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# Inclusion in a recruitment process

**A qualitative study within the** [REDACTED]

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## **Abstract**

*This paper is a qualitative study written with an assignment description done in collaboration with the global home furnishing retailer organisation; **the IKEA Group**. The assignment information has worked as the foundation when constructing this paper. This paper contributes with analyses and discussions about the relationship between recruitment and inclusion. The research method was semi-structured interviews and these serve as the primary data for analysis and discussion. In this paper, inclusion is a part of sustainability, more specific social sustainability. The results from this paper show that there are several factors that can enable and optimise inclusion in a recruitment process. One way to promote inclusion can be achieved through the implementation and usage of digital tools and digital solutions in the recruitment process. To implement and use digital tools and digital solutions in the recruitment process. However, in order to enhance inclusiveness, the employee's awareness and knowledge about inclusion and diversity on the workplace needs to be fostered.*

## **Keywords**

*Human resource management, recruitment, applicant support, social sustainability, inclusion, digitalisation, future recruitment **IKEA***

*"How can we find the talents of tomorrow in a new perspective?"*

*- Interviewee 5*

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Happy reading!

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## 1. Introduction

*In this chapter the guidelines for this research paper will be presented. A brief background description will introduce the subject of the research and will then be followed by the more specific problem description, main purpose and aim of this research paper. This paper focus on inclusion, which is a part of social sustainability. Finally, the main chapters are presented with a short reading instruction.*

Discrimination of people in recruitment processes and employment is an established problem in today's society (Magnus & Eriksson, 2017). According to Diskrimineringsombudsmannen (DO), (2018), it is difficult to see official numbers of discrimination cases, but it is an identified problem that companies need to work actively with. According to DO (2018), discrimination in recruitment processes is common and there are different groups in the society that experience different kinds of discrimination. An example of this is a study, conducted in Sweden, which showed that people with Arabic names were 77% less likely to be called for an interview, compared to people with Swedish names, even though they had the same qualifications (Carlsson, 2017). Another study, conducted by Magnus and Eriksson (2017) showed that people over the age of 40 experienced discrimination because of their age when applying for jobs. Data from this study also revealed that women over 40 are less likely to be called for an interview than men over 40, even though the whole group had smaller chances than people under 40 years (Magnus & Eriksson, 2017). To avoid discrimination and to reach a diverse workforce, organisations must make their recruitment process inclusive (Moody, 2002). A diverse organisation can commit to build talents internally and add value to the organisation's whole productivity (Robertsson, 2006). In this thesis, the focus will be inclusion, which means that inclusion is the term that represents social sustainability. An important definition of social sustainability is provided by the United Nations (2018):

“social sustainability is about identifying and managing business impacts, both positive and negative, on people. The quality of a company's relationships and engagement with its stakeholders is critical. Directly or indirectly, companies' affect what happens to employees, workers in the value chain, customers and local communities, and it is important to manage impacts proactively. United Nations work on social sustainability also covers the human rights of specific groups: labour, women's empowerment and gender equality, children, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, as well as people-centred approaches to business impacts on poverty”.

Another important definition of inclusion is provided by Roberson (2006), who calls it an encompassing involvement and engagement to realise the integration of diversity into organisational processes. Chavez and Weisinger (2008) add to this by stating that inclusion is an attitudinal and cultural transformation. Inclusion helps to ensure that employees from diverse backgrounds are able to contribute, remain with the company and flourish which means that inclusion is a part of social sustainability Chavez and Weisinger (2008).

Hence, this research paper investigates how a recruitment process can be more inclusive to contribute to a socially sustainable workplace. To better understand the context, the following sections will provide an introduction to the topic.

## 1.1 Background

Nowadays, more and more companies understand the importance of Human Resource management (HRM) and its influence on the successful operations of a company (Vermeeren et al., 2014). It is not a secret that various corporations pay a lot of attention to the recruiting process and wellbeing of their employees, as people are the main asset in the business (Vermeeren et al., 2014). In today's world with its increasing global workforce, a more effective approach towards people is needed (Vermeeren et al., 2014). The view of organisation, leadership and employees has changed during the past centuries, and it is still developing constantly (Price, 2007). The international market is rapidly evolving, leading to a more connected world. Hence, the viability and sustainability of a company in the recruitment process in the 21st century depends on a constantly growing extent upon its social sustainability and inclusion policies (Vermeeren et al., 2014).

Inequality and discrimination are issues that occurs in many workplaces all around according to Tomei (2013). That is why it is important to constantly work to prevent discrimination in all the parts of the organisation's operations and one of the key processes in the aim for inclusion is the recruitment process (Tomei 2003). According to Jepsen and Grob (2015), the HR-function has an important role in the organisations work towards social sustainability, which means that the recruitment process should be shaped to be inclusive in order to achieve social sustainability. Many companies are today working efficiently to develop the processes in order to create equality and the same terms no matter of gender, ethnicity, sex, religion, nationality, disability or background (Raghavi & Gopinathan, 2013). Creating an equal opportunity culture within an organisation also enhances the competitiveness of an organisation, according to Raghavi and Gopinathan (2013). To be able to create an equal opportunity culture, it is of high importance that the Human Resources department is engaged and has the knowledge of how to build this culture and how to strategically shape the processes in a way that creates equal opportunities (Raghavi & Gopinathan, 2013). This means that everyone should get the same possibility and access to apply for the same job positions (Raghavi & Gopinathan, 2013). It is important to shape the recruitment process to ensure that the right person is found for the right position and therefore, the recruiters should work to locate a diverse candidate pool, (Raghavi & Gopinathan, 2013). According to Raghavin and Gopinathan (2013), it is also very important to make the process accessible for all groups of people in the society. The experience for the candidates that have applied and that have been a part of the recruitment process is also important since it will affect the candidate's view on the company (Raghavi and Gopinathan, 2013).

The candidate experience is important since it will reflect the values of the company towards the candidates, and HRM must consider and implement processes that will make the involvement for the candidates more positive (Raghavi & Gopinathan, 2013). To be able to create a socially sustainable recruitment process, Jepsen and Grob (2015) argue that the process has to be inclusive.

## **1.2 Problem description**

Inequality and discrimination are issues that occur in many workplaces all around the world according to Tomei (2013). According to Holstein (2009) it is important that organisations create a strategy in order to create inclusion within their workforce. One of the challenges within this is to make a recruitment process inclusive for everyone. That is why this paper address understanding of how to make a recruitment process inclusive. According to Jepsen and Grob (2015), there is some literature with a focus on recruitment in relationship to economic sustainability but it is a very little amount of research that is focused on the relationship between the recruitment process and social sustainability.

## **1.3 Purpose and aim**

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how a recruitment process can be inclusive, and thereby make it possible for everyone to apply.

This research paper aims to contribute to fill the research gap in the context of recruitment in relation to social sustainability. The focus of social sustainability represented in this paper is inclusion.

## **1.4 Research questions**

In accordance with the research purpose, these two questions were developed.

- How can a recruitment process be designed to be inclusive?
- What do the HR representatives working with the recruitment see as the challenges within the recruitment process?

## 1.5 Structure of paper

### Chapter 1 – Introduction

*In this chapter the guidelines for this research paper will be presented. A brief background description will introduce the subject of the research and will then be followed by the more specific problem description and main purpose and objective of this research paper. Finally, the main chapters are presented in a short reading instruction.*

### Chapter 2 – Theoretical background

*This chapter are presenting the theoretical background of this paper; theories within inclusion, HRM and recruitment were gathered and presented. In this paper, the term 'social sustainability' refers to inclusion within HRM.*

### Chapter 3 – Methodology and method

*In the following section the research method, the research approach and the research design will be presented, in connection to why it is relevant to this paper. Furthermore, the [REDACTED] case description will be presented followed by some facts and figures about the [REDACTED] organisation.*

### Chapter 4 – Empirical findings and analysis

*In this chapter the analysis is presented and the empirical findings from the interviews is followed with the theories. The main research question of this thesis is; how can a recruitment process be designed to be inclusive? This will be followed by discussions of how the findings obtained to contribute to the existing literature. In this chapter the findings are examined and reflected on through previous theory.*

### Chapter 5 – Discussions

*In this chapter the findings from the research are presented and outlined. This is followed by discussions regarding the outcome of the analysis. The discussions are connected to the research questions stated in chapter 1.*

### Chapter 6 – Conclusions

*In this chapter, the conclusions of this paper will be summarised and presented, as well as suggestions for further research.*

## 2. Theoretical background

*This chapter presents the theoretical background of this paper; theories within inclusion, Human Resource management (HRM) and recruitment was gathered and presented. In this paper, the term 'social sustainability' refers to inclusion within HRM.*

Companies strive to reach profit and attain a sustainable competitive advantage. To achieve that, it is always important to find and attract the best talents (Anuradha, 2017). The HRM function plays an important part, since the HRM strategies includes the HRM processes. The HRM processes is where the applicants first get in contact with the company when applying for a job. This has according to Anuradha (2017) a great impact on a person's perception of the company. According to Gaddam (2008), it is shown that if a company succeeds with the recruitment and its employer branding, it will have a positive effect on the commitment of the employees. Furthermore, how much they identify themselves with the values of the organisation. That is based on that a strong organisational culture creates trust and will affect all parts of the organisation (Gaddam, 2008). According to Gaddam (2008), there are several factors that have an impact of how successful it will be. Benefits and work-life balance are some important aspects in employer branding, and by presenting these aspects, it also shows the culture of the company (Gaddam, 2008). Another factor of success is digital technology, which is continuously changing how organisations hire, manage and support people (Bondarouk & Ruël, 2009). One key part of the core mission of HR managers is to attract, support and develop the employees in line with the overall organisational strategy (Watson, 2009). Another important part of HR management strategies are preventing discrimination and create processes that make a company inclusive to anyone (Hubbard, 2004). This can be challenging since most people have prejudices and might be ethnocentric, intentionally or unintentionally, and therefore need to work actively to create inclusive processes (Hubbard, 2004). In addition, it is now a necessity: any business missing out on the opportunities of digital will not be able to sustain the competitive pressure from more digitised rivals (DG Communications Networks, Content & Technology (CONNECT, 2017).

