The solutions for Swedish companies to build employer branding on WeChat: Case study of 4 Swedish companies

Yunlong Sun

May 2018

TRITA-ITM-EX 2018:336

Supervisor: Esmail Salehi-Sangari
Examiner: Terrence Brown
CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 6
  1.1 Background of the study ............................................................................................... 6
  1.2 Objective of the study ................................................................................................. 7
  1.3 Limitations of the study .............................................................................................. 7
  1.4 Structure of the study ................................................................................................. 8

2 LITERATURE SURVEY ....................................................................................................... 9
  2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 9
  2.2 Employer branding concepts ...................................................................................... 9
      2.2.1 Employer brand and employer branding process ................................................ 9
      2.2.2 Measurements and determinants ....................................................................... 10
  2.3 Employer knowledge dimensions ............................................................................. 11
      2.3.1 Employer knowledge framework ...................................................................... 11
      2.3.1.1 Employer familiarity ................................................................................ 11
      2.3.1.2 Employer reputation ................................................................................ 12
      2.3.1.3 Employer image ...................................................................................... 13
  2.4 Instrumental-symbolic framework ......................................................................... 13
      2.4.1 Framework ....................................................................................................... 13
      2.4.2 Instrumental attributes ................................................................................... 14
      2.4.3 Symbolic attributes ....................................................................................... 15
      2.4.4 Summary ....................................................................................................... 15
  2.5 Summary and conclusions of the literature survey ............................................... 15

3 OPERATIONALIZATION .................................................................................................. 17
  3.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 17
  3.2 The description of selected models ........................................................................... 17
      3.2.1 The Cable & Turban model ........................................................................... 17
      3.2.2 The Lievens & Highhouse model ................................................................... 18
      3.2.3 The Berthon et al. model & the Esra et al. model ......................................... 18
      3.2.4 The EBI model ............................................................................................. 19
  3.3 Final emerged model of the study .......................................................................... 20
  3.4 Summary ................................................................................................................... 22

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .......................................................................................... 23
  4.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................. 23
  4.2 Research approach .................................................................................................... 23
  4.3 Research paradigm .................................................................................................... 24
4.4 Case study ........................................................................................................................................... 25
4.5 Sample selection and data collection method(s) ................................................................................. 25
  4.5.1 Sample selection .............................................................................................................................. 25
  4.5.2 Data collection method(s) .............................................................................................................. 26
4.6 Measurement techniques ...................................................................................................................... 27
4.7 Reliability and validity .......................................................................................................................... 27
  4.7.1 Reliability ........................................................................................................................................ 28
  4.7.2 Validity ........................................................................................................................................... 28
4.8 Ethical and sustainability consideration ............................................................................................... 28
  4.8.1 Ethical consideration ...................................................................................................................... 28
  4.8.2 Sustainability consideration .......................................................................................................... 29
4.9 Summary and conclusions ................................................................................................................... 29
5 EMPIRICAL STUDY OF WECHAT ........................................................................................................ 30
  5.1 WeChat Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 30
  5.2 WeChat for companies ....................................................................................................................... 30
    5.2.1 Subscription accounts ................................................................................................................... 30
    5.2.2 Service accounts ........................................................................................................................... 30
  5.3 Employer branding on WeChat .......................................................................................................... 30
6 CASE STUDY OF 4 SWEDISH COMPANIES .................................................................................... 33
  6.1 Overview of case study ....................................................................................................................... 33
  6.2 A case study of Swedish company A ................................................................................................ 34
    6.2.1 The overview of the company A.................................................................................................... 34
    6.2.2 Analysis and findings .................................................................................................................. 35
  6.3 A case study of Swedish company B ................................................................................................ 37
    6.3.1 The overview of company B ........................................................................................................ 37
    6.3.2 Analysis and findings .................................................................................................................. 37
  6.4 A case study of Swedish company C ................................................................................................ 39
    6.4.1 The overview of company C ....................................................................................................... 39
    6.4.2 Analysis and findings .................................................................................................................. 39
  6.5 A case study of Swedish company D ................................................................................................ 41
    6.5.1 The overview of company D....................................................................................................... 41
    6.5.2 Analysis and findings .................................................................................................................. 41
  6.6 Summary of 4 case studies .................................................................................................................. 42
7 CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS ............................................................................................. 44
  7.1 Conclusions ....................................................................................................................................... 44
  7.2 Limitations and issues for future research ........................................................................................ 45
Abstract

Employer branding has come a long way from its early stages as a marketing branch. The concept of employer branding was established and developed among western companies in the last few decades, while it has become more and more popular in China in recent years. For Swedish companies who plan to step into the Chinese market, one of the most important thing is to use elaborate methods to ensure that they can compete in the tightened labour market for skilled talent. In order to do so, it is necessary and important to find solutions and strategies for Swedish companies to build employer branding on WeChat, as WeChat is the most popular and widely-used social media platform. Therefore, this paper mainly aims to find solutions and strategies for Swedish companies to build employer branding on WeChat, by conducting 4 case studies of 4 Swedish companies who have successfully built their own employer branding on WeChat. Based on the reference framework, this study came up with the final emerged employer branding model, which includes the employer knowledge framework, the instrumental-symbolic framework, and a scheme of five measurements. In the end, conclusions, limitations and future development suggestions are provided so that the stakeholders could have some references for further development of building employer branding on WeChat.

Keywords: employer branding, Swedish companies, China, Chinese market, social media, WeChat
Acknowledgements

This paper is conducted as the master thesis for the division of Industrial Marketing and Entrepreneurship at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden. The thesis comprised 30 university credits and was conducted in Stockholm, Sweden by Yunlong Sun during the spring of 2018.

Many people have contributed to ensuring the quality of this thesis. I would like express my sincere gratitude to all those people involved. Among them, there are a few special contributors that I would like to mention.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor: Esmail Salehi-Sangari, who has guided me through the whole process of master thesis and provided my thesis with valuable, constructive feedback. Thanks you for encouraging and pushing me along the way.

Second, I would like to thank Potentialpark, which I wrote this thesis with. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to conduct this research project. Especially, thank Torgil Lenning, Anna Blixt and Ying Hong for helping me choose the research topic and valuable insights.

Last but not least, big thanks to my roommate Wei Xia, who has been encouraging and taking care of me since I have been in Stockholm. Thanks to my families, who are concerned about me even they are in China. Finally, big thanks to Angela Zhang, who has always been my spiritual motivator with her world-class and excellent works.

Thank you all!

Yunlong Sun
Stockholm, May 2018
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The concept of employer branding was established and developed among western companies in the last few decades (Chris van Mossevelde, 2014). Over recent years, it has become more and more popular in China. With the emergence and prevalence of the social media, nowadays, western companies have been used to implementing a set of effective strategy to propel their employer branding on social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter and etc. However, it will not work functionally in the Chinese market if they intend to step into the Chinese market, because none of these social media platforms mentioned above have been widely used. There are completely different social media platforms in China, such as WeChat.

As the most popular and widely-used social media platform, WeChat has taken China by storm over recent years. On the one hand, according to the official report released by Tencent (the parent company of WeChat) in 2017, the number of monthly active user on WeChat reached 889 million by Dec, 2016. The number is highly likely to increase further. On the other hand, most of Chinese and Chinese companies have joined on WeChat as official account, while some of western companies also have joined on WeChat. By the end of 2014, the number of WeChat official accounts had reached 8 million (Yu Fang, 2014). They have been harnessing WeChat as a strong and efficient channel to build their employer branding and spread the word out to the Chinese customers. Therefore, if upcoming western companies plan to build an attractive employer brand in the Chinese market, WeChat is definitely the perfect platform they need the most.

Thus, this study is trying to find the efficient strategies for western companies to build employer branding on Chinese social media. To narrow down the scope of the research further, this study decides to solely focus on Swedish companies as the object of the research. Since Sweden is one of the western countries, the findings derived this study will also apply for western companies, while mainly applying for Swedish companies due to the fact that Swedish companies share the same cultural background with each other. Besides, along with the policy of the One Belt One Road proposed by the Chinese government, there will be more economic and business interaction between China and Sweden. Therefore, this study will not only contribute to the general knowledge in
the content of employer branding, but also promote the business contact and trade between two countries.

1.2 Objective of the study
With the previous discussion, the objective of the study can be described as the following research question:

What are efficient strategies for Swedish companies to build employer branding on Chinese social media platforms?

