



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Business programme students - preferences and preconceptions

Management

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Bachelor's Thesis

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this thesis is to provide a better understanding of the organisational preferences and preconceptions towards future employers of business students at the School of Business, Economics and Law at Gothenburg University, Sweden.

Design/methodology/approach – The data was collected through a digital survey. A theoretical framework was then presented, followed by an explanation of the importance of each preference factor that is analysed. The data was subsequently analysed and significant results were highlighted. Finally, the results were explained by using the theoretical framework.

Main findings – The respondents showed a clear preference for large private organisations, followed by small private organisations. The results suggest that good working conditions were the most important factor to the respondents. Extrinsic factors had considerably higher associations with large private organisations than other organisational types, while management and good working conditions were highly associated with small private organisations.

Research limitations/implications – The small sample size and the lack of respondents predisposed towards the public sector. More research should be carried out to verify these findings. The study is also limited to students studying their first or second year of the Business programme.

Originality/value – A broad perspective was used when conducting the survey, with more factors in the study than previous studies carried out on this subject in the past. Good working conditions were only perceived by the respondents to exist in any greater capacity in small private organisations, which may indicate that public and large private organisations either lack this attribute to some extent or need to communicate it more clearly to our respondents. This study also provides a potential foundation for follow-up studies within the subject.

Key words – Sweden, Gothenburg, business, students, public, private, preference, extrinsic, intrinsic, management, organisation, survey, P-O fit, ASA, masculine, feminine

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1 Introduction

Soon, the proportion of the Swedish population aged over 65 will increase (Statistics Sweden 2003), which will not only mean a decreased proportion of the population will be of working age, but also that the business community will lose a large amount of experience and knowledge (Karlsson 2010a). Combined with the fact that fewer young people are achieving a higher degree of education (college and university), this will lead to increased difficulty for private and public organisations to recruit new employees with the right competence and/or professional experience (Karlsson 2010b). This generational shift will have a tremendous impact on the public sector, as its workforce generally has a higher average age than the Swedish workforce at large; public administrators have an average age of 45.5 years, which can be compared against the national workforce's average age of 42.2 years (Statistics Sweden 2010). In order to ensure the availability of skilled labour, we will need to obtain a better understanding of what the highly educated workforce will be looking for in an organisation when looking for their first job after their graduation. From our own experience we have observed that business students in general tend to prefer a private over a public organisation, thus potentially creating a homogenous group which is not attracted to the public sector. We want to investigate this further and see if such patterns can be observed.

The aim of this study is therefore to provide a better understanding of the organisational preferences and preconceptions towards future employers of students studying the business programme at the School of Business, Economics and Law at Gothenburg University.

An observable pattern of the organisational preferences and preconceptions of business students at the School of Economics, Business and Law is of utmost importance to many stakeholders; mainly to those organisations seeking these specific students' skills, so that they can influence them and thereby secure a steady stream of new competence to the organisation. It is also good for the University to gain insight into what students' preferences look like, so it can provide the education requested by both students and organisations/future employers. Moreover, it is advantageous for students to gain an increased awareness of individual preferences, thereby achieving a deeper understanding of why they are actually interested in a particular type of organisation and prefer this over others. As one of our respondents expressed it, *"this survey led me to revise my thoughts on potential future employers"*. With the help of our results and discussion we will thus try to answer the question:

Is there an observable pattern between the students' organisational preferences and their preconceptions towards future employers?

Similar studies have been conducted in other parts of the world (Taylor 2005a; Chetkovich 2003), usually with a sample consisting of several different educational disciplines. We consider this mix of disciplines (including business, law, arts, humanities and science) to be a problem in a study of this kind as it gives a very broad perspective; it analyses and discusses students “in general”. It is our belief that the preferences of a business student are drastically different from, for example, the preferences of a humanities or science student. This study focuses on business students only, which does not only provide an opportunity to investigate how results differ when focused on a specific group, but also creates both opportunities and a foundation for further studies on the subject.

This thesis will first list and define the core terminology used throughout the paper, followed by a theoretical framework consisting of the main theories used in the discussion section. It then moves on to describe the methodology used to design and execute the survey, of which the results are used as a basis for the discussion of this thesis. Subsequently, a scoring model is presented which is used to evaluate the respondents’ perceived level of fit with a specific type of organisation. The results of the survey are subsequently presented and analysed, followed by a discussion of the results. Finally, our conclusions are linked back to the purpose of this thesis.

Thesis structure



2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, core terminology definitions used in this thesis are presented along with the theoretical framework used to explain the results of the survey.

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Public and private sector

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford English Dictionary 2007) public sector is defined as “the part of a country's economy which is controlled by the State” and the private sector is defined as “that part of an economy, industry, etc., which is privately owned and free from direct state control”.

In the survey we have refrained from using these exact definitions due to the fact we wanted to receive answers based on respondents' perceptions and views of what *they* define as the public sector and private sector. For instance, the use of words like “control” and “free”, which are commonly classified as emotionally loaded words, may possibly be reflected in the respondents' answers due to their own positive and negative associations of the loaded words with the public or private sector. Therefore, we defined the public sector as a public authority organisation and the private sector as a private organisation.

2.1.2 Attraction

According to the dictionary, attraction can be defined as “the action or faculty of drawing to or towards the subject” (Oxford English Dictionary 2007). In this thesis we use the word attraction to explain the reason for an individual being drawn towards a specific type or kind of organisation.

2.1.3 Preference

The Oxford English Dictionary defines preference as “a greater liking *for* one alternative over another or others” (Oxford English Dictionary 2007). In this thesis we use the word to explain how individuals value some organisational attributes higher than others.

2.1.4 Selection

The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford English Dictionary 2007) defines select and selection as the action of “choosing out in preference to another or others”. In this thesis, selection is used to describe the process in which an organisation chooses which individuals to employ.

2.1.5 Extrinsic / Intrinsic

Extrinsic factors are obtained by performing work, but are separate from and not inherent to the work tasks (Heery & Noon 2001). Intrinsic factors are integral to work and obtained by performing work tasks (Heery & Noon 2001). In this thesis we mainly use the words intrinsic and extrinsic to group different individual rewards from organisations; for example pay and bonuses are extrinsic rewards while challenging work and other emotional work-related factors are intrinsic rewards.

2.2 Attraction-Selection-Attrition framework

Schneider (1987) states that his *“basic thesis is that it is the people behaving in them that make the organizations what they are”*. From this thesis he develops his ideas by building what he calls the *“Attraction-Selection-Attrition framework”* (ASA). The focus of the framework and its underlying theories is to understand the differences between organisations by understanding the people inside them and their personal attributes. Schneider points out that it only looks as if people act according to the will of the organisation they are a member of while actually the organisation behaves in the way it does as a result of the people in it.