### 2.1 Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management (HRM) is according to, Rivenbark (2006), a very important part in order to make a company reach desirable results. There are several processes and tasks that are included in HRM and one of the main parts is the recruitment. There are also responsibilities such as constructing policies within the organisation in order to create a fair and well-working company (Rivenbark, 2006). These policies might be of an ethical character and be one of the tools for leading towards an accepting and pleasant culture within the company (McGrow, 2011). The people working with the HRM are also responsible for the administration and development of compensations and benefits (Capezza, 2010). Within this area, bonuses and sick leave regulations are included and is therefore important for the organisation to be successful. Hence, this is a part of the structure and regulations and therefore will affect the employees (Capezza, 2010). Another important part of the HRM is the retention, which are the process of motivating people and make them want to stay within the organisation (McGrow, 2011). After the employment of a person, the development, training, team-building activities and similar operations are also important parts of the HRM processes (Witt, 2010). Within HRM, many factors need to be considered and be kept in mind and there are always rules and regulations that the HR department have to follow (Witt, 2010). In different countries, there are different rules, and global companies need to follow these and adapt their HRM depending on the local regulations (Fisher, 2011). There are, according to Fisher (2011), laws regarding discrimination, health-care and workers safety. Laws addressing discrimination can, according to Fischer (2011), differ between countries but in general, the focus on inclusion means that there is a need for a HRM

strategy to include and make it possible for anyone to apply to the company in order to avoid discrimination.

## 2.2 Recruitment

Recruitment is the process within a company where the company fills the gap of people that are needed (Carey, 2011). According to Lewis (1985), recruitment can be defined as: “the activity that generates a pool of applicants, who have the desire to be employed by the organisation, from which those suitable can be selected.” In other words, recruitment is a process of attracting applicants with certain skills, abilities and other personal characteristics to job vacancies in an organisation. Furthermore, it is not only the activity that satisfies the needs of the company, it is also an action that influences the future of the organisation and its sustainable development (Sarma, 2008). According to Rivenbark (2006), an organisation is relying on people and by a well-functioning HRM. On assuring a well-functioning HRM, it is possible to find the right people for the right position (Rivenbark, 2006). Within the recruitment, all parts of the process are relying on how the HRM is working. According to Rivenbark (2006), the recruitment process can be seen in four main steps:

1. Development of a plan for the recruitment, which means that number of new recruiters should be based on the expected demand of new employees.
2. Development of structures that encourage diversity and multiculturalism within the organisation. This is very important since many companies today are becoming more global and more diverse.
3. The recruitment, which is the process where the right person is found for the open positions.
4. The selection step, which is where the recruiters interview the candidates which then are selected or neglected for the position.

The years after 2000 changed the HRM radically by the globalisation and the incorporation of new technologies (Hunt, 2003). According to Hunt (2003), the HR departments of today's companies are facing challenges and need to have well-developed processes in order to stay competitive. Due to new technologies and innovations, recruitment strategies are constantly changing and the development of technologies is more and more influencing how recruitment processes are structured (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017). In today's world, the most innovative recruiting teams are on the lookout for the best digital recruiting tools or recruitment solutions (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017). These innovative recruitment methods can support every step of the hiring process. Computers will increasingly replace all manual work tasks (Cöster & Westelius, 2016). This, connected to additional tools can help global companies to revolutionise their approach of an effective process and enable a more creative and innovative hiring process (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017). Most importantly, individuals in the workplace will need to engage more comprehensively with machines as part of their everyday activities (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017). They will need to acquire new skills that will be in demand in the new automation age, and that will also be able to drive new innovations (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017). According to McKinsey Global Institute (2017), these skills include the ability to work within the digital environment, and the capacity to go beyond the logical reasoning at which computers excel. In other words: digital skills and complementary skills such as creativity, high-level cognitive skills and interpersonal skills will be needed (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017).

## 2.3 Inclusion in the recruitment process

Many companies strive to achieve diverse and multicultural organisations to improve the number of perspectives and thereby increase the quantity of ideas and make the company more efficient (Moody, 2001). According to Lauber (2009) it is shown that an inclusive company with a diverse workforce will have a higher revenue and be more efficient. Also, Page (2007), argues that companies should focus on inclusion and diversity since that will create better work groups where different perspectives will give a better outcome. To enable this, companies need to have an inclusive recruitment process, which can be challenging (Moody, 2001). It is shown that people usually hire and recommend other people that are similar to themselves (Moody, 2001). It is a common mistake, even though recruiters are aware of the problems, that the recruitment becomes biased and that someone from the same age, race, ethnicity or other similar background are the one being hired (Moody, 2001). Diversity can be defined as the difference between people, such as religion, background, socioeconomic status and many other factors (Moody, 2001). Multiculturalism is more focused on understanding, inclusiveness and to be respectful towards everyone and according to Plaut and colleagues (2009), there are some groups in the society which are more privileged. To create a strategy which is inclusive, the awareness of the inequalities is important. According to Moody (2001), companies should strive towards being diverse since that will increase the customer satisfaction by the wider range of ideas, perspectives and languages. The argument for multicultural organisations, are that the different perspectives will increase the innovative and creative ideas and solutions that the company produces (Hewlett, Marshall, Sherbin, 2013).

According to Herring (2006) and Holstein (2009) it is therefore important that an organisation implements a plan for inclusion and diversity in order to create a multicultural company. This development needs to be led by the HR department and is an important part of the HRM strategy (Herring, 2006). The leadership within the organisation is, according to Miller and Katz (2002) crucial to enable multiculturalism and to make the organisation and recruitment inclusive for all groups within the society. Based on Miller and Katz (2002), inclusion and diversity are one of the keys for a company to survive in the tough competition between different organisations. It is challenging to attract, find and maintain the workforce without developing the leadership and the culture of the organisation (Miller & Katz, 2002). By having a diverse group of employees, the ideas and initiatives will enrich the organisation and give it a competitive advantage (Miller & Katz, 2002). According to Miller and Katz (2002), this can be created by teaching the employees and the leaders within the organisation how to work with, and how to promote diversity. By incorporating inclusion in all the aspects and processes of the organisation, the culture will be inclusive and thereby more efficient (Miller and Katz, 2002). To be able to implement strategies, it is important that the people that are responsible for the implementation, for example the HRM function within a company, are flexible and open for innovative solutions (Miller & Katz, 2002). Another important factor is that the leadership that is practiced, shows that the organisation strives to have a long-term perspective when performing change (Miller and Katz, 2002). Key actions for creating an inclusive organisation are according to Miller and Katz (2002) the following:

1. Increase the strengths of the company. See the assets within the organisation and take advantage of them.
2. Coordinate and link the different parts of the organisation to create team work and ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals.
3. The leadership should be coordinated and based in a way that generate a culture and processes that lead towards the goal. It is important to share knowledge and information to everyone, such as informal and formal leaders.
4. Always strive to learn and make sure that the culture allows mistakes.

In a study performed by Herring (2006), it was shown that companies with a greater diversity and inclusion, compared with companies with a homogeneous workforce, had a greater number of customers, higher sales revenues and greater relative profits. Also Page (2007) conducted a study that

concluded that people with different backgrounds were more productive when working together than people with similar backgrounds, due to the enrichment of different backgrounds and approaches.

HR has a very important role working with inclusion in an organisation (Jepsen & Grob, 2015). It is, according to Jepsen and Grob (2015), important that the HR function adapts to social sustainability practices and to implement them by having long-term strategies, to inform and to have a dialogue. Furthermore, to always have an ethical approach in strategies and decisions in order to increase the company's efficiency, inclusion and diversity. According to Jepsen and Grob (2015), the HR department within an organisation, plays a very important part in the work towards making the company socially sustainable since that is the function with the responsibility for which people that will be a part of the company. The recruitment process are essential for a sustainable outcome, but in many companies, a framework for sustainable recruitment is missing (Jepsen & Grob, 2015).