As mentioned above, there are two specific dimensions to research within the activity of building the employer branding: Swedish companies and Chinese social media platforms.

1.3 Limitations of the study
First of all, time is a major limitation for this employer branding research. Therefore, after narrowing down the western companies to Swedish companies, the case study in this research only cover 4 Swedish companies: 2 big companies and 2 small companies. Besides, this study will focus on the side of the companies while building employer branding, no time to cover the side of customers and employees.

Second, financial resources are very limited. Therefore, a limited number of case study and survey will be conducted, and a certain platform will be selected.

Due to the limitations mentioned above, I will select WeChat to include in the research because it is the most popular and widely-used social media platform. Companies have been harnessing WeChat as an efficient channel to build their employer branding and spread the word out to customers. There are some Swedish companies that have more or less successfully built their own employer branding via WeChat. Therefore, if upcoming Swedish companies plan to build an attractive employer brand in the Chinese market, WeChat is definitely the perfect platform they need the most. Therefore, it is reasonable and representative enough to choose WeChat as target social media platform in this study.

Thus, now the research question become:

What are efficient strategies for Swedish companies to build employer branding on WeChat?
1.4 Structure of the study

Figure 1.1. The structure of the study
2 LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1 Introduction

As a result of the shift from the industrial age to information age, human capital has become one of the most important sources of competitive advantage in the global economies (Esra et al, 2012). Given existing and expected shortages of qualified workers (Dogl & Holtbrügge, 2014) and, as a result, increasingly competitive recruitment strategies of organizations (Baum & Kabst, 2013), employer branding has become an important and widespread human resource management (HRM) tool (M. R. Edwards, 2010; Martin, Gollan, & Grigg, 2011). In this regard, firms both can benefit and suffer tremendously from the word of mouth their employees create and share (Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013).

At the intersection of human resource management (HRM) and brand marketing, employer branding have been proposed as an effective organizational strategy that stands out from competitors and gains competitive advantage in the labor market (Collins and Stevens 2002; Lievens and Highhouse 2003). Therefore, employer branding are seen as the main method to deal with recruitment and retention challenges (Martindale, 2010).

2.2 Employer branding concepts

2.2.1 Employer brand and employer branding process

Before discussing any further, stating the difference between employer brand and employer branding in this study is crucial. It is necessary and important to distinguish two terms in this employer branding research: ‘employer brand’ and ‘employer branding’.

The term "employer brand" was first conceptualized in the paper "Employer Brand" of Ambler and Barrow (1996). After conducting in-depth interviews with interviewees from several companies, they believe that the brand concept can also be used for employment. In addition, Ambler and Barrow (1996) described the employer brand as "a package of functions provided by employment, economic, and psychological interests and consistent with the employment company." In contrast, employer branding describes the process of establishing an identifiable and unique employer identity, or as an employer to promote a unique and attractive image (Backhaus 2004). Employer branding represent a clear view of the company's efforts to promote differences and preferences between internal and external companies and employers (Kristin & Surinder 2004). The summary is shown in Figure 2.1:
2.2.2 Measurements and determinants

Berthon et al. (2005) gave a point of view of a scheme of five measurements of employer brand that are applicable to employees which are, Interest Value, Social Value, Economic Value, Development Value and Application Value. These five measurements are explained in following figure 2.2.

In addition, Esra et al. (2012) examine the importance of different levels of employer attraction. Factor analysis reveals six factors that represent the dimensions of employer attractiveness (social value, market value, economic value, applied value, cooperative value, working environment) (Esra et al., 2012). These factors are slightly different from the original five-factor structure (Berthon et al., 2005), possibly due to cultural differences.

There is massive research literature about measurements and determinants in extant research. A scheme of five measurements of employer brand proposed by Berthon et al. (2005) includes: Interest Value, Social Value, Economic Value, Development Value and Application Value. Based on Berthon et al. (2005), Esra et al (2012) introduced six different dimensions of employer attractiveness, which are social value, market value, economic value, application value, cooperation value, workplace environment. According to the employer branding global research of Employer Brand Institute (EBI), published

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambler and Barrow (1996)</td>
<td>Employer brand: package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backhaus (2004)</td>
<td>Employer branding: the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity’ or, ‘the promotion of a unique and attractive image’ as an employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristin &amp; Surinder (2004)</td>
<td>Employer branding: represents a firm’s efforts to promote, both within and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grunewalder (2007)</td>
<td>Employer branding: the process of placing an image of being a great place to work in the minds of the target group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
by Collective Learning Australia, major components of employer brand are compensation benefits, work-life balance (WLB), company culture and environment, work environment, product or company brand strength.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurements</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest Value</td>
<td>In view of the perception that an organization conveys an encouraging and enthusiastic workplace, inventive company policies and procedures, and uses the creativity of its employees to develop the prestigious products and services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Value</td>
<td>The degree to which the organization offers the employees a friendly, enjoyable and pleasant working environment and promotes collegiality and teamwork culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Value</td>
<td>Based on the perception that the organization provides its employees above-average remuneration, job security and prospects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Value</td>
<td>The degree to which an employer acknowledges the accomplishments of his employees, and gives career-enhancing experiences that act as a commencement for future employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Value</td>
<td>The perception that the employer offers employees the chances to apply their knowledge and skills at work and teach others through training, coaching and mentoring opportunities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.2. A scheme of five measurements of employer brand

### 2.3 Employer knowledge dimensions

#### 2.3.1 Employer knowledge framework

Although current employer branding research has come up with a large amounts of theories, the majority fundamentally focus on brand equity concepts. Brand equity theory, consisting of a ‘set of assets and liabilities’ associated with the brand identifiers, is the added value associated with a product or service (Aaker 1991).
There are numerous ways have been proposed to categorize brand equity assets (Aaker 1991) or brand knowledge dimensions (Keller 1993) that (potential) employees consider. Cable and Turban (2001) mentioned that individuals hold different types of knowledge about potential employers, including the dimensions of employer familiarity, reputation and image that are related to each other and have a joint influence on employer brand equity and employer branding outcomes.

2.3.1.1 Employer familiarity

According to Cable and Turban (2001) and Lemmink et al. (2003), employer familiarity expresses ‘the level of awareness that a job seeker has of an organization’, as influenced by greater information exposure. Employer familiarity is an essential element of employer knowledge; it allows the collection and storage of information about the company. Therefore, all other employers’ knowledge dimensions depend on familiarity and are therefore proposed to be a positive correlate of employer reputation and employer image (Cable and Turban 2001).

In fact, empirical evidence shows that there is a direct and indirect positive impact on familiarizing the company with the attractiveness of the employer and the application intention, e.g. mediation through the reputation of the employer or the image of the employer (Lemmink et al. 2003; Lievens et al. 2005; Saini et al. 2014; Turban 2001). However, employer branding research still ignores the contradiction of familiarity proposed by Brooks et al. (2003); the potential shortcomings of familiarity when negative opinions exist.

2.3.1.2 Employer reputation

In terms of employment, Cable and Turban (2001) defined the employer’s reputation as “the job seeker’s views on the public’s emotional assessment of the organization”. Employer's reputation is influenced by the employer's familiarity and image, but in turn it also affects the image of the employer and the attractiveness of the organization (Cable and Turban 2001). This definition is more objective than the general (organization/company) reputation definition. It is initially not related to personal cognition. The employer reputation defined in this paper considers (potentially) employee perceptions and how they believe the public evaluates the hiring organization.

Empirical research shows that job seekers' reputational feelings are influenced by corporate reputation and employer familiarity (Cable and Turban 2003; Collins 2007; Collins and Han 2004). In the study of Cable and Turban (2003), reputation perceptions further affected how job
seekers assessed the job attributes (i.e. the employer's image dimension), whether they expected the pride of the members of the organization and wanted to pursue employment (Cable and Turban 2003). In addition, the minimum wage requirement is also affected by reputation perception.

2.3.1.3 Employer image
Employer image reflects ‘the content of beliefs held by a job seeker (i.e. potential or actual applicant) about an employer’ (Cable and Turban 2001). Image is assumed to be influenced by employer familiarity and reputation, but in turn also supposedly affects reputation and organizational attraction (Cable and Turban 2001). Unlike reputation, which reflects beliefs of how others evaluate the organization, employer image concerns (potential) employees’ beliefs about the employer (Cable and Turban 2001; Yu and Cable 2012).

