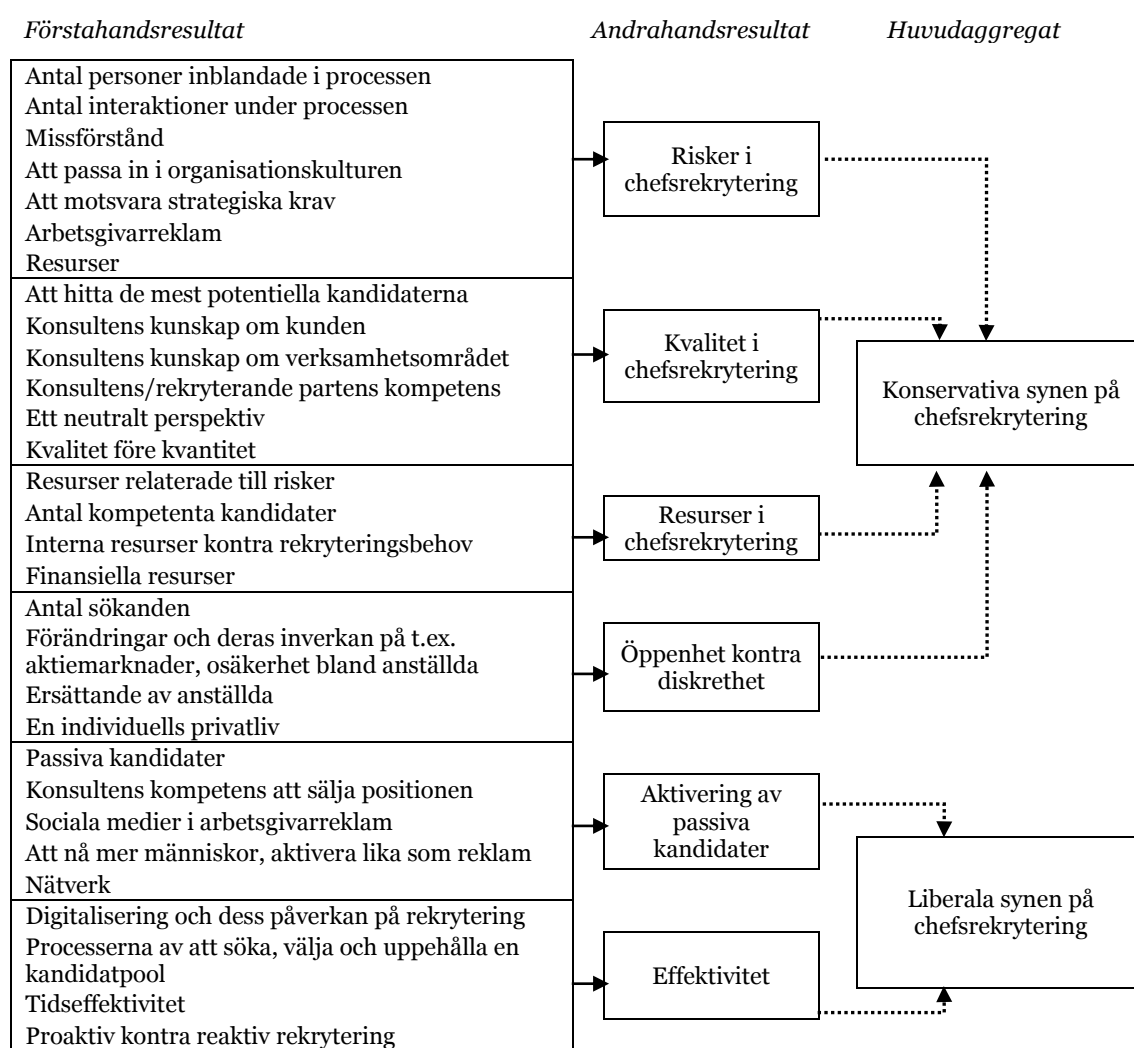


Table 11 Resultaten sammanfattade i en tabell

Forskningen visar att de sex viktigaste elementen att ta i beaktande i chefsrekrytering är risker, kvalitet, resurser, öppenhet kontra diskrethet, aktivering av passiva kandidater och effektivitet. Dessa iakttagelser har gjorts på basen av intervjuerna.