The social focus of sustainability refers to the business practices of a corporation that treats both labour and the surrounding community with respect, fairness and concern (Elkington, 1997). The link between HR and sustainability is relatively strong as HR can advance sustainability and sustainability can help HR (Savitz, 2013). Therefore, sustainable HR is referred to the improvements added to the traditional way of managing HR, through the sustainability focus. One of the important steps to achieve sustainable recruitment, is to ensure that the application form is available and makes it possible for everyone to apply, in order to encourage diversity in the process (Jepsen & Grob, 2015). However, there is no single successful way of implementing sustainable HR practices in a business. It is rather dependent on the specific company's strategy, culture, context and maturity level regarding the development of sustainability (Milliman, 2013). Sustainability adapted HR exercises, which are frequently mentioned to be effective in literature, are: recruitment and retention, communication, training and development, engagement, and rewards and recognition (Dubois & Gadde, 2012; Langwell & Heaton, 2016; Milliman, 2013; Mishra et al., 2013). According to Hubbard (2004) it is important to educate and teach the HR employees how they can work with inclusion and reduce the risks of being ethnocentric, having prejudices and being bias. It is important that companies are taking action on inequality and that they ensure that the employees are aware of how to manage diversity and enable inclusion (Hubbard, 2004).

## **2.4 Organisational culture in relation to recruitment**

Organisational culture has an impact on how an organisation perform and how the individuals within an organisation behave (Armstrong, 2011). Armstrong (2011) describe the culture within an organisation as the values, norms and assumptions that construct the behaviour of the employees. Culture within a company is affected by the leadership and a strong identity of the founder can be one of the foundational parts in creating an organisational culture (Armstrong, 2011). In a strong company culture, the behaviours, decision-making and the processes within the organisation are affected and shared among the individuals (Ayoade, 2000). Within global companies, according to Ayoade (2000), the internal culture will affect the behaviour and values, but different geographical locations will also have an impact since the local cultures can differ tremendously (Armstrong, 2011). According to Ayoade (2000), the performance of recruitment processes within a company, is usually affected by the culture of the company. Kotter and Heskett (2009) also means that the culture of an organisation, and how the norms are constructed, have a significant impact on the HR function and more specifically, on the recruitment process. According to Taylor (2005), the culture has an impact on the recruitment process and the development of strategies. In a more global world with global companies, the aim should be to make the company inclusive, by creating an inclusive recruitment process (Taylor, 2005). It is important, according to Taylor (2005), that an organisations values and culture are viewed for potential applicants, to find and attract people with the same values. By finding people with the same values as the company, and at the same time making it possible for anyone to apply, Armstrong (2011),

argue that a company can find the most suitable candidates and at the same time maintain diversity and a strong internal culture.

## 2.5 Digitalization and technology in relation to the recruitment process

Based on a report, published by LinkedIn via the author Ignatova (2018), regarding global trends in connection to recruitment, it was shown that digital tools are predicted to be the future of making recruitment inclusive. For example, there is already software such as a function called LinkedIn Recruiter. This function enables automatization of candidate searches and make it possible for companies to easily find candidates that match their criteria. One example is Chatbots, which can respond to candidate questions so the recruiters are not forced to manually answer all questions (Ignatova 2018).

Stated below are Ignatova's (2018) future recruitment trends stated:

1. Diversity is the new global mindset
2. Reinventing the interview process with new tools that allow you to understand candidates better
3. Data is the new corporate superpower
4. Artificial Intelligence is taking over

In an article, published in The Business Insider by Feloni (2017) it was shown that the use of technologies within the recruitment process will be mandatory in the future to make a recruitment process inclusive. In the article, an example from the company Unilever was described. Unilever is a British-Dutch company and one of the world's largest manufacturers of groceries, mainly food, beverages, cleaning products and hygiene products. According to Feloni (2017), Unilever has a well-developed recruitment process when it comes to the use of digitalization and technology in relation inclusion. They have implemented artificial intelligence (AI). By implementing AI and algorithmic matching they do not use resumes. Candidates learn about the jobs online through social media, such as Facebook or LinkedIn, and submit their LinkedIn profile instead of a traditional resume. The candidates perform 20 minutes of playing 12 neuroscience-based games on a platform, called Pymetrics. If their results match the required profile, they move on to an interview via a system which is called HireVue, where they record responses to different interview questions. The technology analyses materials, such as keywords, intonation, body language, and creates written information regarding the candidate's performance, which is sent to the hiring manager. All of this can be completed on a smartphone or a tablet.

The results from this implementation in Unilever U.S, increased the number of applicants from 15 000 to 30 000. The system is today implanted in 68 countries, 15 languages and Unilever have reached more then 250 000 applicants. By implementation of AI, Unilever increased the universities represented in the recruitment process from 840 to 2600 universities. The outcome was increased diversity in applications and hires. Furthermore, the time for the recruitment process was earlier 4 months and after the implementation, the process ended up taking 4 weeks in average (Feloni, 2017). The case of Unilever using AI was also mentioned in Forbes (2018) and was described as a successful tool in creating an inclusive recruitment process.

### 3. Methodology and method

*In the following section the [REDACTED] case description will be presented followed by some facts and figures about the [REDACTED] organisation. Furthermore, the research method, the research approach and the research design will be presented, in connection to why it is relevant to this paper.*

#### 3.1 Case introduction

Since the study was conducted within [REDACTED] and they requested a paper within the area of HR and recruitment, we saw this as a suitable company to write the paper within. We wanted to develop the knowledge of inclusion in recruitment and also thought that it would make the process of finding interviewees easier, since the subject might be sensitive for companies to talk about in an official, published paper. We had 2 supervisors from [REDACTED] that we met with 6 times during the process in order to get access to documents and contacts for potential interviewees. The research itself was conducted by us as researchers and the supervisors from [REDACTED] did not have any opinions on the interview guide or which theories that was used. The interest [REDACTED] side was on how the recruitment process could be improved. We chose the angle of inclusion since [REDACTED] is a global company, operating in many parts of the world, were we thought could make the findings interesting. It is still important though, to consider that there is a risk for bias from us as researchers since we had a dialogue with [REDACTED] and took part of their internal documents. The assignment description was decided in collaboration with the researchers of this paper and the contact persons from **the IKEA Group**. This has worked as the foundation when constructing the purpose, the aim and the objective of the research paper.

#### 3.2 The case of IKEA

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### 3.2.1 Inclusion and diversity at IKEA

[Redacted text]

[Redacted text]

[Redacted text]

### 3.2.2 The IKEA Culture

[Redacted text]

### 3.3 Method

The method that was chosen for this research paper was semi-structured interviews. That is a qualitative method that according to Brown (2006) and Rowley (2012) is suitable to use when the researcher aims to see the participant's experiences and interpretations. Furthermore, it also has a foundational frame to be able to ask all the participants some foundational questions on the topic. [REDACTED]

Based on Brown's (2006) recommendation for interviews as a method it is important to use suitable tools. In this case a mobile app for recording was used to record the interviews and after the recording, the interviews were transcribed. Conducting the interviews was in line with the goal of this research paper, since it aims to see the participants understanding of the recruitment process and thereby stay in the area of certain interview questions. According to Jupp (2006), this makes it possible to also leave room for open questions and for the interviewee and the interviewer to have a more open dialogue. According to Brown (2006) it is important to know the techniques for how to interview in order to get a reliable outcome. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are a suitable method when the interviewer wants to collect data in certain themes, but still gives the interviewee the possibility to speak freely under these themes (Silverman, 2011). This was in line with the aims of these interviews since that could lead to relevant information from the interviewees that otherwise would not have been shown if they only responded to structured questions (Silverman, 2011).

### 3.4 Data collection

As mentioned before in this paper, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Based on Saunders et al. (2009), the researcher's need to adapt to the circumstances and since this study was conducted within [REDACTED] a dialogue with [REDACTED] representatives was essential in order to get the right contact information and permission to connect with potential respondents. Another aspect to manage, was the importance to keep the research within a specific time frame since it would have been difficult to contact people randomly. The risk for a lower participation number could occur since it might be sensitive for employees to talk about a company's strategies outside of the organisation, and this was kept in mind. By getting contact details from [REDACTED], emails with information about the research paper were sent to the potential interviewees. The e-mail also contained information regarding the anonymously- and confidentially- regulations. Since it was [REDACTED] that made the contacts available, it was important to be transparent and keep in mind that it could have an impact on the respondent's intentions to participate in the study, and also how they choose to answer some questions. We sent emails to 18 [REDACTED] HR-employees and the goal was to interview 10 persons. But due to lack of time and responses, the final interview number was 7.

The interview questions were based on Rowley's (2012) suggestion to do approximately 12 questions with sub-questions. The interviews were conducted in English. This was the chosen language since the interviewed are located in different places in the world. [REDACTED] is English, this is another factor of why this language was chosen. According to Saunders et al. (2009) it is important to be aware of that when an interview is not performed in the native language it can affect the outcome. This were kept in mind and sub-questions were asked to make sure that we understood the interviewees correct. The length of the interviews were around 45 minutes and the interviewee selection process kept in mind was based on Rowley (2012) who suggests that it should be people that are in the right positions to answer the questions, which meant people that worked with HR related

tasks. The questions that was chosen were based on the theory and the literature that were found for this paper. Based on the theory and earlier conducted research, we created research questions that could contribute to fill the gap within this topic, and the interview questions were then made to be able to answer these questions. The interview guide can be found in the appendix (section 4).