To build up a basic understanding of the ASA-framework there is a need for understanding the basic principles behind it, namely the ideas of attraction, selection, attrition and goals.

Attraction comes from the field of vocational psychology and when used in the ASA framework it concerns how different people are attracted to different careers and organisations as a function of their personality and their own interests; the career environments which people join are similar to the people who join them (Holland 1985). This match of person and environment is supported by Tom (1971) who shows that people prefer environments that have the same personality profile as themselves. People also choose organisations that they believe will be the most contributory to obtaining their highest valued outcomes (Vroom 1966).

Attrition is the opposite of attraction and is used in Schneider’s framework as means of explaining the difference between perceived organisational values and actual organisational values. Humans make mistakes and even if they are attracted to an organisation they may not fit in for various reasons. When realising that they do not fit in they will simply leave the organisation. The side effect of this pattern is that the people left in the organisation will be more alike each other and with time the group will become more and more homogeneous.

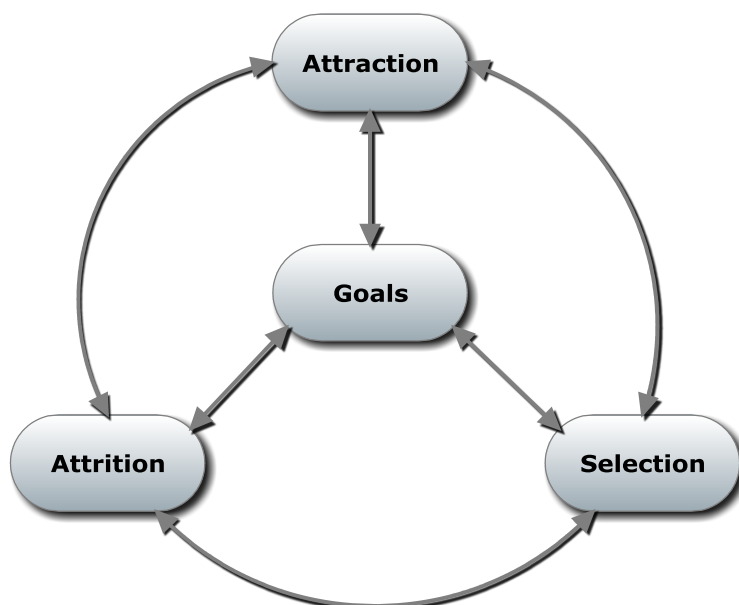
Returning to the subject of attraction and also to a lesser extent attrition, Schneider uses another factor in his framework; goals. What attracts people to an organisation is the fact that the individual and organisation have and strive for the same goal. As mentioned earlier the combination of

attraction and the following attrition creates a homogenous group of persons inside the organisation. The “goal” factor is another step in this explanation because it is the cause of attraction, the core of the creation of the homogenous group. In connection with this Schneider also states how organisations evolve to survive despite the problems commonly associated with a homogenous group; a homogenous group can often hinder creativity and evolution within the group (Hemlin et al. 2008). He mentions that different organisations take different paths of evolution due to the difference in personality and goal between different kinds of organisations and groups. As can be seen in figure 1, the goals act as the main component in controlling the three stages of the ASA cycle.

Continuing the discussion and having the problems with homogenous groups and the survival of organisations in mind, Schneider introduces the final factor of his framework. This factor is “selection” and by introducing this comes an explanation to why organisations exist despite being what we so far have called homogenous. Schneider explains the selection process as the mean of survival. People are not defined by only one characteristic, not even two or three; they are multidimensional and consist of a wide variety of characteristics. By using this fact he explains that seemingly homogenous groups of people can still have several different special competences. The people are still very similar and share many common attributes, but they each have their own speciality.

Schneider’s ASA-theories are mainly used in the discussion section of this thesis to explain how an individual and an organisation’s unmatched goals can potentially affect the respondents’ long-term willingness to stay in the particular organisation.

Figure 1



2.3 Person – Organisation fit

A study conducted by Rentsch and McEwen (2002) focuses on individuals' attraction to organisations and why they are attracted to a specific one taking into consideration of values, goals and personality characteristics. Their main hypothesis utilises the idea of a person – organisation (P-O) fit, which is based on Schneider's (1987) theory that people are attracted to organisations, particularly environments, which have attributes and goals similar to their own. The P-O fit theory is often conceptualized in different ways; a common perspective is the needs-supplies perspective, referring to the extent that organisations meet (or are believed to meet) the individual's demands (Kristof 1996) and thus instigating attraction from the individual towards the organisation. For example, an individual who has a strong need for a high pay will be attracted to organisations that offer a high pay. Another perspective is the demands-abilities perspective (Kristof 1996), suggesting that people have different abilities and organisations have different needs of abilities, with a fit occurring when the individual's level of ability matches the organisation's needs and thus causing the organisation to select the individual. Although Kristof (1996) suggests that the needs-supplies perspective is the most relevant perspective when analysing preferences, she also notes the possibility of the organisation's selection process acting as a contributor towards individual attraction towards the organisation. For example, if an individual is likely to be selected by an organisation then the individual is also likely to be more attracted towards the organisation.

Rentsch and McEwen performed an experiment of the P-O fit theory where they used three points of comparison between a person and an organisation, with two variables within each point of comparison; "personality dimensions" with the variables "need for dominance" and "need for autonomy", "values" with the variables "fairness" and "concern for others", and "goals" with the variables "prestige" and "improvement". Their results showed that persons are more attracted and prone to choosing organisations with personality variables that are similar to their own, as suggested in their hypothesis. Although support for a P-O fit taking into consideration the personality variables was evident, the same cannot be said for the remaining two points of comparison; neither the "goals" nor the "values" variables showed any clear connection to the attraction of an individual to an organisation. Rentsch and McEwen consider their results to be empirical support for the P-O fit theory and drew the conclusion that "it may *not* matter *how* the individual and the organization are similar, it matters simply that they *are* similar" (Rentsch & McEwen 2002).

Other studies (Turban & Keon 1993; Turban et al. 2001; Bretz et al. 1989; Cable & Judge 1994) have found that individual differences in personality, values and goals affect the attractiveness of employers' attributes, thus supporting Rentsch and McEwen's findings (2002) and creating a strong

case that individual and organisational values are important to consider when discussing attraction. Evidence also indicates that the P-O fit perspective is important for job choice and job search decisions (Cable & Judge 1996; Judge & Cable 1997).