A multitude of empirical studies showed that, among the various organizational images that exist, as reflected through different stakeholders, a general corporate organizational image directly influences job seekers’ pursuit and application intentions (Gatewood et al. 1993; Lemmink et al. 2003). More specifically, Highhouse et al. (1999) later demonstrated that, in addition to the direct effect of the general corporate image, the corporate image ‘as a place to work’ (i.e. company employment image) and combinations of specific underlying attributes predominantly influence applicant attraction.

The existing research focuses on the empirical research of the specific element dimension of brand equity based on marketing in the context of employer knowledge dimensions. When it comes to the concept of brand equity, Aaker (1991) pointed out that brand equity theory contains the “asset and liability portfolio” associated with brand identity, which is the added value associated with a product or service (Aaker 1991).

Cable and Turban (2001) introduced that individual potential employees have different types of knowledge about potential employers, including the dimensions of employer familiarity, reputation and image, which are related to each other and have a joint influence on employer brand equity and employer branding outcomes.

2.4 Instrumental-symbolic framework
2.4.1 Framework
Lievens and Highhouse (2003) introduced the instrumental-symbolic framework as an integrative theoretical framework for delineating the main components of organisations’ image as an employer. According to this framework, images consist of both instrumental and symbolic
dimensions (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Instrumental image dimensions describe the organisation in terms of objective, concrete, and factual attributes that are inherent in the organisation, such as pay and advancement opportunities (Lievens, 2007). Symbolic image dimensions describe the organisation in terms of subjective, abstract, and intangible traits, and are similar to what other researchers have labeled organisational personality perceptions (Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse, & Mohr, 2004).

There is a large amount of research conducted on the context of different countries and organizations. For example, previous research in the context of the United States and Belgium (Harold & Ployhart, 2008; Lievens, 2007) shows that both instrumental and symbolic attributes play a role. Hoye et al (2013) found that both instrumental and symbolic image dimensions were significantly related to organisations’ attractiveness as an employer in the context of Turkey. In addition, Hoye et al (2013) found that organisations were better differentiated from each other on the basis of symbolic image dimensions (sincerity and innovativeness) than on the basis of instrumental dimensions (task demands). These findings by the research of Hoye et al were consistent with research in Western countries (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Van Hoye & Saks, 2011), indicating that the symbolic traits that job seekers associate with organisations might be the key determinants of organisational attraction. Their findings provide support for the generalisability of the instrumental-symbolic framework for studying employer image in different cultures and organisations, including China.

2.4.2 Instrumental attributes
Within the instrumental (i.e. functional) attributes dimension from which users (i.e. employees) usually strive ‘to maximize benefits and minimize costs’ (Lievens and Highhouse 2003), numerous employer branding studies tested attributes in various contexts, e.g. start-up (e.g. team climate, responsibility, flexibility), or different professional branches, such as nursing (e.g. quality of care, type of work, compensation), the shipping industry (e.g. time balance, career options, safe environment) or among generation Y representatives (e.g. type of contract, atmosphere at work; Frechette et al. 2013; Soulez and Guillot-Soulez 2011; Thai and Latta 2010; Tumasjan et al. 2011). Baum and Kabst (2013) showed that the influence of some (but not all) tool image attributes on the appeal of the organization is influenced by the culture (i.e. the comfort of work life and the value of tasks and payment appeal are different in the Asia-Pacific region, but for the working atmosphere and job opportunities).
2.4.3 Symbolic attributes
Symbolic meanings, or inferred traits, constitute the second dimension of employer image attributes and allow employees ‘to maintain their self-identity, to enhance their self-image, or to express themselves’ (Lievens and Highhouse 2003). Many symbolic image dimensions build on organizational (brand) personality conceptualizations from outside the employer branding literature (e.g. Slaughter et al. 2004). For example, Davies et al. (2004) classified seven corporate character dimensions that predict employee satisfaction: agreeableness, enterprise, competence, chic, ruthlessness, informality and machismo.

2.4.4 Summary
There is a considerable amount of research demonstrating that applicants are attracted to organizations on the basis of instrumental dimensions (for example, Highhouse et al., 1999; Cable and Graham, 2000). Instrumental factors include job and organizational characteristics such as pay, advanced opportunities, career development and organizational structure. However, further studies have shown that while instrumental factors are important in attracting potential employees to an organization, it is the symbolic dimension that differentiates a company from its competitors (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003). The symbolic dimension is related to perceived traits such as innovativeness, excitement, sincerity, competence and so on.

In summary, both dimensions of attributes positively influence employer attractiveness (Lievens and Highhouse 2003; Lievens et al. 2005; Van Hoye and Saks 2011). Similar findings apply across varied groups of individuals (i.e. potential and actual applicants, incumbent employees), wherein instrumental attributes explain the highest variance in perceived attractiveness among actual applicants, owing to their specific information gathering (Lievens 2007). Symbolic attributes are almost equally important across all groups (Lievens 2007), but are particularly relevant in an internal context, i.e. competence as a (perceived) symbolic identity dimension in predicting employees’ organizational identification (Lievens et al. 2007).

2.5 Summary and conclusions of the literature survey
The literature survey contains several theories and research about employer branding. The following models and theories could be used in the employer branding model in this study, see figure 2.7.1:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cable and Turban</td>
<td>Employer knowledge framework</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lievens and Highhouse</td>
<td>Instrumental-symbolic framework</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berthon et al.</td>
<td>5 measurements of employer brand</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBI</td>
<td>Five components of employer brand</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esra et al.</td>
<td>Six factors of employer brand</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.3 The chosen models to be used for the final model

These models will be operationalized in the next following chapter.
3 OPERATIONALIZATION

3.1 Introduction
A detailed description of the chosen models will be discussed together about the reasons behinds the selections in this chapter.

Therefore, the final employer branding model will be evaluated, emerged and presented in the end of this chapter. The final emerged model will show how employer branding and its components is built up.

3.2 The description of selected models
When selecting the models among the literature survey, the most important reason is that:

- These models will provide answers to the research question which was expressed in the first chapter.

The original research question is:

- What are efficient strategies for Swedish companies to build employer branding on Chinese social media platforms?

After discussed the limitations of this study, the research question has become:

- What are efficient strategies for Swedish companies to build employer branding on WeChat?

A detailed description of the chosen models will be discussed in this section. If there are any theoretical over-laps among the models, they will be excluded from the final emerged model. Besides, this section will also discuss the reasons why these models have been chosen.

3.2.1 The Cable & Turban model
The Cable & Turban model was selected because:

- Although current employer branding research has come up with a large amounts of theories, the majority fundamentally focus on brand equity concepts.

- Employer knowledge dimensions are empirically assessment elements of the marketing-based brand equity construct.

- It has been tested in theory about employer branding research.
• It provides three elements of employer knowledge dimensions and how these elements are interacting and are affected by each other. These 3 components have a joint influence on employer brand equity and employer branding outcomes.

Employer knowledge framework consists of three components:

• employer image (i.e. attribute recall)
• employer reputation (i.e. affective evaluation)
• employer familiarity (i.e. awareness)

3.2.2 The Lievens & Highhouse model
The Lievens & Highhouse model was selected because:

• Its validity and that it was developed from the model of Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse, & Mohr (2004).
• There is a large amount of research about instrumental-symbolic framework conducted on the context of different countries and organizations, for example: United States and Belgium by Harold & Ployhart (2008) and Lievens (2007), Turkey by Hoye et al. (2013).

Instrumental-symbolic framework consists of two dimensions:

• Instrumental dimension
• Symbolic dimension

3.2.3 The Berthon et al. model & the Esra et al. model
The Berthon et al. model & the Esra et al. model have both been selected because:

• They provide a comprehensive structure of the measurements and determinants of employer brand.
• They have been tested and validated since they were introduced.

The Berthon et al. model indicates that there are five measurements of employer brand:

• Interest Value
- Social Value
- Economic Value
- Development Value
- Application Value

The Esra et al. model shows that there are six factors of employer brand:
- social value
- market value
- economic value
- application value
- cooperation value
- workplace environment

As noticed, between these two models, there are a host of overlaps within the structure of the measurements and determinants of employer brand, since the latter model is based on the former one. Therefore, the overlaps will be excluded from the final emerged model and this study will choose the Berthon et al. model over the Esra et al. model.