### 3.5 The participants

The 7 respondents answered general questions regarding current position, responsibilities, background and how they view [REDACTED] recruitment process, which has set the base for the interview. The respondents had different backgrounds and roles [REDACTED]. The respondents that were interviewed were both males and females who came from different countries. The people that were being interviewed had roles in the HR departments, on store level, country level and on global level. Since [REDACTED] is a global company, the 7 interviewees covered the [REDACTED] recruitment process in the [REDACTED]. By interviewing informants with different roles and nationalities, we hoped to be able to see a diverse view of their experiences and opinions of how the recruitment process executed.

According to Saunders and colleagues (2009), there are several important aspects that needs to be taken into consideration when doing the selection of interviewees. What was considered in this case was the time management, where the limited time line of this paper was less than 2 months. It was also taken in consideration, which position the [REDACTED] had as well as their accessibility and possibility for an interview.

### 3.6 Selection of participants

The interviewees were chosen with the focus to reach a diverse group of people on a global level, working in different roles related to the recruitment process. This was chosen to give as broad knowledge, answers and information as possible on a global level when it comes to inclusiveness in the recruitment process. The table below shows the diversity of positions and on what level they are working on, describing whether they are on a [REDACTED]

HR Generalist	[REDACTED]
HR Specialist / Diversity & inclusion	[REDACTED]
HR Specialist	[REDACTED]
Team Manager / HR	[REDACTED]
Senior Recruiter	[REDACTED]
HR Specialist	[REDACTED]
Business Analyst / Talent management	[REDACTED]

After conducting 4 interviews, and had 2 more booked, snowballing approach was used to find the 2 last interviewees to reach a sufficient number of interviewees. This is according to Saunders et al. (2009) a suitable method when it is difficult to directly find informants. In this case we used the contacts we had to get in contact with 2 more potential interviewees. According to Saunders et al. (2009) it is important to be aware of that it is not possible to generalise the result from the research based on a smaller sample of a population. This was considered in this research and the analysis and the result are based on the 7 interviewee's personal perceptions.

After the informants decided to participate in an interview, a time schedule for the interviews was set. Since it is very important according to Jupp (2006) to prepare properly for the interviews, 2 test interviews were performed in order to ensure that the questions were understandable and in line with the research question. The test interviews were conducted on 2 friends with HR background, in order to see if the questions could be understood in the intended way. The next step was to ask for feedback on the structure of the interview questions to be able to adjust if needed. This was seen as very helpful and necessary step, to be able to reach the full potential when the interviews later were conducted.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Saunders et al. (2009) describe that the next procedure after conducting the interviews is to transcribe them, generating data that will be further used in the analysis section. To be able to separate the interviews from each other after the transcribing, the interviewees were named with numbers, from 1 to 7. This is based on the recommendation from Saunders et al. (2009) who also says that this will make it easier to have clear citations in the analysis.

According to Saunders et al. (2009), the purpose of qualitative research is to create an understanding for the data and one way of summarising the data is to identify themes from the interviews. The data was analysed using an abductive approach. The abductive approach is to be seen as different from a mixture of deductive and inductive approaches (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). An abductive approach is fruitful if the researcher's objective is to discover new things, other variables and other relationships. In studies relying on abduction, the original framework is successively modified, partly as a result of unanticipated empirical findings, but also of theoretical insights gained during the process (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This approach creates fruitful cross-fertilization where new combinations are developed through a mixture of established theoretical models and new concepts derived from the confrontation with reality (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). We started with looking at the documents of transcripts and highlighted interesting themes/words. The highlighted themes were: sustainability, environmental sustainability, social sustainability, processes, trial- and error, digital tools, feedback, values, cultures, communication, candidate support, innovation, creativity, challenges, future, inclusion, internal, external, time limitations, global. According to Saunders et al. (2009), this is an efficient way of getting an overview of the data in order to identify potential themes for the analysis. By doing marks and notes in the material, this step also provided insights and showed relationships between the different interviewee's answers. After summarising and highlighting the data, we could identify certain codes and themes from what the interviewees said.

According to Saunders et al. (2009) the codes should lay as a foundation for grouping the data, which it did in this paper as well. After looking at the different codes, we could identify some of them as 'umbrella codes' and merged some with others to scale down the number. The final umbrella codes for the analysis were: inclusion, recruitment, sustainability, challenges in relation to recruitment and recruitment in the future. The codes were chosen based on this paper research questions and research purpose, which is how a recruitment process can be inclusive and supportive. It is, according to Saunders et al. (2009), important to keep the purpose of the research in mind when performing the analysis. The codes were created from the data but since the interview questions were based on the theory in this paper, the interview questions can have had an impact on the answers from the respondents.

### 3.8 Delimitations

Since the study is based on interviews, there are risks that had to be considered and kept in mind when doing the analysis. According to Jupp (2006), there is a risk of bias when using interviews as a method for the research. Everyone has a background, experiences and knowledge that shapes our interpretation and understanding of a phenomenon (Jupp, 2006). Based on this, it was important to consider and to keep an objective mind-set and try not to be affected by preconceptions through the whole research. This is also one of the reasons why the chosen interview form was semi-structured interviews, since that made it possible to treat and ask all the informants some foundational questions that were the same for everyone. According to Rowley (2012) it is important to be aware that a number of limited interviews, in this case 7, will generate insights and information about the topic but not give a result that can be generalised. Other important aspects regarding bias, is that 6 of the interviewees was chosen based on the contact list from [REDACTED] which gave access to the people with the accurate positions but also was chosen by [REDACTED] and therefore was not a random selection. The last two interviewees were found by snowballing, with the risk of people recommending someone that has similar opinions to themselves (Saunders et al, 2009). According to Saunders et al. (2009), this kind of bias from the company's side as well as the risk from bias within the respondents that work within the company that was answering questions, is something that needs to be considered and kept in mind when looking at the research. We as researchers, had in this case experience from working within recruitment, and one is employed within [REDACTED] (in another department) which are backgrounds that we were aware of, took into consideration and worked with actively with through the whole research in order to avoid potential bias.

### 3.9 Reliability and validity

One of the keys in validity that Saunders and colleagues (2009) point out are transparency in the research design of the study and that is why we aimed to clearly state out all the steps of how the research was conducted. Since the method of this research is of a qualitative character, based on Saunders et al. (2009), it is important for the reliability to be transparent. This means that the researchers have an objective approach but also are aware of their own backgrounds and potential bias, which we had in mind and reminded each other through the whole process and especially during the interviews. With experiences from conducting semi-structured interviews before, this could also contribute to better reliability since the interview technique is an important factor according to Saunders et al. (2009). For all the interviews the application Skype was used, and due to practical issues, some of the interviews were conducted by one of the researchers. We are aware of the risk of bias and also the risk of losing some impressions from interviewees that according to Saunders et al. (2009), can be seen on body language for example, only in face-to-face interactions. Due to time and physical accessibility, 6 out of the 7 respondents did the interview online. 1 interview was done face [REDACTED]. The technical tools, such as the computers with Skype and mobile phones for recording the interview were carefully tested in order to ensure the reliability from a functionality and technical aspect.

Looking at the validity of the research, it is difficult to say if the results can be transferred to other organisations since the aim and processes might look differently (Saunders et al., 2009). According to Saunders et al. (2009), it is important to raise the validity of the research by informing the interviewees clearly regarding how the study will be used in order to get truthful answers. In this case it was therefore important to inform the respondents about the anonymity through the whole process, but also informing them regarding the purpose of the paper, in order to make the recruitment inclusive and supportive.

### 3.10 Ethics

According to Jupp (2006), it is important that the interviewer have respect and has considered the ethical obligations regarding the information the interviewee will share, this part was carefully considered. Furthermore, there are some ethical regulations that have to be carefully considered when conducting interviews and qualitative research (Brown, 2006). That is why the informants within this paper are anonymous and based on Brown (2006), all the data processing was made carefully to ensure that all the references were coherent and that the interviews were transcribed properly. According to Brown (2006), it is highly important to ensure the confidentiality of interviewees and that is also one of the foundational parts in conducting the interviews and the data that was generated. Another important aspect of ethics when using qualitative interviews as the method is according to Saunders et al (2009), that the researchers have to make sure that the interviewees suffers no harm from taking part in the study. In this case, this was carefully considered and even though the contacts were given to us by the representatives within [REDACTED] no information that could reveal the interviewees identity was shared. This research was conducted for Malmö University (mah) in Malmö, Sweden and the principles of ethics in research were followed carefully. The regulations according to the institution of research ethics, (Forskningsetiska rådet, (2017) are:

1. The requirement of informing the participants in the study regarding that is fully voluntary to participate.
2. Ensure the approval of participation from the informants.
3. The requirement of confidentiality, which means that no personal information will be shared and that the participants remain anonymous in the published paper.
4. The information that is gathered will not be published or used in no other ways than for a scientific purpose.

## 4. Empirical findings and analysis

*In this chapter the analysis is presented and the empirical findings from the interviews are connected with the theories. The main research question of this thesis is; how can a recruitment process be designed to be inclusive? This is followed by a discussion of how the findings obtained contribute to the existing literature. In this chapter the findings are examined and reflected on through previous theory.*

The empirical findings collected from the multiple interviews was done with the research question as foundation; how can a recruitment process be inclusive? The empirical findings and analysis will be presented in 5 different themes stated below;

1. **Organisational culture and the recruitment process;** states how the recruitment process is perceived and shows the perceptions of the company culture.
2. **Inclusion;** states what inclusion means for the correspondents.
3. **Innovation and creativity;** states how [REDACTED] can improve inclusion in the recruitment process.
4. **Challenges in relation to recruitment;** states the challenges that was experienced.
5. **Communication;** states internal and external support and communication for applicants and HR representatives.