The P-O fit theory is important to keep in mind when analysing students' preferences and associations with specific organisations. In this thesis, its ideas are used to develop a scoring model to measure the perceived level of P-O fit. The discussion section of this thesis also uses the P-O fit theory together with the ASA-framework to explain why individuals with certain goals and values are attracted to a particular type of organisation.

2.4 Masculine / feminine cultures

Hofstede (2001) presented four dimensions in which he described the differences between national cultures. One of these dimensions was masculinity, which was identified by asking the respondents of Hofstede's study to describe their imaginary ideal work by ranking fourteen factors in order of importance by assigning them points from one (of utmost importance) to five (of very little or no importance) (Hofstede et al. 1998). The fourteen factors that Hofstede examined were *challenge*, (living in a) *desirable area*, *earnings*, *cooperation* (with colleagues), *training*, (fringe) *benefits*, *recognition*, *physical* (working) *conditions*, *freedom*, (job) *security*, (career) *advancement*, *use of skills*, (relationship with) *manager* and *personal time* (for personal and family life). The results were used to create an index which he called the MAS-index (Hofstede 2001). The index is often mentioned as a masculinity/femininity index as the two characteristics stand as opposites of each other. According to Hofstede, cultures with a high MAS-value have an overall masculine national culture, which in turn means that they also tend to have very masculine organisational cultures. When reversed, this theory predicts that a low MAS-value is linked with a feminine culture in the country and thus also feminine organisational cultures (Hofstede et al. 1998). Masculine organisational cultures prioritise career, visible achievements and show a desire for material rewards. They also exhibit several characteristics linked to individual performance such as challenge and competition in the organisation. Furthermore, they are supposedly very result oriented with demands for initiatives and efficiency. On the other hand, feminine organisational cultures prioritise family and personal life. There is a clear focus on social interaction and the quality of relations in these organisations and the desire for personal fulfilment and belonging is ever present. The feminine organisations also place a great emphasis on the quality of the working conditions (Hofstede et al. 1998).

Hofstede (2001) discovered that Sweden attained the lowest MAS-value of all countries in his studies; only 5 points out of 100. This means that Sweden is supposedly the most feminine country in the world and therefore also ought to display the typical traits of the feminine organisational culture.

For our survey this would imply that intrinsic factors (such as personal fulfilment and high quality relations) will be ranked above extrinsic factors (such as high salary and material rewards).

Furthermore it should mean that competitive factors will not be prioritised by the respondents.

The discussion section of this thesis uses Hofstede's theories and results to explain the reasons behind the results and how they are connected (or not connected) to the Swedish culture and organisational culture. They are also used to explain how Swedish results may differ from similar surveys conducted in other countries and, to some extent, the reason for that.

The GLOBE study is a cross-cultural research study that aims to have a broader perspective than previous studies conducted on the subject of cultural differences and their impact on organisational culture (House et al. 2004). The main point of interest connecting this study with the GLOBE study is whether the findings made by Hofstede regarding masculine/feminine cultures are supported or not, especially the findings regarding the Swedish culture. The GLOBE study does not use a masculinity index; instead it uses two factors which describe the same phenomenon as Hofstede's index does. These factors are called "assertiveness" and "gender egalitarianism". Assertiveness describes how demanding, assertive and dominant people are in their relations with others (Koopman et al. 1999) and a higher score indicates a higher level of assertiveness (House et al. 2004). Gender egalitarianism describes to which degree the culture strives for gender equality as a collective effort and a higher score indicates a higher male orientation while a lower score indicates a higher female orientation (Koopman et al. 1999).

In the study Sweden received the lowest assertiveness score of all participating countries and was also found among the lowest scores of the gender egalitarianism. Although Hofstede's study and the GLOBE study are hard to compare due to their different approaches and used factors, their results point in the same direction. It is important to note though that Sweden did not receive as extreme results in the GLOBE study as in Hofstede's study; Sweden is considered feminine, but not as extreme as Hofstede suggests.

2.5 Literature criticism

The main critique against the ASA framework and especially the P-O fit theory is that a person's personality cannot be described by using a limited number of factors. This comes from the fact that a personality is multi-layered and unique in that way that no two personalities are exact copies of each other. This will in turn always lead to a certain margin of error in this kind of studies based on personal views and preconceptions about things and their own personality.

Hofstede's theories and research have been around for quite some time and has received criticism on several aspects of his theories from other authors and researchers. One aspect that has been especially criticised is Hofstede's categorisation of cultural factors which has been likened to the periodic table by Holden (2002) and that such a simplistic categorisation is unfit for describing national cultures. Holden also argues that anthropologists do not agree with Hofstede's concept of culture which according to them is out-dated and incorrect in its definition (Holden 2002). Hofstede has also received criticism regarding the basic assumptions of his study. McSweeney (2002) states that Hofstede's assumptions are flawed; general ideas and concepts of a nation's culture are based on research conducted on a very small part of its population. McSweeney also voices criticism regarding the use of a questionnaire, and contests whether such methods can really identify differences between national cultures. Another aspect which needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that Hofstede's studies were conducted quite some years ago, thus implying that the findings might not be fully applicable on the current generation of university students as cultures tend to change over time.

2.6 Previous studies

Several previous studies in the area of subject have been made. We have mainly focused on studies by Taylor, Gabris and Simo, and Lewis and Frank. Our focus towards these studies is due to that they were either conducted in a similar way as our study or they investigated factors similar to those factors we chose to include in our study.

Taylor's studies (2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2010) were conducted on a variety of different students attending Australian universities from the fields of business, humanities, art, science etc. Taylor used a large scale survey to gather data on the students' views on a number of factors linked with organisations. The students were asked how important they deemed the factors when choosing an organisation to work for. Taylor's focus on students makes her research relevant to our research problem as we examine similar populations.

The study conducted by Gabris and Simo (1995) aims to explain the concept of public motivation and they examine whether intrinsic rewards are more important than, for example, material rewards for workers in the public sector. Lewis and Frank's (2002) study tries to explain, much like the study conducted by Gabris and Simo, what motivates people working in the public sector and what types of people who want to work for it. To explain this they investigate which factors are generally preferred by the public work force. In our study we also examine intrinsic and extrinsic factors, and compare their relative level of importance and preference in both the private and public sector.

2.7 Approach

The mentioned theories are used together to create a model of analysis for this study. Schneider's ASA-framework (1987) and the P-O fit theory (Rentsch & McEwen 2002) are used to explain and analyse the match/pattern between the respondents' preconceptions of the different organisation types and their own preferences. Hofstede's theories (Hofstede et al. 1998) and research is used to explain the outcome of several of the examined factors in this study; it explains the reason for their level of importance and the potential motives behind this. Since the factors in turn are used to explain and calculate the match/pattern between the respondents and the organisations, Hofstede's theories indirectly help explain the matching.