3.2.4 The EBI model
The EBI model introduces five components of employer brand:
- compensation benefits
- work-life balance (WLB)
- company culture and environment
- work environment
- product or company brand strength

However, The EBI model about employer branding in general will not be taken into consideration and not included in the final emerged model, the reasons are given below:
The EBI model overlaps with The Berthon et al. model & the Esra et al. model to a great extent.

It has not been tested and validated by peer researchers.

3.3 Final emerged model of the study

The previous sections in this chapter has provided a detailed presentation of the models that are selected into this study. Overlaps between selected models have been stated and identified. Therefore, in this section, the selected models will be modified.

Thus, the final emerged model consists of following models:

- The Cable & Turban model
- The Lievens & Highhouse model
- The Berthon et al. model & the Esra et al. model
Figure 3.1. Final emerged employer branding model
3.4 Summary
This chapter has provided a detailed description of the selected models, so that the potential overlaps in the models could be recognized and excluded. Furthermore, a final employer branding model has been constructed.
4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of scientific research is to generate new knowledge and describe new knowledge in a systematic way. Therefore, it is very important to choose a method that enables the research to answer the research questions in this master thesis study. In addition, it is vital that the method used is aware of its advantages and disadvantages when applied.

In this chapter, a discussion about different methods and techniques that will be used in this study and why I chose it will be provided and discussed. Research approach, research paradigm, research strategy and measurements techniques are included in this chapter. Furthermore, reliability and validity of the survey, plus ethical and sustainability consideration of this study will be discussed.

4.2 Research approach

This research is based on inductive research approach, which starts with research questions and aims and objectives that need to be achieved during the research process. The route of inductive studies can be described in the following figure:

Figure 4.1. Inductive process in research approach

The main idea of this study is to solve a particular problem, which is to find the efficient strategy for Swedish companies to build employer branding on WeChat. It provides a strategy solution for Swedish companies building employer branding on WeChat, which solves the research problem and generate theoretical contributions to current research.
The method of choice is based on qualitative research methods. The reason for choosing qualitative research methods is that they are able to provide a richer explanation of a particular phenomenon (Weber, 2015) and qualitative methods are credited with the acknowledgement of abstraction and generalization (Monette et al, 2010), which this study needs.

In addition, qualitative research methods are usually more flexible, which makes the interaction between researchers and research participants more spontaneous and adaptable. They allow researchers the flexibility to probe the initial participants' responses, asking why or how. In terms of quantitative methods, using open questions and exploration gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words rather than forcing them to choose from fixed answers.

### 4.3 Research paradigm

According to Thomas Kuhn (1962), the term paradigm refers to a research culture with a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research (Kuhn, 1977). Within qualitative study, Gephart (1999) classified research paradigms into three philosophically distinct categories as positivism, interpretivism and critical postmodernism, which is illustrated by figure below.

![Figure 4.2. Underlying philosophical assumptions](image)

This study uses the research method of the interpretivist paradigm, emphasizing that "understanding" is not only a textual understanding but also universality (Arghode, 2012). As the concept of employer
branding in China is brand new and influences in a large extent to both social and economic development, interpretivism research methodology is therefore more suitable for this study to interpret the social and economic phenomenon behind the concept of employer branding.

The interpretivist paradigm places more emphasis on the description and analysis of research themes, which is consistent with the mission of this study to find the solutions for Swedish companies building their employer branding on WeChat platform. Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm seems to be suitable for this study.

4.4 Case study

This study included 4 case studies because, as a research design, it was designed to analyze specific issues within a specific environment, situation or organizational boundary. Some people believe that case studies are too narrow to infer to fit research problems, while others believe that case studies provide a more realistic response than simple statistical surveys. Indeed, case studies cannot be generalized to fit the entire population or ecosystem. However, when the case study publishes results to the public, it will raise more interesting topics. This has been achieved by many researchers for many years. In addition, due to time and cost constraints, this study will select the method of case study.

According to the design, case study can be divided into three categories: explanatory, descriptive and exploratory. The case study in this research is exploratory case study, which aims to find answers to the questions of ‘what’ or ‘who’. A certain number of detailed case studies of Swedish companies who have successfully built their employer branding on WeChat will be discussed in the next chapter. In the case study, exploratory description and analysis will be discussed in detail in parallel with the final emerged model in this study. Therefore, the conclusions about the efficient strategy of building employer branding for Swedish companies on WeChat can be presented.

4.5 Sample selection and data collection method(s)

4.5.1 Sample selection

In a qualitative study, even though it is possible, it is not necessary to collect data from everyone or every company in order to get valid findings. Only a sample, a.k.a. a subset of research targets is selected in any given qualitative study. For the issue of sample selection, this study involves a sample or subgroup of the total Swedish companies who has
successfully built their employer branding on WeChat, which is relevant to the research problem and representative for Swedish companies.

Which and how many Swedish companies to measure have to be determined. Due to the limitation of time and cost, this study cannot afford too many surveys and interviews. As a result, in this study, there are 4 Swedish companies selected as research sample to conduct the interview and send the questionnaire. The interview guide and questionnaire are mostly based on the final emerged model, which are shown in the appendix.

4.5.2 Data collection method(s)

A qualitative study also involves collecting data, as a quantitative study does. Compared with quantitative data collection methods, Monette et al (2010) credit that qualitative data collection methods with the acknowledgement of abstraction and generalization. Polonsky and Waller (2011) categorize vision, images, forms and structures in various media, as well as spoken and printed word and recorded sound into qualitative data collection methods. The most popular qualitative data collection methods used in research include interviews, observation and document analysis as proposed by Yamagata-Lynch (2010).

As this study includes 4 case studies, additional data collection method(s) such as interviews, questionnaires, experiments etc. A data collection approach needs to be selected when gathering information for this study. Based on many choices of qualitative research data collection methods, survey research is selected for collecting data. Generally, the survey research is chosen, because it provides “questioning individuals on a topic or topics and then describing their responses” according to Jackson (2011), also because of its low cost and quick replies. The reason for only choosing the survey research method instead of other methods (for example, experimental research method) is because of the limitations of time and cost of this study, as mentioned in chapter 1.3.

To choose specific survey research method for this research, it is necessary to consider collecting information directly from the companies in an easy and less time-consuming way. Therefore, the questionnaire technique will be included because of its low cost and convenience, also anonymity. In addition, interviews with companies will also be conducted along with the questionnaire. The interviews will be conducted with companies that I am able to reach out to and agree to do the interview.
4.6 Measurement techniques

For designing the questionnaire, introducing and discussing relevant measurement techniques is vital and necessary. As this study uses qualitative research methods, the questions of questionnaire consist of choice questions and open-ended descriptive questions. According to Tull and Hawkins (1990), there are three forms of rating scales, which are The Semantic Differential Scale, The Stapel scale and The Likert Scale.

According to Tull and Hawkins (1990), The Semantic Differential Scale is a type of a rating scale designed to measure the connotative meaning of objects, events, and concepts. The Staple Scale is a simplified version of the semantic differential scale. The Likert Scale is a scale used to measure the attitude wherein the respondents are asked to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement with the statements related to the stimulus objects.

Above all, these three measurement techniques are simple to use both for the respondent and the researcher. In addition, according to Tull and Hawkins (1990), the Semantic Differential Scale is frequently used in marketing-related research scaling. Therefore, the Semantic Differential Scale will be used for designing the questionnaire.

4.7 Reliability and validity

Issues of research reliability and validity are discussed and addressed in a concise manner in next following sub-chapter. It is important for researchers to understand that although threats to research reliability and validity can never be totally eliminated. However, this study will strive to minimize this threat as much as possible.
4.7.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of variable errors in a measurement. Tull and Hawkins (1990) defines the reliability concept:

“... as the extent to which a measurement is free of variable errors.” A variable error is, according to Tull and Hawkins (1990), an error that occurs randomly each time something is measured.

Tull and Hawkins (1990) also presented different approaches to estimate reliability. One of them is Test-retest reliability. The definition to this approach is: “... applying the same measure to the same object a second time” (Tull and Hawkins, 1990).

This measure will be used in the following case study through control questions within the questionnaire and the interview guide. The two measuring instruments, i.e. questionnaire and interview guide, is also directed to the same companies.

4.7.2 Validity

According to Tull and Hawkins (1990), the concept of validity is:

“... as the extent to which a measurement is free from systematic errors.” A systematic error is, according to Tull and Hawkins (1990), an error that occurs each time something is measured.

To increase the validity of this thesis, as mentioned above, both the questionnaire and the interview guide are tested before the real research started.