These 5 sections show the empirical findings from the collected data in context with analysis, all in close relation to the research question stated above.

Conducting the interviews revealed that even though the respondents had different positions within the HR management on different levels and in different countries, some parts were very similar and in close relation. One example was that the recruitment processes needed to be updated and more modern than it is today. Another example of a common perception was that many of the interviewees [REDACTED] as a workplace for everyone. However, some thought that the recruitment processes needed to be more inclusive than it is today. A common statement was that the focus of the recruitment is the personality of the applicants, and not the resume or earlier experience.

All the informants mentioned that the global recruitment system will be replaced in a few years (different implementation time in different countries). Everyone was very positive about that, since they hope that implementing this new system would make it easier to be flexible and try different tools in the recruitment process.

As a start, we asked about their position within the company and why they work [REDACTED] for IKEA, which grounded the base for the interview and also opening questions for the interviewee to feel relaxed. When it comes to the reasons [REDACTED] for joining IKEA, the respondents provided various inputs as; culture, opportunities, development, flexibility, genuine [REDACTED] like for IKEA as the furniture retailer, international opportunities, reputation and the people (co-workers). Secondly, several respondents mentioned that the company values and work/life balance plays a huge part. [REDACTED] Furthermore, they explained IKEA as an attractive company, a good company for people and for the society, fun workplace, "family like" and believes in its people. Stated below is one of several examples describing IKEA as value based [REDACTED]

5.: *"It is a fantastic company and I always have identified myself with this, like, this is a really value based company".*

## 4.1 Organisational culture in the relation to the recruitment process

According to the majority of the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] are the core foundation during the recruitment process. Indeed, the respondents are influenced by the core values during day to day business, in the way they conduct business, treat each other and solve problems. From the collected data it showed that many informants experienced it can sometimes be a bit inflexible. One reason for this occurrence is [REDACTED]

digital tools in the recruitment process, some of them mentioned that they had tried video interviews instead of written resumes. The reason for this was that some applicants might not want to apply if they had to write an application. According to Miller and Katz (2002), it is important to create a culture that allows mistakes and encourage the employees to dare to try and take new initiatives in order to achieve social sustainability.

1: “[REDACTED], that is not always so innovative and sometimes a bit slow, so I think it depends on the recruiter and the recruiting manager - how much they want to go outside the box and there is always opportunities to think new and think big, and you just how to try it yourself. So we have some very good examples within the organisation of that”.

From the interviews responses, it revealed that most of the informants felt that if they wanted, they could and should try new initiatives in the recruitment process, which is in line with the arguments of what Miller and Katz (2002) argued regarding inclusion. Some of the interviewees did not mention how they perceived the opportunities in trying new strategies or tools, but no one expressed that they felt limited in doing so, except for the foundational recruitment system that is a global recruitment system. Another question in the topic of recruitment was about how they work with the recruitment process. A common answer among the informants, was that the core of the recruitment process is about finding the right person [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] are some quotes from different correspondents connected to [REDACTED] According to Ayoade (2000), the culture and values within a company has an impact on how the individuals within it behave and how they make decisions. This can be related to the case of the interviewees, where the values [REDACTED]

1: “They are all aware of that if the person does not have the right values then it does not matter how technical they are. So we put that first, before the CV, and I think that is quite unique, to have the actual knowledge as a second step.”

6: “I think it is by being consistent in terms of following our values.”

3: “I think it is very interesting that it is global, but even though it’s global they have a lot of focus on the values which still makes you feel at home.”

These quotes are from the respondents that shows that they are [REDACTED] [REDACTED] organisational culture, diversity and values, it is shown that they are very aware and committed to maintain the value driven culture within the company. According to Miller and Katz (2002), it is important to have common goals within the organisation in order to make a company inclusive. In this case, all respondents except for one seemed to have a common vision. Ayoade (2000) argue that the culture of a company has an impact on how they recruit and how the processes are constructed. In this case it was shown that many of the respondents had the mindset of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] updated and improved to be able to reach

inclusion. Taylor (2005) stretches the impact of a company's culture on the HR and recruitment, and it was clear that inclusion is a topic that has been discussed within the company. Some of the interviewees were sceptical towards how the process was constructed today and it seems to be a part of the culture to be proud of the values but also to be critical on how the company can improve. From their answers it was clear that the process must constantly develop in order to become more inclusive. The respondent that had a different opinion did seem more technical focused and did not disagree on this, but did not either mention it specifically. Since everyone was talking about

It is clear that the culture within the company is strong and in line with Armstrong (2011), the values of IKEA seems to be an important part in the assumptions and beliefs of the employees. From reading internal documentation regarding how IKEA work with their values (see 3.2.2) and from our earlier knowledge, this was an expected finding. Armstrong (2011) also argue that values and culture can be strengthen when a company has a clear leadership, such as a founder with a strong identity. Even though the interviewees did not talk explicit about IKEAs founder, looking at the history of IKEA (3.2), it might be one of the reasons. Armstrong (2011) also mentioned the leadership in general as one of the foundational parts to achieve a united culture and values. In this case of IKEA, where most of the interviewees talked about the values, that might be a compulsory part to include the values in everything the work with.

## 4.2 Inclusion

When asking a question about inclusion and how they work with inclusion, all except for 2 of the respondents talked about the importance of inclusion. They mentioned that they had a person within the HR department, working to educate them in how to make the recruitment process inclusive which they were very positive towards. According to Herring (2006) and Holstein (2009) it is important that the organisation creates a plan for inclusion and diversity in order to create a multicultural company, which is in line with the respondent's perceptions. According to Raghavi and Gopinathan (2013), it is fundamental for an organisation in order to achieve social sustainability, that the HR department is engaged and receives knowledge and information on how to strategically manage the recruitment process. From the interviews it was shown that inclusion is a topic that is being discussed in relation to the recruitment process. Below are examples from the collected data that express how the interviewees work to make the recruitment process inclusive:

5: *"In our team we have a person that cover diversity and inclusion as a specialist, so we often have workshops, maybe every 3 months, so we have this as a continuous process in our team."*

1: [...] *"working with diversity and inclusion, and that role has only existed for maybe 1 year, so she is trying to find our scope. But she has worked a lot with us recruiters and bringing that to the table."*

Another important aspect, according to Miller and Katz (2002), is to use and maintain the resources of the company in order to achieve sustainability. The interviewees state that (to stay in the organisation but at the same time, develop and try new positions and roles. Also, there seems to be discrepancies in the application process between internal and external applicants. For example, the internal applicants often receive personalised feedback while the external applicants get automatized feedback or no feedback at all. It is also easier for the internal applicants to access information and contact people due to the internal database. Below are two examples stated about the differences.

2: *"Regarding references, for internal we can just talk to the line manager, it is easy."*

4: *“For internals they could ask their HR colleagues and then they could address the request to super user that was me. But for external it was not that clear.”*

All of the respondents seem well aware of that it is important [REDACTED] with Raghavi and Gopinathan (2013), by making a recruitment process inclusive, a company can achieve social sustainability. An interesting observation from the interviews though, was the question regarding what sustainability means for them in the area of recruitment. All of the respondents first mentioned that they worked with sustainability from an environmental perspective, which was clearly an important part of how they worked on daily basis. An example of an environmental perspective is stated below.

6: *“We try to do everything to talk over phone. And if we fly we try to meet as many as possible in terms of the environment.”*

After that, the sub-question regarding how they work with social sustainability was asked. This was automatically linked to inclusion and social sustainability in most of the participant’s answers. By analysing the data, it is clear that the subject of social sustainability and inclusion has been discussed and is part of their HR strategies. This is in line with Miller and Katz (2002), who argue that there is a need for a HRM strategy that includes and makes it possible for anyone to apply to the company. When asking if they could develop the discussion on how they work with inclusion, some of the respondents had some clear examples. The answers varied, some could for example be about hiring a person in a wheelchair and how they look at gender inequality within IT. One of the interesting finding was that none of the interviewees mentioned ethnicity, class or religion in any of the examples. On the top of their mind were about inclusion for disabled people. Some of the answers are the following:

5: *“It is in our values - inclusion - we always have this top of mind about getting the best candidate and how the team looks like, what would be the best fit, so yes, absolutely.”*

4: *“[...] as a value we look that the person match, then it is diversity and inclusion, and then it is capability. So we always have that in top of mind as well. We kind of speak to the hiring manager what the team looks like today. Me particular working, with IT organisations, for now, where it might be a lack of women in some departments then we look in to what we can do there.”*

6: *“We have talked about this, for example, a practical one that we talked about recently. The part of hearing and seeing, that we need to have more practical steps, be more inclusive, have more language, we do have this but look more to have we can reach out in different languages.”*

An interesting result from the interviews was that 3 of the respondents took visual impairments as examples of a group that might not be able to apply [REDACTED] also meant that this is something they need to develop within their recruitment strategy. The interviewees are aware of that they want to develop a more inclusive processes. However, most of the respondents were also aware of the fact that the process needs to develop and be more innovative in order to actually be fully inclusive. According to Raghavi and Gopinathan (2013), it is important to create awareness and to constantly develop the HR strategy to enable inclusion.