Chefsrekrytering har flera risker, vilket är förknippat med hur kritisk positionen är (Soikkanen et al., 2015). De största riskerna som anses vara förknippade med chefsrekrytering är bland annat följande: en kandidat drar sig ur i sista minuten, kandidaten slutar under provotiden, kandidaten passar inte in i organisationskulturen, eller att profilen är missförstådd. Enligt respondenterna och litteraturen minimeras risken ju fler människor är inblandade i processen och ju fler interaktioner det finns (Brooke, 1967; Soikkanen et al., 2015; Skokic & Coh, 2017). Den mest kritiska risken som kommer fram är matchningen med organisationskulturen och enligt vissa kan sociala medier hjälpa i att berätta om hurdan kulturen är, vilket också är länkat med arbetsgivarreklam (Wilkinson et al., 2010; Banerjee, 2012).

En nyckelfaktor är att kvalitet går före kvantitet, vilket också är en nyckelaspekt i headhunting (Tienari et al., 2001; Soikkanen et al., 2015). Kvalitet diskuteras också i litteraturen där vissa skribenter ifrågasätter hur de mest potentiella och bästa kandidaterna kan hittas genom sociala medier eller e-rekrytering (Chapman & Webster, 2003; Reiter, 2009; Stone et al., 2015). Att hitta de mest potentiella kandidaterna är också presenterat som en nyckelfaktor i litteraturen (Tienari et al., 2001; Roberts, 2005; Soikkanen et al., 2015), eftersom personer i ledningspositioner har ansvar över företagets framgång (Guest, 1997; Barber, 1998; Orlitzky, 2007; Schmitt & Kim, 2007). För att hitta de mest potentiella kandidaterna är headhunterns kompetens och kunskap om företaget samt dess verksamhetsområde viktiga element, vilket också diskuteras i litteraturen (Britton et al., 1992; Clark, 1992; Fish & Macklin, 2004; Soikkanen et al., 2015). Ytterligare handlar kvalitetsaspekten om relationen mellan konsulten, kunden och kandidaterna, vilket också framkommer i litteraturen om headhunting (Britton et al., 1992; Tienari et al., 2001; Soikkanen et al., 2015; Skokic & Coh, 2017).

Behov av resurser har även noterats påverka val av chefsrekryteringsmetod och en rekryteringsprocess tar alltid tid och kostar (Jones, 1989; Catasús et al., 2012). Sociala medier sägs göra rekrytering mer tidseffektivt och spara pengar (Calvasina et al., 2014; Arjomandy, 2016; Schultz, 2016), vilket också av respondenterna anses vara möjligt. Dock hämtar sociala medier andra utmaningar, bland annat kan det generera flera ansökningar, vilket kan göra processen mer arbetsdryg och kräver mer resurser.

Öppenhet kontra diskrethet tycks vara den största skillnaden i chefsrekrytering jämfört med lägre nivåers rekrytering, där det kommer fram att chefsrekrytering är mer sensitivt, vilket i samband med sociala medier blivit mer aktuellt. Traditionellt hålls headhunting

i skymundan (Brooke, 1967; Lim & Chan, 2001; Soikkanen et al., 2015). Diskrethet är också länkat till förtrolighet och med risker.

De flesta kandidaterna som ett företag försöker nå är oftast passiva arbetssökanden, vilket gör att de måste lockas till en position (Brown & Swain, 2012), vilket också diskuteras i intervjuerna. I litteraturen om e-rekrytering diskuteras ifall e-rekrytering möjliggör att hitta de mest kompetenta och passande kandidaterna för en viss position (Stone et al., 2015). Vissa anser att sociala medier kan användas till arbetsgivarreklam och väcka intresse hos passiva sökanden, så som vilken som helst annan reklam. Med sociala medier kan man nå en stor massa människor (Calvasina et al., 2014; Arjomandy, 2016), men dock anser vissa respondenter att konsulter krävs för att hitta de passiva kandidaterna. Detta är vidare relaterat till nätverk, vilka anses vara viktiga i chefsrekrytering (Hollenbeck & Jamieson, 2015; Soikkanen et al., 2015; Skokic & Coh, 2017)

Relaterat till resurser är också effektivitet en viktig aspekt i chefsrekrytering. I samband med detta diskuteras teknologiska framsteg, vilka anses sätta press på headhunting-företag att göra processerna mer effektiva. Prissättningen anses vara föråldrad, vilket också lägger press på effektivitet och resursanvändning. Ytterligare är headhunting-processerna väldigt standardiserade (Khurana, 2002; Jenn, 2005; Soikkanen et al., 2015). E-rekrytering har gjort rekrytering mer tids- och platsberoende samt kollaborativ (Holm, 2012), vilket också är relaterat med effektivitet. Litteraturen på området diskuterar också att sociala medier gjort rekrytering enklare (Dunn, 2009; Tyagi & Tyagi, 2012). Respondenterna utmanar headhunting-företag att ändra på processer och prissättning till att svara på kundernas önskemål och behov. Sociala medier ger möjligheter för företagen själva att göra headhunting och detta diskuteras vidare i samband med reaktivitet och proaktivitet. Chefsrekrytering borde vara mer proaktivt, i stället för reaktivt, vilket är enligt Stone med kolleger (2015) möjligt i och med sociala medier. Wilkinson med kolleger (2010) har understrukt att mer fokus borde läggas på proaktiv rekrytering.