4.8 Ethical and sustainability consideration

4.8.1 Ethical consideration

This study takes ethical perspective into consideration. Therefore, potential interviews will be conducted on the basis of absolute voluntary participation, which ensure that participant are willing to take their time to complete the questionnaire and interview. The issue of confidentiality and anonymity will also be addressed for respondents who are unwilling to state their identity. If the interview is conducted to an important person with a significant role in this industry, this study will ensure that the person agrees to use the terms of his or her name. Also, this study will obtain permission to use any of his or her opinions before publishing it.
4.8.2 Sustainability consideration
This study also takes sustainable perspective into consideration. The questionnaire will be sent out and collected via internet, instead of traditional paper tool. In addition, this master thesis will be supervised and submitted online.

4.9 Summary and conclusions
This chapter has mainly discussed about research approach, research paradigm, case study, data collection methods and measurements techniques in this study. Besides, the reliability and validity have been taken into consideration in this study, so have the ethics and sustainability. In sum, this employer branding research is a qualitative study, and will be based on these methods:

- Personal interviews
- Questionnaire
- Case study

These methods were chosen because of its low cost and quick replies. The data collection results and analysis will be presented in chapter 5.
5 Empirical study of WeChat

5.1 WeChat Introduction

WeChat (literal meaning in Chinese: micro-message) is a Chinese multi-purpose messaging and social media app developed by Tencent. It was first released in 2011, and by 2018 it was one of the world’s largest standalone mobile apps by monthly active users with over 1 billion monthly active users and 902 million daily active users according to the official report released by Tencent.

WeChat is China's most popular social media platform. This is a fenced walled garden where users cannot search for companies using tags or keywords. This may be done on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Companies must use the QR code to share and provide useful, competitive content on the WeChat account platform into the WeChat system. For the issue of Swedish companies building employer branding in the Chinese market, WeChat is a necessary and important social media platform to share company’s branding story and make people feel connected to the company.

In recent years, WeChat has taken China by storm. The emergence of this mobile communication technology is helping companies to promote their talent acquisition capabilities through effective employer branding. WeChat has evolved from an instant messaging application to the social media ecosystem, incorporating the features and capabilities of WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, PayPal, Skype and a host of other services.

5.2 WeChat for companies

Companies are using the app to invest in brand messaging campaigns to sell themselves as compelling places to work. From an employer branding perspective, the key to WeChat’s success is that it’s also a platform that is driven by both employer and customer experiences. Unsurprisingly, organizations that fail to harness the power of WeChat are getting left behind. Even though this study solely focuses on the side of employers, it does not change the fact that WeChat is one of the biggest and best online platform for companies to implement their own employer branding strategy. Therefore, it is important to use the app to build employer branding for Swedish companies who are eager to step into the Chinese market.
Currently, according the introduction of official website of WeChat, paralleled to personal accounts designed for individual customers and users, there are two types of public accounts on WeChat that suit employers and companies: service account and subscription account.

5.2.1 Subscription accounts
WeChat subscription account is the basic choice of the official account, it is more conducive to push frequent content and notification, subscription account followers will usually see this account update information in the subscription area. Subscription accounts are grouped together and will not individually show activity. These accounts do not support WeChat payment service.

5.2.2 Service accounts
With a service account, newsletters notifications will show up in between users’ other messages instantly grabbing customers and users’ attention. The service account is for businesses or organizations to access more advanced features on WeChat. It offers more Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) than subscription accounts, and companies and organizations can create their own applications based on WeChat APIs. Users can see the information when viewing their main messaging page. Service account support WeChat payment service, which could be the case for companies in some occasions.

5.3 Employer branding on WeChat
By the end of 2014, the number of WeChat official accounts had reached 8 million (Yu Fang, 2014). Official accounts of organizations can apply to be verified (cost 300 RMB or about US$ 45). In addition, WeChat has added data analysis function to its public account service, providing employers some basic analytics and demographic information on their followers. With this functionality, employers can focus on creating more tailored content to engage with their target audience and attract the right talent. Furthermore, this study will come up with more efficient strategies for Swedish companies to build employer branding on WeChat.

As Chinese most popular social media platform, WeChat is for sure a good choice for Swedish companies to build their employer branding on the Chinese market. With the rapid technological improvement, WeChat has been evolved into a social media ecosystem that combines the features and functions of WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, PayPal, Skype and a host of other services.

The channels and tools that companies can take advantage of are mainly two types of public accounts: subscription accounts and service accounts.
These two types of accounts don’t offer much difference in functionality for career accounts, only how newsletters appear in users’ message feed. These two types of accounts would be the main channels for Swedish companies to start building their employer brand on WeChat, where a whole set of toolbox is available for companies to learn how to harness them efficiently, which this study will discuss more in the following section.
6 Case study of 4 Swedish companies

6.1 Overview of case study

Before discussing the analysis and result of 4 case studies individually, a brief introduction about the design and distribution of questionnaires and the conduct and arrangement of interviews is of much necessity.

In the questionnaire, there are 4 parts, which is consistent with the structure of the final emerged model.

- First, questions related to employer knowledge framework are included, so it will show a basic situation of company’s employer branding on WeChat.

- Second, questions about Instrumental-Symbolic framework come up, which will lead to a deeper understanding of company’s experience and strategies in building their own employer branding on WeChat.

- Third, questions about five measurements of employer branding need to be answered by companies so that their employer branding activities and tactics can be shown with a holistic view.

- In the last part, there are two open descriptive questions regarding the biggest challenge in the past and top priority in 2018 of building employer branding on WeChat. The purpose of these 2 open descriptive questions is to get more information and insights about how companies conduct their employer branding activities and strategies practically on WeChat.

Combining with the interview with the team who is responsible for carrying out activities of building employer branding on WeChat, there are sufficient data material for conducting the following case studies.

The questionnaires were designed both in English and Chinese (which is exactly the same content in the questionnaire), because there might be companies’ Chinese office who is responsible for building employer branding on WeChat. Plus, based on the principle of localization in the Chinese market, Swedish companies prefer to hire the local talent to do so according to the interview with these companies. Sending out the both English and Chinese versions of questionnaire make sure that this study can get as many replies as possible.

Distribution of questionnaire was arranged by sending to the managers who are in the human resource department or in charge of human
resource business. More than ten questionnaires and interview invitations were sent out to these Swedish companies who has already launched their employer branding activities and programs, so that this study can summarize their success story, a.k.a. experience and strategies of building employer branding on WeChat. The number of replies and feedback from these companies is exactly 4 companies, which is more than the expectation. These 4 Swedish companies also agreed to do the interview for this study. Before sending out the questionnaire and interview invitation, this study planned to conduct 4 case studies individually in order to dig out strategies of building employer branding on WeChat based on the final emerged model. Therefore, the case studies in the following chapters will be based on these 4 responses of questionnaires and answers of interviews.

About interpreting the answers of the questionnaire, measurement techniques were mentioned in the chapter 4.6. This study chooses to the Semantic Differential Scale. According to Tull and Hawkins (1990), about interpreting the Semantic Differential Scale, there are seven intervals that respondent needs to choose one from to answer the question. According to Tull and Hawkins (1990), these seven intervals can be regarded as a scale of from 1 to 7. In this study, this scale is used for companies to describe the level of a specific element and dimension in the final emerged employer branding model, so the potential answers from companies could only be any number from 1 to 7. If a company answers a question with 1, then it can be interpreted as the level of this specific elements when this company build employer branding on WeChat is extremely low. Contrarily, 7 can be interpreted as an extremely high level. In other cases, 2 and 3 both refer to a relatively low level, 4 means a moderate level, 5 and 6 are a relatively high level. This interpretation solution will be implemented on analysis of case studies of 4 companies below.

6.2 A case study of Swedish company A

6.2.1 The overview of the company A

Company A is a Swedish company founded in 2013 with offices in Stockholm and China. They focus on the industry of E-learning and play a vital role in implementing corporate social responsibility in global value chain. The team in the company A has many years of international experience from global production and trade, risk management in global supply chains, corporate responsibility and development of educational technology. Company A is engaged in Swedish and Chinese market since the beginning of establishment, which they value Chinese market a lot. On the one hand, Company A is working with plenty of Swedish
companies as their customers, for example, MQ, Lindex, ÅHLENS, H&M and so on. On the other hand, company A is engaged in business with Chinese market. Therefore, looking for the right local talent is what company A is concerned about.