Results from previous studies by Taylor, Gabris and Simo, Lewis and Frank etcetera is used to highlight any abnormalities in our results compared to previous studies. The main point of using this secondary approach is to give a stronger explanation of the results presented and the observed similarities and differences to previous studies concerning the same/similar subjects.

3 Methodology

In this chapter our methodology is presented. The fourteen factors that were studied are presented and split into four different groups, based on their nature. The design and execution of the survey is described and finally an explanation of the developed P-O scoring model is presented.

3.1 Research approach/method

For this thesis, we chose a deductive research approach, which implies that we used theories to construct hypotheses. We then observed a sample and either validated or falsified the hypotheses. The discussion was then based on the confirmed hypotheses (Newman & Benz 1998).

While a qualitative research method provides a more in-depth view of gathered data, it is rather limited in terms of statistical analysis and generalisations about a sample or population. The quantitative research method is based on numeric values that indicate the amount or extent of a survey variable, which in turn offers more alternatives for statistical analysis and generalisations (Anderson et al. 2009).

We thus chose a quantitative research method in the form of an anonymous survey. According to Ejlertsson (2005), a few of the benefits of using an anonymous survey are the relatively large sample sizes with regard to time, the respondents have plenty of time to answer the questions, the “interviewer effect” (the interviewer’s way of asking questions may affect the interviewee’s answers) is eliminated and sensitive questions can be answered more honestly. On the other hand, Ejlertsson also states that surveys generally give a low response rate, offer no opportunity to ask any follow-up questions and do not allow any complex questions. With both pros and cons in mind, we felt that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages and chose to conduct a survey where we examine fourteen factors that we deemed relevant to this study. They are explained and motivated later on in this chapter.

3.2 Sample

The survey used in this study was sent to a population of 519 students studying their first or second year of the Business Programme at the Gothenburg School of Business, Economics and Law. Students in year three and above were left out due to unreliable mailing lists and mixed classes (classes contain a mix of Business programme-students and other students), thus defining it as a convenience sample (Trost 2007). To be able to make statistical analysis on the respondents’ data a certain sample size had to be attained; the size of the sample is important for statistical analysis considering the validity and the margin of error of the results (Halvorsen 1992). In general a larger sample gives a better overall accuracy of the data compared to the population (Bartlett et al. 2001)

Before choosing a model for sample size determination, the type of data must first be determined. In this study the data is defined as categorical rather than continuous data, since for most parts it is divided into groups (Cochran 1977). The model which has been used in this study for determining the sample size is the one presented by Cochran (Cochran 1977), consisting of four variables. The first variable is based on the alpha level which measures the risk that the true margin of error is larger than the acceptable margin of error (Bartlett et al. 2001). The formula uses a t-value which in turn is derived from the alpha level. In this study we chose to follow the recommendations of Bartlett et al. (2001) and therefore an alpha level of 5% was used with the corresponding t-value of 1.96 (derived from a t-distribution table). The second and third variables consist of p and q , which represent the proportion of elements in a sample that do or do not have a specific attribute. The value of p should be estimated beforehand by using pilot studies or using data from previous studies (Cochran 1977). If it is not practical or possible to obtain this value, then this variable can be set to a default value of 0.5 which then maximises the estimated minimum sample (Krejcie & Morgan 1970); a principle that was used when calculating the sample size in this study. The value of q is simply calculated as the inverse of p . The fourth and final variable is the acceptable margin of error, defined as d in the formula. The acceptable margin of error used in this study is 10%. Although Bartlett et al. (2001) recommends a lower value, we chose to use a d value of 10% since we are examining patterns and therefore accept a higher margin of error as the exact values are not our focus; the relative ranking of the factors are. Also, a d value of, for example, 5% would require a sample size of 221, which is roughly two fifths of the entire examined population; something we consider to be very difficult to achieve due to the limited timeframe and boundaries of this study.

Values
$t = 1.96$ ($\alpha = 5\% = 0.05$)
$p = 0.5$
$q = 1 - p = 1 - 0.5 = 0.5$
$d = 10\% = 0.10$
Population = 519

Cochran's sample size formula in its complete form is as follows:

$$n_0 = \frac{t^2 * pq}{d^2} = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5}{0.10^2} = 96.04$$

n_0 is the required minimum sample according to Cochran's formula. However, if it exceeds 5% of the population, which in our case is $519 * 0.05 = 25.95$, Cochran's correction formula should be used to calculate the required sample size n_1 (Cochran 1977):

$$n_1 = \frac{n_0}{1 + (n_0/Population)} = \frac{96.04}{1 + (\frac{96.04}{519})} = 81.04 \approx 82$$

Cochran's correction formula thus gives a required minimum sample size of 82 (rounded up from 81.04 because it is not allowed to fall below this value to achieve the minimum sample size) when using the variable values that we have chosen for this study.

3.3 Examined factors

The fourteen factors examined in this study are subsequently presented and the reason for including each factor is explained.

3.3.1 Friendly and approachable leadership / Effective leadership

According to a previous study (Taylor 2010), management is one of the most important factors among students. Incompetent or unfriendly managers can create such a strong feeling of dissatisfaction among employees that any pleasure gained from other aspects of the work may be stifled (Taylor 2010). Friendly and approachable managers were believed to be important to facilitate good communication and self-improvement, along with improving the employee's confidence levels which in turn affects their motivation to perform (Taylor 2010). Students also believed that effective managers would raise their capacity to learn, develop their professional skills and create a more satisfying work environment, which in turn will increase work productivity. Likert (1961) supports this and believes that the style of leadership is more important than employee attitudes and interest in terms of influencing the result. Given that students exhibited a tendency to rank management as one of the most important factors in Taylor's study (2010), we have chosen to include this factor when studying our target group as we also anticipate a high ranking of management factors in our survey. Due to "good" management being such a broad definition, we have chosen to divide it into two separate factors: friendly and approachable leadership, and effective leadership. These "sub-factors" were chosen as we believe that they cover the main points of "good" management.

3.3.2 Good working conditions

According to Taylor (2008a) good working conditions can be associated with good colleague relationships, physical working conditions, flexible working hours and the opportunity to contribute to important decisions. Taylor's studies (2008b) shows that social relations in the workplace provided "opportunities for building or enhancing both social and professional aspects of their lives, thus contributing to a greater sense of belonging and personal worth" and created a family-like environment. Good working relationships can also be used by colleagues and management to express intrinsic factors such as recognition, trust and loyalty (Frey 1997). Taylor (2005a) found good working conditions to be one of the highest ranked working attributes with a special emphasis on good working relationships and flexible working hours. Since Taylor (2005a) found working conditions to be such an important factor among students when choosing a future employer, we

have chosen to include it in our survey to see whether our results can confirm that it is of high importance to our population.