Faktorer som påverkar rekrytering, så som teknologiska framsteg, sociala medier och digitalisering, anses mest påverka rekrytering på lägre nivåer men anses inte lika starkt påverka rekrytering på chefsnivå. Förutom att de påverkar själva rekryteringsprocesserna, framkommer tanken om att teknologiska framsteg ändrar på arbetsmarknaderna och skapar ett behov av väldigt specifika teknologiska kompetenser.

Detta anses påverka headhunting-företag, som kunde erbjuda deras tjänster också till lägre nivåer, i stället för att rent rekrytera till ledningsgrupper och styrelser.

6.5 Diskussion och slutsatser

Den förändrande rekryteringsomgivningen kan förklaras med hjälp av Lüscher och Lewis (2008) modell om meningsskapandet. *Röran* syftar på de ifrågasättande kommentarerna och diskussionen i litteraturen, som utmanat headhunting-företag (Hill, 2013; Luukkonen, 2016; Ruuska, 2017; Ahlroth, 2018). *Problemet* är de teknologiska framstegen som ger nya utmaningar, samt hur de påverkar chefsrekrytering och möjligheterna på området. *Dilemmat* här är att försöka identifiera elementen (förstahandsresultaten), för att kunna arbeta vidare till lösningar. För att komma fram med lösningarna är elementen förknippade till andrahandsresultaten, alltså de huvudsakliga kategorierna som är vidare kopplade till huvudaggregaten. Dessa andrahandsresultat kan förknippas med *paradoxen*, vilket syftar på att det finns fler aspekter och perspektiv hos de potentiella kunderna, vilka headhunting-företagen måste ta i beaktande. När dessa aspekter är noterade går det att se de två huvudsakliga perspektiven; det konservativa och det liberala perspektivet. För att kunna komma till en genomförbar visshet är headhunting-företag tvungna att fundera på sin positionering på marknaden, samt möjligen komma med mer kreativa prissättningsmodeller.

Denna helhet av iakttagelserna indelade i första- och andrahandsresultat, samt huvudaggregat, svarar på forskningsfrågan om vilka element som orsakar förändringar i rekryteringsomgivningen kring chefsrekrytering; risker, kvalitet, resurser, öppenhet kontra diskretitet, aktivering av passiva kandidater och effektivitet. Dessa element, förknippade med huvudaggregaten, det konservativa perspektivet och det liberala perspektivet, tyder på en mer konservativ syn på rekrytering av chefer.

Även om vissa akademiker anser att e-rekrytering tagit en del av andra former av rekrytering (Boehle, 2000; Feldman & Klaas, 2002) och e-rekrytering ökar på antalet sökande (Galanaki, 2002), finns det inte bevis på att det skulle vara mer effektivt än någon annan rekryteringsform. Här måste det också noteras att en hel del av litteraturen talar om rekrytering i allmänhet och har inte iakttagit skillnader mellan olika nivåer.

De viktiga elementen och övriga iakttagelser från denna avhandling ska fungera som en grund för headhunting-företag att fundera på sin verksamhet och hur den borde

utvecklas. Förutom att fundera på sina interna processer, prissättning och positionering på marknaden, kan headhunting-företag försöka sig på mindre exklusiva nivåer där till exempel specifik teknologisk kunskap krävs. Ytterligare är det värt att notera att det finns skillnader mellan generationer, där yngre generationer uppskattar annorlunda arbetsuppsättningar med mer frihet och möjligheter att byta arbetsplats. Speciellt kan företag fundera på hur de kan tackla riskerna med matchningen i organisationskulturen.