According to Raghavi and Gopinathan (2013), it is important that the recruitment process is accessible for everyone in order to be inclusive. Most of the respondents said yes to the question regarding if [REDACTED] an employer for everyone. This can be seen as partly contradictory since some of them also were aware of that the process might not be accessible for everyone today. Some of the actions that the interviewees wanted to take were to make it possible to apply for all positions through a mobile device. They also wanted to make it possible for those who have a hearing reduction or cannot see, to apply for a position. As mentioned before, some of the parts of the recruitment process were seen as creative and innovative. One example was the use of a video tool instead of making the applicants write a resume, which the interviewees were very positive towards going forward. Some examples are stated below.

7: *“Today we have a lot of difficulties because you cannot apply through a mobile phone advice and I do not think it says anywhere that you cannot do it and then people try and it does not work and then they reach out to us.”*

2: *“I also think that the hiring tool with the video recording will be used more and more and I think that is very high efficient and including in many ways.”*

According to Moody (2002), it can be challenging for companies to develop recruitment strategies that are inclusive. This is a challenge that the interviewees seem aware of and there was a consensus from the collected data regarding that they need to develop the processes further. However, there is no single successful way of implementing sustainable HR practices in a business. It is rather dependent on the specific company’s strategy, culture and context (Milliman, 2013).

### 4.3 Innovation and creativity

When asking the [REDACTED] and creative recruitment process, the interviewees had similar answers. In general, they don’t see the process as innovative and creative today, they all agreed that there is room for improvement and that they always can ‘do better’. Some of the explanation to this was that the size and the [REDACTED] they for now are using a system that is going to be updated. According to Hunt (2003), today's companies are facing challenges and need to have well-developed processes in order to stay competitive, which is in line with the interviewees perceptions on the recruitment process. 3 correspondents called the system of today ‘an old system’. Some of the interviewees that did not think that the process is seen as innovative and creative, stated that small parts in the process are. An example of this was open houses recruitment and video recruitment. Furthermore, the way of recruiting and working with inclusion and support was seen as very traditional from all of the interviewees. As stated above, most of the correspondents were critical in [REDACTED] process innovative and creative. One exception from the correspondents who answered that comparing to other same size companies, w [REDACTED] come quite far.

One example is stated below.

5: *“We always think that we are a bit old school style but we have really good tools compared to other companies. I mean, as large as we are.”*

What also was mentioned many times during the interviews, was that this old system will be replaced and that the correspondents are hoping for many improvements. The recruitment strategies are constantly changing and the development of technologies is influencing how recruitment processes are structured more and more (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017). This can be related to the general result from the collected data. The interviewees explained that the system they are using today is not giving data of where the candidates came from. According to Ignatova (2018), some of the trends within recruitment are inclusion and data. It could be seen from the interviews that the informants believed that inclusion was important and also that they were missing a function to gather data to be able to track which people they are missing today. It was a partly a surprising result that they had no system to track candidates to see statistics within this. The informants talked about the implementation of a new recruitment system and in line with Ignatova (2018), they were hoping for new tools that could improve the inclusion and the process. Another function that is wanted and seen as adding value, is the possibility to see how many people that are browsing in to the job ad, and then not applying for that job. One example for explanation is stated below.

5: *"I can give an example on the IT side, we search for more female candidates, and then we went through an interview with females working with [redacted] them; have you applied for the position? And then basically often that they have bullet points in the ad where they feel like: okay, I cannot apply because you requested this or that. And I think it would be interesting to see in that function, if there are 20, in one position there are 20 women tried to apply and they did not. So you know, we could see if something in the ad, we can change to encourage them to apply because some of them are interested in the position so it is more for us, what can we, you know, do to make them apply. So I think that it would be really interesting facts to have. A really relevant function we need to have."*

According to Robertsson (2006), a statistic functionality in the recruitment system could improve inclusion which is in line with the statement above. Some other potential improvements that 3 correspondents are waiting for when it comes to innovation and creativity in the new system, is to optimise automation. The interviewees would like to optimise the automation, but still have the feeling of personalisation. These 3 would like it to be innovative in the way the recruiters are connected with the applicant, to be able to update the current status of the application. On the same time, the correspondents would like it to be [redacted], with people focus. This was in some interviews followed by a discussion about digitalisation and how and if, digital tools can support inclusion. The examples are stated below.

6: *"We would like to do it more personalised, but at the same time we don't have the time to do that."*

3: *"I like to see it more personalised, to feel more of the values. I am maybe dreaming, even though it can be some kind of auto system but still personalised. More committing values when applicants applies for a job. If they get the same answer for 8 jobs they are not going to apply for job number 9."*

When asking about the topic of digitalisation in relation to the candidate experience and where this can [redacted] the future, one interesting finding from 2 of the correspondents was the topic of virtual reality. Another interesting finding was when the majority of the correspondents discussed the topic of different generations and how to create processes that fit all ages and cultures. This is in line with reaching many people and to have inclusion in the process, which they argued leads to a more attractive brand. Employer branding is a term that has an important part in modern HRM. In a study performed by Anuradha (2017), it was shown that depending on how the applicants perceived a company had a connection to how the culture within the organisation looked like. Most of the respondents talked about employer branding and digital, innovative solutions that could attract more people to apply. These innovative recruitment methods can support every step of the hiring process (Cöster & Westelius, 2016). However, some of the interviewees also talked about that the digital and innovative tools might not fit all applicants, due to lack of experience and technological knowledge. See examples stated below.

5: “We get a new system soon, but the experience for the candidates need to improve. I think we are still living on our name because when you apply for companies like Heineken and so, you go through a virtual experience. Even in the companies who has a virtual experience, you can see how the working place looks like. You get a feeling of how will my working place be, and I think that we have a way to go here. We came far but we still have a way to go when it comes to catching the new generation as well.”

7: “Everything is going to be more digital. ...(). But we have groups in the society that we can't forget. Many people think it is hard to use digital tools, and we can't forget them.”

Furthermore, when collecting the data from the interviews, one of the focus areas was the future, and how it will look like when it comes to inclusion, creativity and innovation in the recruitment process. [REDACTED] tools were mentioned as the solution for improving the recruitment process, and in line with Feloni (2017), Artificial Intelligence was one of the examples on [REDACTED] use technology to be more inclusive. Based on the answers regarding how the future plans looks like, the result was that the focus will be on maintaining the culture, simplify the process and increase the speed. All of the correspondents interviewed believe [REDACTED] the employee of the future, but are also agreeing that the tools need to be improved. According to Miller and Katz (2002), it is important to have common goals within the organisation in order to make a company inclusive. Looking at the collected data, they informants had common perceptions about the future directions. See examples below.

6: “I think in the future, it has to be more interesting in terms of fun and speed.”

5: “We should have the possibility of different recruitment functions depending on the country because in countries like Sweden and China people do not want to sit and write a CV anymore. This is one of, sending a video, applying via an app and so on. And we really, you know, are stuck in one single tool.”

#### 4.4 Challenges in relation to recruitment

From the collected data, it was shown that many informants experienced the same challenges within the recruitment process. When asking the question about challenges in the recruitment process, a common factor was the long lead time. This can be seen as one of the bigger challenges when it comes to how the recruitment process [REDACTED] today. 2 examples are stated below.

6: “Speed is our main challenge, we have to act quickly to the request. So in time for responding and not put anyone of that need to wait for a long time. They shared an interest and want to apply. So the speed and responses to not lose people that is interested.”

2: “I think it its known over all that [REDACTED]

According to 1 interviewee, speed, in this [REDACTED] too much in their identity and brand ID, the outcome can lead to challenges in attracting the right talent for the specific job. By assuring a well-functioning HRM, it is possible to find the right people for the right position (Rivenbark, 2006). From the quote below, it can be stated that the recruitment process takes too long time which might make them loose candidates. From an inclusive point of view, this can be an excluding factor for applicants that do not have the economic conditions to wait the process to continue.

1: *“We are competing with a lot of start-ups and a lot of consultant agencies and so on. I mean a recruitment process, some IT people, they get 5 offers per week from recruiters on LinkedIn saying that they have interesting profiles [REDACTED] waiting for the applicants to apply for us, we are not working that much with search or active search in that way.”*

Another common factor mentioned by several of the interviewees was connected to resources. Meaning, the number of resources to be able to follow up with the candidates the right way, preferably, in a personalised way. When asking about personal experience when it comes to challenges when supporting the applicants in the process, one of the answers is quoted below.

2: *“[...] hmm let me think... The number of resources to be able to follow up with the candidates the right way.”*

Another challenge explained by the correspondents, stated from the data was the language complexity, since they work with many different countries. This was seen as an expected result when doing the interviews, *since IKEA is operating in 29* countries. This will also be a challenge when implementing the new recruitment system, which will take *years* due to language differences based on the interviews.

It was stated in all [REDACTED] recruitment process is perceived as old fashioned and needs to be updated. However, even though the questions that were asked for describing specific challenges within the recruitment process, many of the respondents answered positive and connected it with [REDACTED], that it is good, but it can for sure be better.