3.3.3 High salary

Previous studies (Taylor 2005a; Latham & Locke 1979) claim that the receipt of income is the main reason for seeking employment. Students that favour the private sector are more concerned about a high salary than their counterparts who favour the public sector (Taylor 2005a). Blank's study (1985) of American workers shows that public sector salaries tend to be higher than the private sector for employees with a high level of education, however several comparative studies conducted on workers in both the private and public sectors (Gabris & Simo 1995; Karl & Sutton 1998; Newstrom et al. 1976) clearly show that workers in the private sector tend to rank the importance of a high salary significantly higher than public sector workers, thus contradicting Blank's study. Based on this, we expect our respondents to rank high salary as one of the most important factors and have thus chosen to include it in our study.

3.3.4 Material rewards

Material rewards are according to Cable and Judge (1994) closely connected with the personal attribute materialism and they also mention in their report that people having this trait more often than not aim for organisations which can fulfil this need. It is important to note that material rewards are placed on top of one's salary; for example it can be a monetary bonus or a material possession like a watch that is awarded for exceptional performance or loyalty. The reason for us to include this factor in our study is mainly because we think it will show a significant importance among the respondents' view on what is important for when choosing a job. Material rewards are also a factor that is used in almost all the previous similar studies we have found on the subject.

3.3.5 Social status

According to a study conducted by Taylor (2008b) the tangible side of return on investment from a University education is an increased social status and a higher salary. She also mentions that the students seem to have the view that "working gives me status and prestige". Studies made by Rainey (1982) and Wittmer (1991) reach the conclusion that workers striving for a position in a business organisation place a larger emphasis on social status and prestige than their counterparts aiming for government positions. From these results we have come to the conclusion that the aspect of social status needs to be taken into consideration in our study, as it ought to show a fairly high ranking by students predisposed towards private business organisations.

3.3.6 Job availability

Gabris and Simo's (1995) article about public sector motivation initially considers job availability as a primary motivational factor when choosing a job, but they find that overall the job availability does not seem to be of any significant importance, however almost a third of all respondents in the non-profit sector chose job availability as the main reason for choosing their current line of work. Considering Gabris and Simo's (1995) findings, we predict that job availability will be of lesser importance to the respondents of our study.

3.3.7 Job security

Several studies have been made on the subject of job security and how individuals value this factor when they chose an organisation to work for. Lewis and Frank (2002) make the conclusion that security searching individuals are more prone to take a job in the public sector than in the private sector. In a study conducted by Karl and Sutton (1998) one of the most important factors for taking a decision about employment is job security. They also found that contrary to the result of the study made by Lewis and Frank (2002) there is hardly any difference between the public and private sectors. In other words, the respondents are as likely to take employment in the public sector as the private sector as long as they feel there is a low risk of losing the job once it is taken.

We think that the respondents of our survey will value job security as highly important. We also think that they will associate the factor more with the public sector than the private sector; in our experience private organisations are more prone to restructure their organisation to achieve more effective constructions and an opportunity to decrease the number of employees.

3.3.8 Good image

Gatewood et al. (1993) found empirical evidence in their study showing that the image of an organisation is very important for a potential employee when they take the decision whether they should apply for a job in the organisation or not. In their study they also found that this image is based on the exposure to the organisation, mostly via personal experiences, use of products and advertisements. Cable and Turban (2003) chose to use a perspective usually associated with marketing when describing and explaining the effects of the image of an organisation, the brand-equity perspective. They say that:

“The brand-equity literature suggests that brands are important to consumers because (a) brand names offer signals that consumers use to make inferences about the attributes of the product, and (b) consumers endeavor to associate themselves with certain brands to improve their self-esteem.”

They also mention that the brand-equity perspective supports the notion of people accepting employment with a lower salary just to get the chance of working for an organisation with a good image. From the studies mentioned the conclusion is quite clear; image is an important factor for applicants and therefore we chose to use it in our survey.

3.3.9 Internal career opportunities

Taylor (2008b) mentions several factors that emerged as being important in the report based on a study conducted on Australian university students during 2005 (Taylor 2005a). One of them is career development and opportunities. One of the respondents in Taylor's (2008b) report expresses it this way:

"Because I need to build my career, I want a job which could give me an opportunity for promotion."

This suggests that the perceived levels of career development opportunities in an organisation could give it an edge in attracting potential employees to it, thus making it relevant to examine whether it is of importance to the respondents and if they associate it with the different types of organisations.

3.3.10 Support

The factor "support" might be a bit difficult to define clearly but we still think it is a vital factor to have in our study. A typical trait of the supportive organisational culture is according to Loden (1985) that it focuses on intrinsic rewards (emotional rewards) rather than extrinsic rewards (material rewards), which is consistent with Catanzaro et al's (2010) claims that support is an attribute that is strongly associated with "feminine" organisations and cultures. Furthermore, Maier (Maier 1999) says that the "feminine" organisational cultures tend to support a balance between family and career. Masculine organisational cultures tend to stress ego goals such as earnings or advancement while feminine organisational cultures tend to stress social goals such as recognition or cooperation (Hofstede et al. 1998). According to Hofstede (1998) the Swedish people have the most feminine culture in the world, where both men and women are generally "modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life" and we therefore assume that Swedish students will rank feminine factors such as support of great importance when considering a future employer and have thus chosen to examine the support factor in this study.

3.3.11 Emotional rewards

Emotional rewards are rewards that, as the name implies, are connected to emotional satisfaction and well-being. They serve as a counterweight to the material rewards in the aspect that you cannot "touch them". In Taylor's (2010) study a few comments that define these kinds of rewards can be found - "It doesn't matter how much you get paid; if you don't enjoy your work, you will be unhappy

and frustrated with yourself.” She also mentions that the people she studied found it “fulfilling to give something back to the society”. A more general comment on that statement is that some people (if not most) feel good when they do things that they receive appreciation for. The reason for us to include this factor in our study is partly due to Hofstede’s (1998) valuation of Sweden as the most feminine country in the world, thus with a focus on intrinsic factors such as recognition and cooperation, and also partly due to the aforementioned fact that it serves as a counterweight to the material rewards. According to Hofstede’s (1998) results, we ought to find a strong relationship between Swedish students and a high ranking of emotional rewards and we thus include this factor in our study to confirm this.