The analysis and result of case studies of 4 Swedish companies will be represented in the form of summary based on the interview and answers to the questionnaire which were designed based on the final emerged employer branding model mentioned in the chapter 3.3. After discussing the results of 4 case studies individually, a summary table will be presented in the chapter 6.6.

6.2.2 Analysis and findings
Company A have operated its own official account on WeChat since it was founded in 2013. Because of the company focusing on providing a safer workplace for factories in the developing countries, serving as a vital role in implementing corporate social responsibility in global value chain. Therefore, company A works with more and more factories in the Chinese market by hiring the local talent. They do have some experience in attracting potential employees through WeChat platform. Following is the discussion about the answers of questionnaire and interview from company A.

Company A has a service account, as manager in company A who were interviewed explained about why they chose service account over subscription account in the first place. They got some business advise about how to harness WeChat platform for hiring potential employees from a local consulting company, who suggested that a service account is more suitable for a company who intends to attract more followers. In the service account, newsletters notifications show up in the main page of WeChat so that it can instantly grab users’ attention. There are also more advanced features for a service account. Service accounts offer more Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) than subscription accounts, so they have been implementing different interfaces to show the company’s mission and expertise, working space, current employees, media cover and so on. By providing more interfaces with users, they think that they can develop more employer attractiveness.

As for the employer knowledge framework, the answers from the company A are pretty straightforward. They described promoting employer reputation (i.e. affective evaluation) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with an absolute high level (7 out of 7). They described promoting employer image (i.e. attribute recall) involved in the process of building employer branding
efforts on WeChat with a high level (6 out of 7). They described promoting employer familiarity (i.e. awareness) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with a high level (6 out of 7). They explained that employer knowledge, especially the employer reputation, always comes first when it comes to attracting potential employees. Therefore, maintaining a good and healthy employer knowledge not only helps company in finding the right people, but rooting in every markets and countries.

In the part of instrumental-symbolic framework, according to Lievens and Highhouse (2003) it was introduced as an integrative theoretical framework for delineating the main components of organisations’ image as an employer. Company A described the level of the instrumental factors relating building employer branding on WeChat is relatively high (6 out of 7), while the level of symbolic factors is also relatively high (5 out of 7). The manager in company A explained the reason why instrumental factors weigh more than symbolic factors is because they believe that current and potential employees values pay and advancement opportunities more than inferred traits. Therefore, when building their employer branding on WeChat, they put instrumental factors in the first place, such as salary, promotional opportunities, career development and organizational structure. At the same time, they further answer that symbolic traits also plays an important role in the process, as many young talents not solely focus on the salary and promotional opportunities nowadays, but company’s factors of innovativeness, excitement and so on.

In the next part of five measurements’ scheme introduced by Berthon et al. (2015), company A answered questions relating with five measurements of building employer branding that are applicable to potential employees which are, Interest Value, Social Value, Economic Value, Development Value and Application Value. They described the level of these five measurements that they provided relating employer branding building on WeChat as followed: Interest Value-a relatively high level (5 out of 7), Social Value-a relatively high level (6 out of 7), Economic Value-a relatively high level (5 out of 7), Development Value-a relatively high level (6 out of 7) and Application Value-a moderate level (4 out of 7). They explained that they value all of these five measurements mentioned in the questionnaire and interview, but it is difficult to manage all five measurements in the process of building employer branding on WeChat. Therefore, when they interact with potential employees on WeChat, they choose to create and curate more content to show an encouraging and enthusiastic workplace (Interest Value), a friendly, enjoyable and pleasant working environment (Social
Value) and a career-enhancing opportunity (Development Value). Regarding the Economic Value, manager mentions that they are not able to offer an extreme high salary due to company are still in the startup phase, but they do offer an above-average pay, which is the best offer they can promise about the pay issue.

In the last two open descriptive questions, Company A mentioned that the biggest challenge would be Chinese laws and regulations when it comes to doing business with foreign countries. What’s more, they choose service account on WeChat because it offers more features and interfaces with users, but they are still trying to figure out how to optimize the use of their service account. They see it as their top priority in 2018.

6.3 A case study of Swedish company B

6.3.1 The overview of company B

Company B was established to overcome main barriers in business and economics such as distance, knowledge and cultural differences between Swedish and Chinese companies. Company B helps Swedish businesses build a strong brand perception and grow their customer base in China. The team in company B are reviewed as Swedish companies’ Chinese special marketing and sales department. Company A was started in Stockholm and now they also have office in Shanghai, which is the one of most developed top-tier cities in China. They offer business solutions in social media marketing/digital marketing, Chinese local payment solutions, website design and localization. Because of dealing with Chinese business and market from the day one when the company was founded, they have rich experience in building employer branding in the Chinese market, especially on all kinds of Chinese social media platforms, in which WeChat is one of them.

6.3.2 Analysis and findings

Company B has a service account, as person who were interviewed explained that service accounts are more suitable for a company who wants to harness it as a tool of building employer branding. They also have been utilizing a number of interfaces to showcase the company’s mission and expertise, business solutions and story of current employees, which make potential employees more connected and engaged. By interacting with users on their service account, they think that they can attract more targeted talent.

In the first part of employer knowledge framework, answers from the company B show a very positive result. They described promoting
employer image (i.e. attribute recall) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with a relatively high level (6 out of 7). They described promoting employer reputation (i.e. affective evaluation) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with an extreme high level (7 out of 7). They described promoting employer familiarity (i.e. awareness) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with a high level (5 out of 7). They answered in the interview that they value all 3 factors of employer image, employer reputation and employer familiarity in the employer knowledge framework, because they are complementary to each other and functioning together for company to attract potential talent.

In the second part of instrumental-symbolic framework, Company B described the level of the instrumental factors relating building employer branding on WeChat is relatively high (6 out of 7), while the level of symbolic factors is also relatively high (6 out of 7). The person who were responsible for marketing and were interviewed in company B indicated that instrumental factors and symbolic factors both matters for potential employees because they believe that this is what potential talents come for. Company also shared their experience that if company wants to hire the right people in the Chinese market, company cannot solely focus on the practical part (pay, promotional opportunities), because more and more young talent value more on the spiritual part (company’s soft power, sense of honor, growing prospects in the future and so on).

In the third part, they answered questions about the scheme of five measurements. They described the level of these five measurements that they provided relating employer branding building on WeChat as followed: Interest Value-an extreme high level (7 out of 7), Social Value-an extreme high level (7 out of 7), Economic Value-a relatively high level (6 out of 7), Development Value-a relatively high level (6 out of 7) and Application Value-a relatively high level (6 out of 7). They illustrated that that they value all of these five measurements, especially Interest Value and Social Value. They have been showing to the potential talent about the friendly and challenging working environment, incentive promotional opportunities and teamwork culture that they offer to employees. They also mentioned that they offer an above-average pay and other kinds of job benefits, because monetary and non-monetary issue both play a vital role in attracting talents, which influences the first impression about the company. Company B also admitted that it is difficult to manage all five measurements in the process of building employer branding on WeChat. Therefore, they currently pay more attention on Interest Value and Social Value, and in the future they want
to find a good balance of maintaining more measurements to better attract talents.

For the biggest challenge they have encountered in the past during the process of harnessing WeChat as a tool of building employer branding, company B stated that how to contact with potential employees though WeChat platform is what they are concerned mostly. In addition, they haven’t figure out how to create qualified content to help the company to spread the word out. Therefore, as for top priority in 2018, they plan to Create high-quality content to show the highlights of the company in all aspects and attract more potential talents, including paying more attention to team culture construction, increase team cohesion and sense of collective honor.

6.4 A case study of Swedish company C

6.4.1 The overview of company C

Company C provides global research, consulting and communication. Their mission is to help customers create value by transforming data and knowledge into strategic advice and effective communication. They are a truly global company that covers more than 30 nationalities, which stay active in more than 100 countries on 6 continents. Since company’s establishment in 1987, they have participated in hundreds of international projects. Therefore, company B holds extensive and deep expertise in many industrial fields and regularly serve more than 100 of the world’s leading companies. The focus of company B is on forest products and chemicals, healthcare, industrial products, consumer products and services. They also have a deep understanding of how to efficiently build employer branding in the Chinese market, especially on social media platforms, including WeChat.