## 4.5 Communication in relation to recruitment

When we raised the question about communication towards the applicants it was stated that half of the interviewees had a role where they are responsible for the communication towards the candidates. They are responsible for the candidate communication, via the recruitment platform, or phone, or via email. The tool that is used is the recruitment platform, where everything is gathered. The interviewees explained that it is the tool where they receive the applications, post the ads and communicate with the candidates.

It can be stated from the result that the applicants will be treated differently in the recruitment process depending on if they are already [REDACTED] (internal), or if they are applying outside of the company (external). When analysing the collected data it can be stated that the interviewee's would want to have more resources or solutions to be able to communicate, support and follow up on the process with the candidates. Below is one example.

2: *“[...] and the communication part actually cause I think that as long as you get some kind of communication, maybe saying this will take another week, then they now that. But if you do not get to hear anything, that is when you get frustrated.”*

One interesting fact that occurred when collecting the data in terms of applicant support was the lack of a clearly stated point of contact in the recruitment process. This was not a predictable result, and it clearly showed confusion to explain this in a simple way. One example is shown below.

2: “[...] yes that was the only one because actually this was, I think, a weak point that we did not really have a clear point of contact in case of something happened. For internals they could ask their HR colleagues and then they could address the request to super user that was me. But for external it was not that clear.”

When a question about the amount of applicants ‘getting stuck’ in the process of sending in an application was asked, it was clear that the applicant support was weak. One example is stated below.

7: “Not many, they would contact our customer service support, it is not intended for this kind of support, it is intended for problems with furniture so for our sales activities, and for delivery date. But still sometimes, if they could not find any other point of contact they were asking them for help and then I was achieving the requests from them.”

3 of the interviewees argued that what is needed in the ad is a clear point of contact. An interesting finding from the interviews was also a common result when it comes to internal communication and how the recruitment team structure looks like. According to Miller and Katz (2002), to link different parts of the organisation and to create teamwork and ensure that everyone is working towards the same goal(s). One example where this is lacking is described below. This can be seen as an obstacle for inclusion in the recruitment process.

5: “I think that we do not have aligned set to communicate. And this is because we do not have a centralised recruitment team. If we compare to other companies we need to have a centralised recruitment team, I mean, it is maybe that we need to centralise different parts of HR to secure the same communication to all the candidates.”

## 5. Discussion

*In this chapter the findings from the research are presented and outlined. This is followed by discussions regarding the outcome of the analysis. The discussion is connected to the research questions stated in chapter 1.*

Looking at the organisational culture aspect of this thesis, all of the interviewees talked about the cultural values [REDACTED]. This was also expected since, from looking at the internal documentation, the interviewed are very clear with expressing the company values. That is also something that is showed as the core in the documents [REDACTED] regarding the different processes. From the people that were interviewed, it was also clear that the recruitment is based on the [REDACTED] and it is interesting that the company culture is so clear even though the informants worked in different countries. This was in line with our expectation since [REDACTED] a very strong brand, it was interesting though, that some differences could be identified in the view of inclusion. These differences might be due to different local cultures, where an informant in Sweden and another in the USA both talked about the [REDACTED] but also showed some differences. The informant in Sweden talked about inclusion as one of the most important parts of the recruitment and how to make it possible for disabled people to apply. The American informant was more focused on the [REDACTED] and saw all applicants as potential customers, which showed more focus on business.

An interesting aspect of how the HR representative responded to the questions in the theme of sustainability, was that almost everyone first connected sustainability to environmental sustainability. This was not expected since we thought that, based on their roles which are focused on people, they would mainly think of social sustainability. Some of the examples that came up in the area of sustainability were that they tried to not use and print paper, and also that they tried to avoid flying people between countries for job interviews. They were instead using skype as a tool for interviewing. The sub-question within the theme of sustainability were regarded social sustainability and more specific about how they worked with inclusion in the recruitment process. It was clear that inclusion within recruitment [REDACTED] is a subject that has been discussed and most of the informants seemed to have a wide knowledge and are very aware of the topic of inclusion. An interesting aspect here was that the interviewees that were from a Nordic country, seemed most aware of how to work with inclusion. The interviews from these countries also brought up examples and talked about how to involve people with disabilities as an example. Some also mentioned gender inequality in the recruitment process in relation to some positions, as IT for example. [REDACTED] is a global company with [REDACTED], but it seems like the surrounding culture within different countries that people worked in also had an impact of their view of inclusion. The number of informants is not enough to draw any general conclusions regarding this, but the societal view of the issue might have had an impact in this case. This was partly surprising since, from an outside perspective, the [REDACTED] is so strong and we expected it to be the same view in all countries, but as an example, the difference between the American and the Swedish informant was that the Swedish interviewee talked a lot about inclusion and had many ideas and opinions in the topic. For example, the American HR person only mentioned gender once and then focused mostly on the business aspect and the financial part of the recruitment. Since we as researchers are from Sweden, it might be easier to culturally understand the informants with a similar background, but we kept this in mind at all times. Furthermore, we did not perceive any communication problems and always made sure that we understood the informant correctly. This could be done by following up the questions and the answer to state that it was understood. 2 of the candidates did not talk much about inclusion, but was more focused on the digital aspect of the recruitment process. Another surprising factor in this theme, was that none of the informants spoke more about diverse groups from an aspect of different ethnicities or socially exposed groups. The reason for this might be that they have gotten so far in the process of inclusion and diversity already, so that they do not even think about that as an issue when it comes to inclusion. Another reason might be, at least in some cases that they have not been able to focus on different

groups yet, and right now the focus of development might have been for people with hearing or seeing reductions, since that were examples that were brought up in several interviews.

When it comes to the subject of digitalisation, all of the interviewees talked about that the recruitment processes of today needed and should be more modern and more digital. It was surprising to us, that so much of the job was done manually and in a global company as [REDACTED] the process was relatively slow. Several of the informants highlighted that a new recruitment system was about to be implemented, and they all agreed on that it was necessary. In the question regarding how they work to support the candidates, several informants said that they tried to provide feedback for the candidates after having interviews, but except for that, there is not a functioning way of giving the applicants the support they might need in order to be able to fulfil an application [REDACTED]. Some of the informants talked about the issue of a lack of support for the candidates and thought that it might be a risk of losing good candidates because of that weakness. The goal was to provide feedback for the applicants that came for interviews, but since they are all very busy, the candidates sometimes had to wait for a long time. [REDACTED] also recruiting internally and people move from different positions within the company, the internal candidates had better possibilities to receive feedback and get information from recruiters regarding the recruitment process. [REDACTED] seen as a company that are ahead of many others, we expected the recruitment process to be more digital and more innovative.

To conclude this chapter, the analysis of the empirical material first showed that all the informants had a focus on the [REDACTED] when they are recruiting people to the organisation. Most of the interviewees stated that there is an aim to be able to focus more on inclusion over the whole recruitment process. The perception among the informants seemed to be that this can be done by innovative and creative ways to optimise the process. Such as new technology and improved communication and teamwork among the different functions and roles related to the recruitment. There are some challenges though, and it might be complicated to implement new solutions in a global company where the recruitment tools have limitations. All the informants were positive about the future recruitment process and to optimise inclusion in this process. It was also clear that they expected that the new recruitment system, that will be implemented soon, would facilitate the possibilities to make the process more innovative, creative and inclusive. Based on the informant's answers, it seemed as one of the important actions to enable inclusion was to make the recruiters aware and to provide the necessary resources for the HR team. The support for the applicants was also seen as an important part for the inclusion and how the candidates experience the recruiting process. This part needed according to the informants, to be improved and developed, and some of them perceived that the candidate support was inadequate in the current process.

## 6. Conclusion

*In this chapter, the main findings of this study will be presented. Our conclusion is based on the empirical analysis and discussion. The conclusions from this research aims to answer the research questions.*

This thesis contributes to the existing literature by analysing and giving a deeper understanding through exemplifying how inclusion connects and has impact on Human Resource management (HRM) in connection to the recruitment process. The aim of this paper is to create an understanding and knowledge of inclusion in the recruitment process. Our main findings show that digitalisation and new technologies could be one solution to support the massive amount of candidates [REDACTED] today. Digitalisation has become a buzzword in the organisational environment, and addressed as something organisations must embrace in order to stay relevant (e.g. Capgemini, 2013; Deloitte, 2016; Goldstein, 2015; Spitzer, 2014). To reach inclusion the platform and tools for applying for a job should be accessible anywhere and everywhere in all languages when in text, but also in different forms. Digitalisation enables new employment forms through new innovative and creative ways of recruiting, communicating and interacting globally with the use of digital tools. It also demands new employment forms as a form of flexibility in meeting the unpredictable environment that digitalisation entails. New online labour markets specialise in micro-tasking by matching employers and on demand workers. This has offered opportunities for many people to join the labour market and even to complement other existing activities which could not be done under traditional labour arrangements. This has added to overall economic growth and employment (DG Communications Networks, Content & Technology (CONNECT, 2017).