3.3.12 Self-improvement

The definition of self-improvement is, according to Oxford English Dictionary, “improvement of oneself, one's character, etc., by one's own efforts”. This can include thoughts and feelings on a basic level like: “I enjoy learning, simple as that” (Taylor 2010). However, it can also be used in a broader perspective taking personal growth into consideration as a means to improve personal success in both the private aspects of life, family for example, and the public aspects, for example career. Previous studies (Taylor 2005a) indicate that self-improvement should be ranked high by business students.

3.3.13 Challenging work

A study conducted by Gabris and Simo (1995) shows that challenging work is perceived as exciting by both private and public sector workers. The survey also shows that challenging work was the major factor that made employees choose and continue their line of work. Karl & Sutton’s (1998) study is consistent with these findings and shows that interesting work is ranked third in importance among their respondents, with public sector employees ranking it higher than private sector employees. From this information we have constructed a hypothesis that the majority of our respondents will associate challenging work with the private sector, rather than the public sector. We also predict that our respondents will rank challenging work as a factor of high importance.

3.4 Groups

The factors were divided into four different groups based on their nature; management, working conditions, extrinsic and intrinsic. These groups were mainly derived from Taylor's (2008a) grouping of similar factors.

- Management
 - Friendly and approachable leadership
 - Effective leadership
- Working conditions
 - Good working conditions
- Extrinsic
 - High salary
 - Material rewards
 - Social status
 - Job availability
 - Job security
 - Good image
 - Internal career opportunities
- Intrinsic
 - Support
 - Emotional rewards
 - Self-improvement
 - Challenging work

The distribution of factors amongst these groups is slightly skewed; the extrinsic group has considerably more factors than any other group. The reason for this is that extrinsic factors are more concrete factors while the other groups (management, working conditions and intrinsic) contain more abstract factors. Concrete factors are easier to define and relay to the respondents; they leave little room for interpretation. Abstract factors are considerably harder to define and relay to the respondents.

3.5 Survey

The survey was conducted digitally through a web-based form on a webpage to collect quantitative data. The results were stored in a database for further analysis. In the survey, each factor was accompanied by a short explanation to clarify what was meant by the term(s) used (Appendix 1). The digital form was chosen due to its inexpensive nature and ease of distribution.

Students were first asked to enter some basic demographic data to validate whether our sample can represent the population. Age, gender and current term on the Business programme were the most basic demographic data we gathered about the respondents. We also gathered information on whether the respondent was currently working in either the private or public sector (or both) while studying, as we believed that there might be a connection between the students' current work situation and their preferential patterns.

They were then asked to rank the previously listed factors in order of importance when choosing their future employer. This was done by ranking each factor relative to the others.

According to the Swedish accounting law (Årsredovisningslag (1995:1554) 1995), organisations with less than 50 employees are defined as small while organisations with 50 or more employees are defined as large. Using this accounting definition, each sector can then be divided into two types of organisations based on the number of employees. This left us with four types of organisations; small private, small public, large private and large public. We refrained from giving the respondents any specific examples of organisations within these four categories as we believe it might affect their answers; respondents may have had a good or bad experience with a specific private company, thus giving us their views of that particular company instead of their views of private organisations in general. We presented the four types of organisations and asked the students to value how strongly they associated the different preference factors with each type of organisation:

- A small private organisation, defined as a company with less than 50 employees
- A large private organisation, defined as a company with 50 or more employees
- small public organisation, defined as a public authority with less than 50 employees, such as a local council office
- large public organisation, defined as a public authority with 50 or more employees, such as a state authority

Finally, we asked the students which of the four organisations they would prefer as a future employer.

Prior to publishing the survey, a pilot study on a group of 10 students was conducted consisting of four men and six women, a similar gender distribution to the population as a whole and thus also representative. According to Ejlertsson (2005) a representative pilot study of at least 10 individuals help the query designers to eliminate any confusing phrasing and make sure that the respondents interpret the questions in the manner intended by the query designers.

After receiving constructive critique from the participants in the pilot and adjusting the survey, it was sent via e-mail to students studying their first or second year at the Business programme at the Gothenburg School of Business, Economics and Law. Students in year three and above were left out due to unreliable mailing lists and mixed classes (classes contain a mix of Business programme-students and other students).

According to Trost (2007), having the option of choosing "I do not know" in a survey can pose a problem as too many respondents tend to choose that answer in order to avoid taking a position on a question. Bearing that in mind, we have chosen to avoid using that option in our survey, thus compelling the respondents to take a stand on each question.

Ejlertsson (2005) mentions that a reward can be offered to participants a higher response rate if a survey is expected to give a low response rate (which is common for digital surveys). Ejlertsson also states that cinema tickets are a common reward in surveys aimed at young people. Therefore, to ensure a high response rate the responding students were entered into a lottery with two cinema tickets as a prize if they left their e-mail address at the end of the survey. Entering their e-mail was optional and the students were informed that their answers were strictly confidential and would never be associated with their e-mail address. Students who left their e-mail address also had the option of receiving a copy of this study via e-mail when it was completed. Furthermore, students were asked whether they would consider participating in an interview regarding the same subject as the survey. Although interviews would be useful to delve deeper into the preference patterns of our respondents, the limited timeframe for this thesis meant that we had to refrain from using this possibility.

The survey was sent to the entire population of 519 students, whereof 314 students were studying year one of the Business programme and 205 were studying year two of the Business programme (60.5 % and 39.5 % respectively). After 2 weeks we had only received 63 answers, so a reminder was sent out via e-mail to the entire population; this resulted in an additional 20 answers. The 83 responding students followed this distribution pattern with 55.4% studying year one and 44.6% studying year two of the Business programme (Table 1). The programme has a gender distribution of 56 % women and 44 % men (Universum 2010). The respondents in the survey had a distribution of 62.7% women and 37.3 % men, showing roughly the same pattern in both years (Table 2). The demographical data also shows that the majority of the respondents are between 20 and 24 years old, which is in line with Statistics Sweden's data of the age distribution of students on graduate education level in Sweden (see pie chart of age distribution below). We thus draw the conclusion that our sample of 83 students represents the population of 519 students studying year one or two

of the Business programme. However, since only 8 respondents were predisposed toward the public sector (as compared to the 75 that were predisposed toward the private sector), it is difficult to draw any statistically correct conclusions about this sub-group in the entire population.