6.5.1 Teoretiska implikationer och förslag för vidare forskning

Avhandlingen studerar rekrytering på chefsnivå, vilket också hämtar innebörd till rekryteringsforskningen. Meningsskapande har fokuserat mest på ett mikroperspektiv inom organisationer (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Weick et al., 2005; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), medan denna avhandling har tagit teorin om meningsskapandet för att förklara ett fenomen som påverkar ett verksamhetsområde. Ytterligare skulle inter-organisatoriskt meningsskapande forskning stöda förslag om att skapa en mer djupgående förståelse av organisatoriskt meningsskapande (Maitlis, 2005) samt forskning om meningsskapande på en makronivå (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

6.5.1.1 Begränsningar

Eftersom avhandlingen har utförts under en viss tid med att intervjua tio HR-chefer från tio finska företag, ger resultaten enbart en knapp inblick på hur chefsrekryteringsomgivningen har påverkats av de teknologiska framstegen. En forskning under ett längre tidsintervall kunde ge en bättre helhetsbild av förändringarna i omgivningen. Ytterligare kunde en internationell forskning ge avvikande resultat, där möjliga kulturskillnader kunde påverka värderingar i chefsrekrytering.

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APPENDIX 1 THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Below you can find the interview guide, and the interview info and background sheet, which were used in each interview, and based on which the research is analyzed.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The Master's thesis examines how social media affects executive recruitment, especially, how the changing recruitment environment is affecting the executive search field. The focus is on how companies, which are active in Finland, manage executive recruitment and what how HR Directors in these companies perceive executive search services and social media in executive recruitment. Further, the interview touches themes like risks in executive recruitment, and what are key components for successful or unsuccessful recruitment processes and placements. The interview focuses on expectations about future executive recruitment, and about possibilities and challenges that social media could bring.

When discussing recruitment, the focus is on executive recruitment. Note, that executive recruitment refers to the top management team level, and to the extended top management team.

When discussing social media, and recruitment in social media, it refers to all activities in social media channels like LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter, that correlate somehow to the executive recruitment.

Theme 1: Recruitment methods in use

1. What channels or methods do you use for executive recruitment?
2. How does executive recruitment differ from lower level recruitments?
3. What affects the choice of recruitment channel?
4. What are key aspects in the executive recruitment process and the selection process?

Theme 2: Executive Search

1. Have you used executive search services in the past two years?
2. What are the reasons for choosing executive search services as recruitment method?
3. How would you describe the executive search processes from the recruiting party's point of view?
 - a. Opportunities – positive sides
 - b. Challenges – aspects to develop

Theme 3: Social Media in recruitment

1. Do you use social media in executive recruitment?

If yes:

- a. To which positions have you used social media for recruitment?
- b. When did you start using social media in executive recruitment?
- c. How does an executive recruitment process look like in social media?
- d. What are the reasons for choosing social media as a recruitment method?
- e. What are the opportunities in using social media as a recruitment tool or method for executive search?
- f. What are the challenges in using social media as a recruitment tool or method in executive search?

If no:

- a. Have you used social media for lower level recruitments?
- b. What is the highest-level recruitment done through social media?
- c. What opportunities could you see in using social media as a recruitment tool or method for executive search?
- d. What challenges could you see in using social media as a recruitment tool or method in executive search?
- e. Do you believe that social media brings ethical challenges to recruitment?
 - If yes, why?
 - If no, why not?

Theme 4: Risks in executive recruitment

1. What risks do you see in executive recruitment?
2. How do you measure a successful recruitment?
3. How do you measure an unsuccessful recruitment?
4. Do you believe that the recruitment method or tool affects the process or outcome of the recruitment?
5. Do you believe that the recruitment method affects the employment relationship between the employer and the new executive?

Theme 5: The future of executive recruitment

1. What thoughts do you have about future executive recruitment?
 - a. How will social media affect?
 - b. How does the future for executive search services look like?
 - c. Do you have other thoughts about future executive recruitment?

Finally,

- Do you have any questions regarding the interview or the research?
- Do you have any other opinions you would like to discuss, relating to the topics?

APPENDIX 2 CONSENT FORM

INTERVIEW: Master's thesis Krista Allinen

*Hanken School of Economics, Department of Management and Organization
JFP Executive Search Oy*

Date:

Place:

This interview will be conducted for the Master's thesis work of Krista Allinen. The interview is done either at the respondent's company, or at JFP Executive Search Oy. The interview is fully anonymous and the respondent's identity and company identity will be kept anonymous. The background information about the respondent or the company will only be used to present the data sample, including the respondents' age and gender variation, and the company sizes and turnover. Direct quotes may be used in the thesis, however, keeping the respondent anonymous. The respondent can cut of the interview at any time, if wanted. The interview does not require any preparation from the respondent and it will take about 60 minutes.