The accelerated technological sustainable development has revolutionized the society and continues to impact and change the way organisations work. The findings from this paper state that [REDACTED] recruitment process and way of working is seen as traditional. One way of making it more modern, digitalization of the 11 different step in the process could be considered, to be able to meet the people in the way the people want. According to Andersson (2018), transformation is required on all levels, in order to create a modern organisation that has the ability for continuous change. The common denominator in this debate is that the digitalisation permeates everything – everything that can be digitised, will be (Andersson, 2018). This puts big pressure on the company and its people to adapt to the fast-changing world and the increasing amount of new innovations and new ways of recruiting.

On the other hand, to reach inclusion over the whole recruitment process it is important to keep the complexity [REDACTED]. The size of the company and the diversity of people from different backgrounds, countries, gender, religion etc. makes this difficult since the knowledge and experience of technologies and digitalisation is differing. To be stated, there is not a one clear answer to the question of how to be inclusive in the recruitment process.

### - **How can a recruitment process be designed to be inclusive?**

From the interviews it was shown that many of the informants believe that by using modern technological tools the recruitment process can be more inclusive. It was also shown that education within the company, regarding how to work with inclusion and diversity appeared important to be able to make the recruitment inclusive. The informants also had the same perception on how the applicants could be better supported in the process. The technological tools and solutions were highlighted here as well since the experience was that the support tools of today are not enough. By not having supporting tools for the potential applicants, there was a risk of losing candidates that are not able to apply. Technological tools and candidate support that makes it possible for anyone to apply is needed to make a recruitment process inclusive.

- **What do the HR representatives working with the recruitment see as challenges within the recruitment process?**

The challenges that the HR representatives experience are partly in the communication and support between hiring managers and recruiters since they have different main focuses. The hiring managers usually have other tasks to prioritise which leads to a slow process and therefore enhances the risk of losing applicants. It is also a challenge to make the recruitment process inclusive since there is no data on which applicants they are losing because of the current structure and ways of working. Since many companies today have a recruitment process with a high speed and delivery, it is also a challenge to keep up with the competitors, and to handle the time management and performance outcome of all the steps of the process.

## **6.1 Limitations**

First of all, this thesis paper was conducted through a case study of one single company and thus the authors acknowledge the impossibility of generalising the results. Furthermore, the sample in the empirical material of this study was limited in regard to the number of interviewees, which thus only represents minor parts of the perceptions among HR employees. The authors have been interviewing representatives from departments that had positions ranging from HR responsible to corporate HR. The data collected from them might be subjective, which could be a limitation by giving different views based on their level of responsibility. Moreover, the range of number of employees may vary noticeable in the sample, which might create different patterns, possibly because of the different areas of focus. Another limitation, was the amount of time, approximately 2 months, could also be seen as a limitation since that limited the extension of the research. Other limitations, such as bias, from the researchers, as well as the informants, are important to keep in mind through the whole research paper.

## **6.2 Recommendations for further research**

Bell, Lee and Yeung (2006) argue that the digitalisation and the use of technology has resulted in further implications for the role of HR, its capabilities and competencies. It is evident that digitalisation of society puts immense pressure on organisations and its people, but the research regarding how it is experienced by HR managers in practice is limited, and it would therefore be of interest to focus more to conduct research within this area.

For further research, the area of how to make recruitment sustainable could be investigated from different perspectives. Since this paper is focused on social sustainability in the shape of inclusion, it would be interesting to look at a recruitment process from not only a socially sustainable perspective, but also from an economic, environmental and social perspective individually and combined. If companies of today are working towards sustainability from all these perspectives, the research regarding how to implement these parts in the recruitment process could be helpful. Since this research paper is conducted from a perspective [REDACTED], it would be interesting to see how the applicants themselves experience the process in order to see the issues and challenges from different perspectives. Other different aspects would be to compare different company's recruitment processes and from different parameters see what processes that are more inclusive and/or socially sustainable. That might be interesting to conduct with a quantitative approach in order to make it measurable. It would also be interesting to see research that would be advanced and well-founded enough to work as a foundation for the development of guidelines in how to make recruitment inclusive and sustainable.

Since this research was performed in the private sector, it might also be a valuable contribution with research that shows if there are differences in inclusion in the public sector.

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## Other materials

[REDACTED]

## Appendix

### 1. Interview guide.

This interview guide was used, with room for follow-up questions, as a framework during our 7 semi-structured interviews with IKEA

#### Interview Questions IKEA

Name:

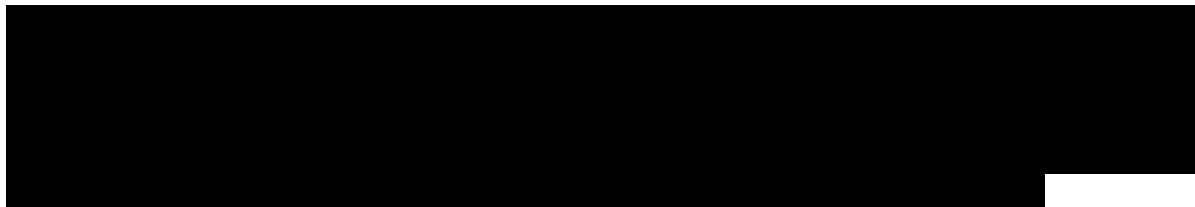
Date:

Role:

1. How come you work at IKEA?
2. Can you explain your role/ position?
3. Can you share how the recruitment process and handling of applicants is working?
4. How do you handle the applicants in the recruitment process at your IKEA today?
5. How do you support your applicants during the recruitment process?  
-Digital tools, phone, e-mail etc.
6. What kind of digital tools and solutions do you use in the recruitment process applicable to the applicants?
7. Would you call IKEA's recruitment process innovative? (Why, how, what)

8. Would you describe your recruitment process as creative? (why, how, what)
9. Where do you see challenges when it comes to supporting the applicants?
10. What do you miss in the way **IKEA** is supporting the applicants in the recruitment phase?  
-Weaknesses of the process
11. What do you think **IKEA is** doing well when people are applying for a job **at IKEA**?
12. What is your experience when it comes to problems with supporting the applicants in the recruitment process?
13. What does sustainability means to you in relation to the recruitment process?  
-How do you work with inclusion?
14. Where do you see **IKEA's** support for the applicants in the future? (AI, robotisation, chat, calls etc.)  
-What kind of digital tools do you think could support the candidates more?
15. Anything else to add?

## 2. The inclusion model at **IKEA**



*The 11 step process in recruitment at IKEA (IKEA, 2018).*

## 3. The IKEA Values (From IKEA)



#### 4. The 4 principles for interviews (ethical reasons)

##### Informationskravet

Regel 1 Forskaren skall informera uppgiftslämnare och undersökningsdeltagare om deras uppgift i projektet och vilka villkor som gäller för deras deltagande. De skall därvid upplysas om att deltagandet är frivilligt och om att de har rätt att avbryta sin medverkan. Informationen skall omfatta alla de inslag i den aktuella undersökningen som rimligen kan tänkas påverka deras villighet att delta.

##### Samtyckeskravet

Regel 2 Forskaren skall inhämta uppgiftslämnarens och undersöknings deltagares samtycke. I vissa fall bör samtycke dessutom inhämtas från förälder/vårdnadshavare (t.ex. om de undersökta är under 15 år och undersökningen är av etiskt känslig karaktär).

Regel 3 De som medverkar i en undersökning skall ha rätt att självständigt bestämma om, hur länge och på vilka villkor de skall delta. De skall kunna avbryta sin medverkan utan att detta medför negativa följder för dem.

Regel 4 I sitt beslut att delta eller avbryta sin medverkan får inte undersökningsdeltagarna utsättas för otillbörlig påtryckning eller påverkan. Beroendeförhållanden bör heller inte föreligga mellan forskaren och tilltänkta undersökningsdeltagare eller uppgiftslämnare.

[https://www.gu.se/digitalAssets/1268/1268494\\_forskningsetiska\\_principer\\_2002.pdf](https://www.gu.se/digitalAssets/1268/1268494_forskningsetiska_principer_2002.pdf)

## 5. Email

Email to potential informants.

*Hej,*

Me and Emma are studying a Master in Leadership for Sustainability in Malmö, Sweden and are writing our master thesis in the subject of;

*Application Support in the recruitment process for IKEA - hoping to support the applicant via digital solutions and have a more sustainable, innovative and creative recruitment process. This to be able to reach more people. E.g. applicants that 'get stuck' when applying for a job at IKEA.*

*Therefore we would like to reach out to you! We got your name from Nha-Tien Nguyen and Stefan Vukicevi (HR Talent Management Group Function's Business Solutions).*

*And would like to ask you for an interview to get more information of how IKEA is working today and what you are working with at IKEA.*

*The target group for our interviews is mixed; from different countries, ages, gender and positions within IKEA to get an unbiased interview result, but with recruitment, HR and leadership in common.*

Since we already started writing we would like to book a time slot with you as soon as possible. Let us know when we can interview you via SKYPE (approx. 40 min) and we will reach back to you.

*Your contribution will be valuable for IKEA's future direction when it comes to changing the way IKEA are supporting the applicant in the recruitment process. Thank you in advance.*

We are following ethical and moral rules when doing the interview's which means that your interview and the material that will be collected is anonymous and will not be used in any other matter then related to this thesis with IKEA as owner.

Let us know if you have any questions.

Looking forward to hear from you.

*All the best,*

Louise Österlind & Emma Lindgren