Year – Table 1

Year	Frequency	Percentage
1	46	55.4
2	37	44.6

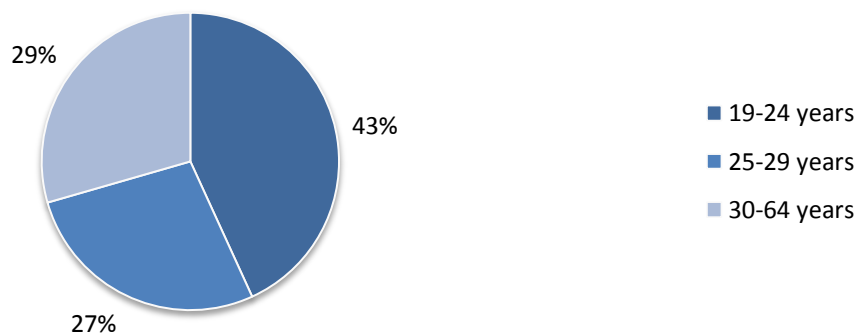
Gender – Table 2

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	31	37.3
Female	52	62.7
Male – Year 1	19	41.3
Female – Year 1	27	58.7
Male – Year 2	12	32.4
Female – Year 2	25	67.6

Job alongside studies – Table 3

Job	Frequency	Percentage
Private sector	41	49.4
Public sector	5	6.00
Both sectors	5	6.00
None	32	38.6

Age distribution of Swedish students studying on undergraduate education level (2007)



Source: Studerande som läser på grundläggande hörscoleutbildning med arbete vårterminen 2007 efter arbete, ålder och kön. (Statistics Sweden 2007)

The collected data is extensive and can be analysed in many different ways as it contains many different aspects. In this study we have performed a limited analysis in order to reflect the purpose of the study and create useful results. While analysing respondents' ranking of organisational factors we chose to group the respondents by organisational preference, comparing the groups to one another rather than viewing the sample as a whole, thus providing information on how the importance of different organisational factors is linked with organisational preferences. In the analysis of organisational associations, we chose to look at the sample in total in order to get the general preconceptions of organisational types, rather than analysing organisationally predisposed individuals' preconceptions of their preferred organisation type and thus creating biased results; respondents will most likely have favourable opinions about their own preferred organisation, thus rendering such results useless.

3.6 P-O fit scoring model

In order to measure the level of perceived P-O fit we developed a scoring model. This scoring model is used to predict which type of organisation the respondents ought to choose based on their ranking of the factors and their associations of the factors with the different types of organisations. For each individual, a score was calculated by multiplying the reverse ranking of a certain factor by the strength of its association with a particular organisation type. The reverse ranking thus serves as a weight for the association value, defining how much that factor will affect the level of perceived P-O fit. The sum of all the calculated factor products for a specific organisation type shows the level of perceived P-O fit for a respondent – a higher score equals a higher perceived P-O fit. The formula for these calculations can be expressed in the following way:

$$Score_{Organisation\ type} = \sum_{n=1}^N (N + 1 - Rank_n) * Association_{n,Organisation\ type}$$

This process was then repeated for all organisational types (including combined scores for the entire private and public sectors, separately). The mean scores were calculated and grouped by the respondents' preference of organisation. In an ideal scenario, the respondents should have the highest P-O fit with the organisation type that they prefer. An example of the P-O fit scoring model calculation can be found in Appendix 2.

3.7 Reliability and validity

Halvorsen (1992) defines reliability as how trustworthy the collected data is. If the reliability is high then independent collections of data should give the same results. A high reliability guarantees that the data is trustworthy and also collected and registered correctly (Halvorsen 1992).

Trost (2007) mentions four different aspects to consider when evaluating the reliability of a survey/study: congruence, precision, objectivity and constancy. Congruence refers to the similarity of questions that aim to measure the same thing – our survey had almost identical questions (only varied by the type of organisation) and answer options for the association sections of the survey. The digital survey only allowed one answer per question and subsequently did not allow the respondents to skip any questions (as compared to paper surveys where multiple answers can accidentally be filled in and questions can be skipped), thus giving our survey a high precision. A survey is fairly objective by nature – there is no human contact involved to affect the respondent's answers. Constancy addresses the time factor and assumes that the responses will not differ if performed at different time; the relatively small timeframe designated for this thesis limits the ability to test this, however we do not think that the responses would differ considerably if the survey was conducted at a different time.

According to Trost (2007), validity refers to how well the survey measures what it is designed to measure. Using a pilot study method, we have fine-tuned the survey questions to avoid systematic errors, thus increasing the validity of our data (Ejlertsson 2005).

4 Results

In this chapter the results from the survey are presented and analysed as a basis for the discussion of this thesis.

4.1 Preferred organisation

When asked which organisation they would prefer as a future employer (out of the four presented organisations), table 4 show that more than half of the respondents answered that they would prefer a large private organisation. Two fifths of the respondents would prefer a small private organisation while only 9.6% preferred a public organisation whereof a 3.6% and 6.0% for small and large public organisations respectively.

The results from the P-O fit scoring model indicate a connection between respondents' preferred organisation and their score preference towards the factors associated with that particular organisation. Respondents predisposed toward the large public and private organisations have the strongest perceived P-O fit with those respective organisations according to the scores in the model. For the respondents predisposed toward small organisations (private and public) the result is not the same; these respondents indicate a greater P-O fit with the large types of organisations in their respective sector, rather than the small types of organisations.

Preferred organisation – Table 4

Organisation	Frequency	Percentage
Small Private Organisation	32	38.6
Small Public Organisation	3	3.6
Large Private Organisation	43	51.8
Large Public Organisation	5	6.0

P-O fit scoring model – Table 5

Organisation preference	Organisation association					
	Small private	Small public	Large private	Large public	Private (small and large combined)	Public (small and large combined)
Small private	675	516	715	564	695	540
Small public	618	748	678	810	648	779
Large private	658	524	724	583	691	554
Large public	704	617	647	717	676	667
Private (small and large combined)	665	521	720	575	693	548
Public (Small and large combined)	672	666	659	752	665	709

A higher value indicates a higher degree of perceived P-O fit between the respondents and the organisation type.

4.2 Management

The management factors were not ranked in the absolute top but were still ranked in the upper-middle segment. However, looking at the public sector alone, we can see a substantial increase in the ranking of management factors, moving to the upper segment with a mean value of almost 2 points below the entire sample's mean. The private sector (both small and large individually) showed no significant deviations from the entire sample.

In general, the management factors were most strongly associated with small private organisations, followed by large private organisations. Public organisations were only moderately associated with management factors. Friendly and approachable leadership was much more highly associated with small private organisations (with a mean below 8) than the other organisation types which had mean values slightly below 6. Effective leadership was most strongly associated with large private organisations, followed by small private organisations and lastly public organisations (both large and small) significantly trailing far behind the private organisations.