Before the interview, the respondent needs to fill in the following:

Initials

The interview can be recorded.

The recording will not be used for any other purpose than analyzing the interviews and the results. The recording will not be released to third parties.

Age: _____ Year of birth: _____ Gender: _____

Education: _____

Position in the company: _____

Years in this company: _____

Experience from a similar position (years, months): _____

Number of direct subordinates: _____

APPENDIX 3 JFP EXECUTIVE SEARCH OY

JFP Executive Search Oy

The thesis is supported by a Finnish Executive Search company, JFP Executive Search Oy.

JFP is established in 1979, and has five senior consultants and five assisting search consultants. The company is a part of the global IIC Partners -network, which is a global organization with 52 executive search offices around the world. JFP is also a member of FEX Ry, the Finnish Executive Search Firms' Association. The company's work is based on ethical codes and confidentiality. (JFP Executive Search, 2017)

Below is presented the search process of JFP Executive Search, which is an example of the quite standardized search process in the field.

The search process

Based on this preliminary analysis of the situation, the company's needs and potential problems, the consultant draws a *profile* of the person that the company is looking for, as well as outlines the *strategy* for the project. The research team then starts to look for the potential candidates and makes a so-called *Long List*, based on which the candidates are contacted. From this Long List, and based on the discussions with the candidates, the consultant makes a *Short List*. Based on this list, and the potential candidates' Curriculum Vitae, the consultant writes an outline report about the candidates. These candidates are invited for an *interview* with the consultant. Based on the interviews the consultant then writes a *confidential report*, which is a thorough review of the candidate's history, competence and potential. The recruiting company then chooses based on the confidential report, which candidates they want to meet. The consultant also suggests candidates, who are most potential for the position in question. The consultant participates in the meeting between the candidates and the recruiting company, after which the consultant advises in the final decision made by the company. The process ends in the final decision, when the contract is signed. Additionally, the executive search firm follows and evaluates the new employee's performance in the company a certain time after the process, usually twelve months. A search process from start to finish usually takes around six to ten weeks. (JFP Executive Search, 2017) This process is presented in figure 7.

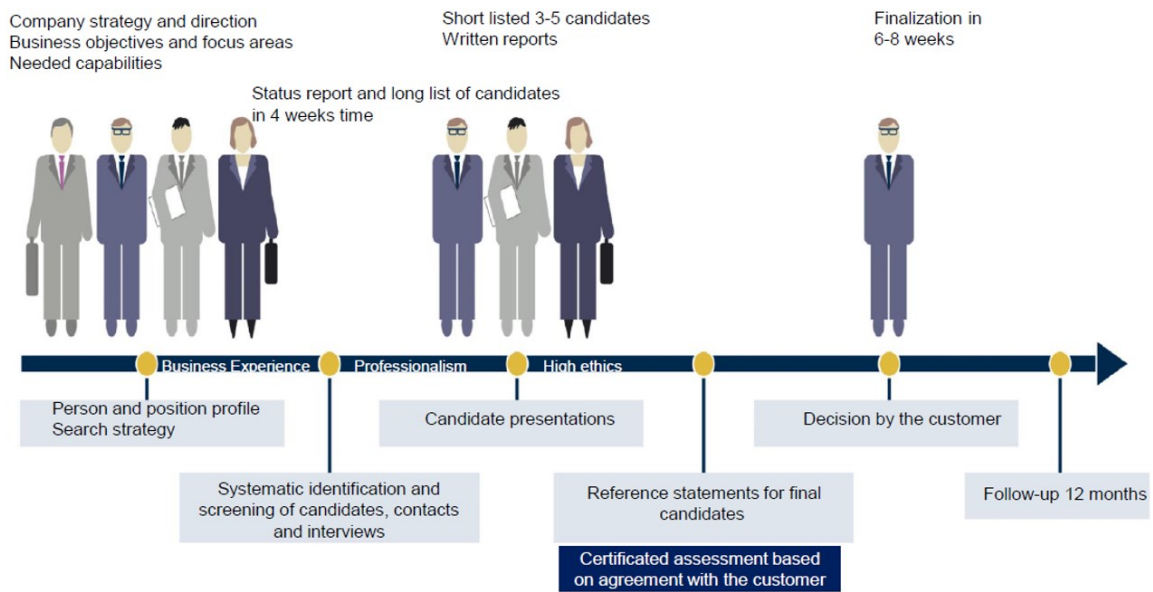


Figure 7

Search Process at JFP (JFP Executive Search, 2017)