6.4.2 Analysis and findings

In the first part of employer knowledge framework, answers from the company C show a little difference from company A and B. They described promoting employer image (i.e. attribute recall) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with an extreme high level (7 out of 7). They described promoting employer reputation (i.e. affective evaluation) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with a relatively high level (6 out of 7). They described promoting employer familiarity (i.e. awareness) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with an extreme high level (7 out of 7). Even though company C described thesis three kinds of employer knowledge all with a high level, compared with company A and B, company C cares about the company
reputation the least and cares about the company image and familiarity the most. They explained that company familiarity reaches to potential talent first, then company image, last one is company reputation. So they have been creating contents and marketing plans to gain more familiarity through WeChat platform.

In the second part of instrumental-symbolic framework, Company C described the level of the instrumental factors relating building employer branding on WeChat is moderate (4 out of 7), while the level of symbolic factors is also relatively high (6 out of 7). The manager in company C who were interviewed indicated that instrumental factors is more old-school and traditional, as most of young people appreciate more on the invisible offerings from the company (company’s soft power, working dynamics, growing prospects in the future and so on). Also, the manager mentioned that the reason they did not promote more contents about instrumental factors such as pay and promotional opportunities was because they were not comfortable of promoting too much on instrumental factors and it would be against company’s culture. Therefore, company C insists on promoting more contents about symbolic factors on WeChat.

In the third part about the scheme of five measurements, company C described the level of these five measurements that they provided relating employer branding building on WeChat as followed: Interest Value—an extreme high level (7 out of 7), Social Value—an extreme high level (7 out of 7), Economic Value—a relatively high level (6 out of 7), Development Value—a extreme high level (7 out of 7) and Application Value—a relatively high level (5 out of 7). They stated that that they currently pay more attention to Interest Value, Social Value and Development Value, because company has been working on promoting the flat and comfortable working environment, potential promotional opportunities and dynamic teamwork vibe that they offer to employees. Regarding the Economic Value, company C offers a higher payment than average, which they shared during the interview that a competitive offer on salary is a must and they plan to raise the offer in the near future.

Company C regarded overall planning of building employer branding on WeChat as the biggest challenge in the past. They struggled with how to arrange the layout of the overall employer brand building, how to take into account all aspects, such as the balance of company's visibility, reputation and image, as well as how the company can provide candidates with a variety of value dimensions. For the past few years, this is a relatively big challenge and has not yet been solved. Therefore, they intend to address issues that they have not resolved well in the past as a
matter of priority in the future so that they can better attract more potential talents on the WeChat platform.

6.5 A case study of Swedish company D

6.5.1 The overview of company D
Company D is in the industry of marketing research. It was born and created from a class project, which intrigued many Swedish companies back then so that the company was formally established. Now the story of company D not only continues in Sweden, but also in more than 20 countries globally. The company B’s Chinese office is located in Shanghai, which is one of the most developed top-tier cities locally and globally. Company D works with over 2000 clients, including many Fortune 500 companies. Besides, they exert a big influence in the industry where they are. Meanwhile, building employer branding in China is one of their important mission and experience to get the right employees on the board.

6.5.2 Analysis and findings
In the first part of employer knowledge framework, answers from the company D are discussed as followed. They described promoting employer image (i.e. attribute recall) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with a moderate level (4 out of 7). They described promoting employer reputation (i.e. affective evaluation) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with a relatively high level (5 out of 7). They described promoting employer familiarity (i.e. awareness) involved in the process of building employer branding efforts on WeChat with a relatively high level (6 out of 7). Company D shows less efforts on promoting employer image compared with the other 3 companies, while hold the similar level of promoting employer reputation and familiarity as the other 3 companies. Company D explained that the value the company familiarity the most because it can bring more attention from the potential employees. Company D also planned for more contents of promoting company’s image on WeChat in the near future.

In the second part of instrumental-symbolic framework, Company D described the level of the instrumental factors relating building employer branding on WeChat is relatively high (5 out of 7), while the level of symbolic factors is extremely high (7 out of 7). The person who were interviewed in company D indicated that they do target more on symbolic factors than instrumental factors, because they believe that potential talents would care more about issues such as company’s soft power, sense of honor, growing prospects in the future and so on.
In the third part, company D described the level of these five measurements that they provided relating employer branding building on WeChat as followed: Interest Value—a relatively high level (5 out of 7), Social Value—a relatively high level (6 out of 7), Economic Value—a relatively high level (5 out of 7), Development Value—an extremely high level (7 out of 7) and Application Value—a moderate level (4 out of 7). They illustrated that that they value all of these five measurements, especially Social Value and Development Value. For the Social Value and Development Value which they pay most attention to, they have been showing to the potential talent about the friendly and challenging working environment, incentive promotional opportunities and teamwork culture that they offer to employees. Company D also admitted that it is difficult to manage all five measurements in the process of building employer branding on WeChat. However, they will pay more attention on Application Value in the future so that they can ensure future talents with more opportunities to use their knowledge and skills in the workplace.

Company D shared a lot of thoughts on the last part of the interview. For the past challenge, they talked about when the company just stepped into Chinese market and knew nothing about how to use WeChat platform, so looking for employer branding experts specially for WeChat platform was a big challenge. Except for that, managing multiple employer branding channels on WeChat seemed impossible back then. However, now company D has developed a special expert team who is responsible for not only building employer branding on WeChat, but the operation of the whole company on WeChat. For the top priority in 2018, company D commented that they plan to transform current employees into employer branding advocates on WeChat and improve the career site presentation on WeChat to better represent company’s employer brand.

6.6 Summary of 4 case studies

In the chapter 2.2 to chapter 2.5, the analysis and findings about 4 case studies of 4 Swedish companies were discussed individually and detailedly. The answers of questionnaire and interview from companies were indicated based on 4 parts: employer knowledge framework, instrumental-symbolic framework, a scheme of five measurements and descriptive questions about past challenge and future priority. Before coming up with conclusions of this study, a summary table of 4 case studies are shown below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Company A</th>
<th>Company B</th>
<th>Company C</th>
<th>Company D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Account</strong></td>
<td>Service account</td>
<td>Service account</td>
<td>Service account</td>
<td>Service account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employer Image</strong></td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employer Reputation</strong></td>
<td>Extremely high</td>
<td>Extremely high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employer Familiarity</strong></td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instrumental Factors</strong></td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbolic Factors</strong></td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Extremely high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interest Value</strong></td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Extremely high</td>
<td>Extremely high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Value</strong></td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Extremely high</td>
<td>Extremely high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Value</strong></td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development Value</strong></td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Extremely high</td>
<td>Extremely high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application Value</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge</strong></td>
<td>Chinese laws and regulations</td>
<td>Reaching out to talents</td>
<td>Overall plan on WeChat</td>
<td>Employer branding experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority</strong></td>
<td>Optimizing the account</td>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Contents, interfaces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.1. Summary of case studies
7 Conclusions and limitations

7.1 Conclusions
This chapter provides a summary of the research findings, by highlighting the identified success factors and elements of the final emerged model in 4 Swedish companies. The research objective of this study was to find the efficient strategies for Swedish companies to build employer branding on WeChat. The objective is addressed by combining the research framework derived from the existing research literature, the final emerged employer branding model, with the empirical data collected through questionnaires and interviews with 4 Swedish companies involved in the implementation of building employer branding on WeChat. Based on the fact that this study builds on the views and perspectives of 4 different Swedish companies who have more or less successfully built their employer branding on WeChat platform, it is difficult to draw the general conclusions which can be applied to all Swedish companies who are eager to attract local Chinese talents through WeChat platform. However, the conclusions drawn in this research are indications and suggestions on what kind of success factors and elements may exist and matter when building employer branding on WeChat.

This study indicates that factors and elements of the final emerged model based on existing literature are mostly considered and promoted. 4 Swedish companies in this study all have a service account on WeChat, which indeed indicates that a service account is more suitable for a company to conduct employer branding building activities on WeChat, because it provides more features and interfaces with potential talents according to the empirical research of WeChat product and feedbacks from 4 interviewed Swedish companies. In the employer knowledge framework, all 3 factors (especially employer reputation and familiarity) show either a relatively high level or an extremely high level, which indicates that they are indispensable for new companies to build employer branding on WeChat. In the instrumental-symbolic framework, both dimensions play a vital role, with a tendency of paying more attention to symbolic factors, which indicates that future employees take both instrumental and symbolic traits into consideration, with an inclination of preferring symbolic traits that are connected with the company. In the scheme of five measurements, five measurements all exert a big influence on building employer branding on WeChat, especially Interest value, Social value and Development value, while Application value shows an overall moderate level. This indicates that company should pay more attention on creating high-quality contents to promote Interest value, Social value and Development value that
company offers, while it is necessary to keep a good balance among five measurements.

### 7.2 Limitations and issues for future research

There are a few limitations about this study. First, since the findings are based on qualitative data from questionnaire and interview, conclusions about the strategies for Swedish companies might be lack of generalization. Even though the qualitative study and the case study offer some advantages in this study, normally, the problem is that they cannot be generalized to fit a whole population or ecosystem. Therefore, figuring out how to best represent and generalize the whole ecosystem of Swedish companies worth discovering in the future research.

Second, 4 companies have been chosen to do case studies, where there is no specific boundary of industry. 4 Swedish companies were chosen based on personal contact and reply for emails and calls. This study is limited by companies who actually replied for the questionnaire and interview. It is difficult and time-consuming to manage more replies from specific Swedish companies who are in the same industry. Due to the limitations of time and cost, this study was not able to choose 4 Swedish companies which are in the same industry. This may differ from industry to industry.

Third, even though the scope of this study has been narrowed down in many aspects and dimensions, there were still too many elements regarding the research question. Therefore, the conclusion based on the questionnaire and interview could be more specific and concrete. It is impossible to include as many research objects as possible in a master thesis project. Therefore, specifying the research object is necessary in the future study. Too many research objects and questions will only lead the research nowhere.

For the future research, there are plenty of room to improve current study, relating to the limitations mentioned above. First, it would be better to focus solely on one element in the final emerged employer branding model so that the research could be go deeper and further in one dimension of employer branding, which will come up with more validated conclusions about practical strategies of building employer branding on WeChat. For example, employer attractiveness and the use of WeChat social media, or solely discussing building employer branding on WeChat platform in the context of instrumental-symbolic framework.

Second, this study only chooses the perspective of companies/employers to conduct the questionnaire survey and interviews due to the limitation
of time, so it is necessary and feasible to conduct a new research with the perspective of students/employees in order to investigate and discover which factors employees take into consideration when they go through companies’ employer branding strategies on social media platform, so insights and feedback from the side of students/employees can be harnessed as strategies for companies building their employer branding on WeChat.

Last but not least, due to that the qualitative study and limited case studies in this research lacks generality for all Swedish companies, therefore conducting a quantitative study to better generalize and represent Swedish companies would be appreciated. After all, quantitative study provides some advantages that qualitative study cannot offer. In addition, collecting massive data to analyze the relation of some specific elements in the employer branding model could be more representative for more Swedish companies to build employer branding.
Reference
42. Oliver, V. (2010), 301 Smart Answers to Tough Business Etiquette Questions, Skyhorse Publishing, New York USA

Appendix

Questionnaire (English Version)

1. What type of WeChat official account does your company use for building employer branding?
   A. Subscription account
   B. Service account

2. Employer image reflects the content of beliefs held by a job seeker (i.e. potential or actual applicant) about an employer. How would you describe promoting employer image (i.e. attribute recall) involved in your employer branding efforts on WeChat?
   Low __ __ __ __ __ __ High

3. Employer reputation refers to a job seeker’s beliefs about public’s affective evaluation of the organization. How would you describe promoting employer reputation (i.e. affective evaluation) involved in your employer branding efforts on WeChat?
   Low __ __ __ __ __ __ High

4. Employer familiarity expresses the level of awareness that a job seeker has of an organization. How would you describe promoting employer familiarity (i.e. awareness) involved in your employer branding efforts on WeChat?
   Low __ __ __ __ __ __ High

5. In an Instrumental-symbolic framework, the instrumental factors include job and organizational characteristics such as salary, promotional opportunities, career development and organizational structure. How would you describe the instrumental factors in your company relating employer branding?
   Low __ __ __ __ __ __ High

6. In an Instrumental-symbolic framework, the symbolic factors are related to perceived traits such as innovativeness, excitement, sincerity and competence. How would you describe the symbolic factors in your company relating employer branding?
   Low __ __ __ __ __ __ High

Berthon et al. (2005) introduced a scheme of five measurements of building employer branding that are applicable to employees which are, Interest Value, Social Value, Economic Value, Development Value and Application Value.
7. **Interest Value** is in view of the perception that an organization conveys an encouraging and enthusiastic workplace, inventive company policies and procedures, and uses the creativity of its employees to develop the prestigious products and services. How would you describe the **Interest Value** your company provides relating employer branding?

Low __ __ __ __ __ __ High

8. **Social Value** refers to the degree to which the organization offers the employees a friendly, enjoyable and pleasant working environment and promotes collegiality and teamwork culture. How would you describe the **Social Value** your company provides relating employer branding?

Low __ __ __ __ __ __ High

9. **Economic Value** is based on the perception that the organization provides its employees above-average remuneration, job security and prospects. How would you describe the **Economic Value** your company provides relating employer branding?

Low __ __ __ __ __ __ High

10. **Development Value** refers to the degree to which an employer acknowledges the accomplishments of his employees, and gives career-enhancing experiences that act as a commencement for future employment. How would you describe the **Development Value** your company provides relating employer branding?

Low __ __ __ __ __ __ High

11. **Application Value** is the perception that the employer offers employees the chances to apply their knowledge and skills at work and teach others through training, coaching and mentoring opportunities. How would you describe the **Application Value** your company provides relating employer branding?

Low __ __ __ __ __ __ High

12. What have been your biggest challenges with employer branding to date on WeChat? Please state below:
What are your top employer branding priorities in 2018 on WeChat? Please state below:

**Questionnaire (Chinese Version)**

1. 您用来建立**雇主品牌**（ Employer branding）的微信官方账号是什么类型吗？
   A. 订阅号 (Subscription account)  
   B. 服务号 (Service account)

2. **雇主形象**反映了求职者（即潜在或实际申请者）对雇主所了解的内容。您如何描述贵公司在微信上建设雇主品牌活动时涉及到**雇主形象**？
   低  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  高

3. **雇主声誉**是指求职者关于公众对公司情感评估状况的看法。您如何描述贵公司在微信上建设雇主品牌活动时涉及到**雇主声誉**？
   低  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  高

4. **雇主知名度**指的是求职者对组织的认知程度。您如何描述贵公司在微信上建设雇主品牌活动时涉及到**雇主知名度**？
   低  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  高

5. 在关于雇主品牌建设的**实用主义与象征主义的理论框架**中，实用主义因素包括工作和组织特征，例如工资，晋升机会，职业发展和组织结构。您如何描述贵公司有关雇主品牌建设过程中的**实用主义因素**？
   低  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  高

6. 在关于雇主品牌建设的**实用主义与象征主义的理论框架**中，象征主义因素与感知特征相关，如创新性，激情，诚意和竞争力等。您如何描述贵公司有关雇主品牌建设过程中的**象征主义因素**？
   低  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  高

Berthon 等人（2005）提出了一个适用于雇员的建立雇主品牌的五个度量指标的方案，即兴趣价值，社会价值，经济价值，发展价值和应用价值。

7. **兴趣价值**是指一个公司传达一个令人鼓舞和热情的工作场所，创新的公司政策和程序，并利用其员工的创造力开发产品和服务。您如何描述贵公司提供的有关雇主品牌建设过程中提供的的**兴趣价值**？
   低  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  ___  高

8. **社会价值**指组织为员工提供友好，愉快和愉快的工作环境并促进合作和团队合作文化的程度。您如何描述贵公司提供的有关雇主品牌建设过程中提供的的**社会价值**？
9. **经济价值**是基于组织为员工提供高于平均水平的薪酬，工作保障和前景的看法。您如何描述贵公司提供的有关雇主品牌建设过程中提供的的经济价值？
   
   低 ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ 高

10. **发展价值**是指雇主承认他的员工成就的程度，并提供职业促进体验，作为未来就业的开始。您如何描述贵公司提供的有关雇主品牌建设过程中提供的的**发展价值**？
   
   低 ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ 高

11. **应用价值**是雇主为员工提供在工作中运用自己的知识和技能的机会，并通过培训，指导来教导他人。您如何描述贵公司提供的有关雇主品牌建设过程中提供的的**应用价值**？
   
   低 ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ 高

12. 迄今在微信上建设雇主品牌过程中遇到的最大挑战是什么？
   请注明：

13. 2018年在微信上建设雇主品牌，您的优先级是什么？
   请注明：