4.3 Working conditions

The top choice among the respondents, regardless of which sector they were predisposed towards, was by far good working conditions; in the whole sample it had a mean that was 0.5 points higher than the second highest ranked factor. Good working conditions were highly associated with small private organisations, moderately associated with large private organisations and rather poorly associated with public organisations.

4.4 Extrinsic

Overall, high salary was ranked as the fifth most important factor, however, respondents that were predisposed towards the public sector ranked it as the fourth least important factor with a mean value of 2.0 higher than the sample mean. Material rewards were consistently ranked in the bottom segment by the respondents, regardless of which sector they were predisposed towards.

The social status factor was overall ranked in the middle-bottom segment, however the respondents predisposed towards the public sector ranked it considerably lower (with a mean value of almost 3.2 lower than the sample mean) than their private sector counterparts. Good image was ranked in the bottom segment for all organisational types. It was clearly more strongly associated with the large private organisation than the other organisational types, with an association value of more than 1.6 points higher than the second highest organisation type. Internal career opportunities were ranked in the top three overall. However, respondents predisposed towards the private sector tended to rank it slightly higher than their public sector counterparts.

In general, job availability was ranked in the bottom. The respondents that were predisposed towards the public sector ranked job availability as much more important (with a mean value of approximately 1.4 lower than the sample mean) than their private sector counterparts who ranked it as one of the least important factors. Job availability was also associated slightly stronger with public (especially large) than private organisations by the respondents.

Job security was ranked similarly by respondents, regardless of which sector they were predisposed towards, with an overall mean value of 7.87. The results also showed that the respondents had a stronger association of job security with public organisations than with private organisations, especially with the larger public organisations. It is worth noting that job security was by far valued as the most strongly associated factor compared to the other factors within both public organisations.

Extrinsic factors were generally highly associated with large private organisations while only moderately associated with the other organisation types, with the exception of the job security and job availability factors that were highly associated with both types of public organisations.

4.5 Intrinsic

Overall, challenging work was ranked in the middle segment. Respondents predisposed towards small private organisations ranked this factor as the third highest, which is considerably higher than the rest of the respondents. Furthermore, the respondents showed a stronger association with challenging work and large private organisations than the other organisational types.

Respondents predisposed towards the large private organisation ranked support in the bottom segment while respondents predisposed towards small private and public organisations ranked it in the middle segment. Support was strongly associated with small private organisations, but only moderately associated with large private or public organisations.

Emotional rewards were ranked in the middle-bottom segment by respondents predisposed towards all of our organisational types. The factor was by far more strongly associated with the small private organisation than with the large private or public organisations; it had a mean value of almost 1.7 points higher than the other organisations. Self-improvement was ranked highly by all respondents, however it was ranked slightly higher in relation to the other factors by those predisposed towards the private sector than those predisposed towards the public sector. Self-improvement was also associated slightly higher with the private sector than with the public sector.

Intrinsic factors were in general more strongly associated with private organisations (both small and large) than public organisations (large and small) by the respondents, however the difference was minor.

4.6 Ranking and association tables

Ranking – Table 6

Factor	Small Private	Large Private	Small Public	Large Public	Private (small and large combined)	Public (small and large combined)	Total (private and public combined)
Friendly and approachable leadership	6.88 ⁴	6.77 ⁵	4.67 ³	5.20 ³	6.81 ⁶	5.00 ³	6.64 ⁴
Effective leadership	7.09 ⁷	7.40 ⁸	5.00 ⁵	4.80 ¹	7.27 ⁷	4.88 ²	7.04 ⁷
Internal career opportunities	6.91 ⁵	6.02 ³	4.33 ²	7.20 ⁹	6.40 ³	6.13 ⁵	6.37 ³
Support	7.88 ¹⁰	9.16 ¹²	8.00 ⁸	6.00 ⁴	8.61 ¹¹	6.75 ⁶	8.43 ¹⁰
Material rewards	8.63 ¹²	9.28 ¹³	9.33 ¹⁰	12.20 ¹⁴	9.00 ¹³	11.13 ¹³	9.20 ¹³
Emotional rewards	7.66 ⁹	7.37 ⁷	9.33 ¹⁰	7.00 ⁷	7.49 ⁸	7.88 ⁹	7.53 ⁸
Self-improvement	6.19 ¹	5.56 ²	4.67 ³	6.00 ⁴	5.83 ²	5.50 ⁴	5.80 ²
Good working conditions	6.44 ²	4.51 ¹	4.00 ¹	5.00 ²	5.33 ¹	4.63 ¹	5.27 ¹
Social status	8.47 ¹¹	8.12 ⁹	12.33 ¹⁴	11.40 ¹³	8.27 ¹⁰	11.75 ¹⁴	8.60 ¹¹
Job security	7.63 ⁸	8.19 ¹⁰	7.67 ⁷	7.00 ⁷	7.95 ⁹	7.25 ⁸	7.88 ⁹
Good image	8.66 ¹³	9.12 ¹¹	11.33 ¹³	9.20 ¹¹	8.92 ¹²	10.00 ¹²	9.02 ¹²
High salary	6.91 ⁵	6.19 ⁴	10.33 ¹²	7.80 ¹⁰	6.49 ⁴	8.75 ¹¹	6.71 ⁵
Challenging work	6.56 ³	6.86 ⁶	8.67 ⁹	6.00 ⁴	6.73 ⁵	7.00 ⁷	6.76 ⁶
Job availability	9.13 ¹⁴	10.47 ¹⁴	5.33 ⁶	10.20 ¹²	9.89 ¹⁴	8.38 ¹⁰	9.75 ¹⁴

Lower score is better, with the value of 1 being the highest rank and 14 being the lowest. The superscript shows the factors' relative ranking order compared to the other factors in the same column. The data was grouped by the respondents' preference of organisation type, private or public sector, and totals.

Association – Table 7

Group/Factor	Small Private	Small Public	Large Private	Large Public
Management	7.27	5.17	6.64	5.52
Working conditions	7.30	5.69	6.30	6.11
Extrinsic	5.49	4.90	7.12	5.65
Intrinsic	6.89	5.31	6.40	5.69
Management				
Friendly and approachable leadership	7.99	5.76	5.86	5.77
Effective leadership	6.55	4.57	7.41	5.27
Working conditions				
Good working conditions	7.30	5.69	6.30	6.11
Extrinsic				
High salary	5.59	3.60	7.52	4.48
Material rewards	4.64	3.59	7.13	4.42
Social status	5.34	3.94	7.27	4.90
Job availability	6.02	6.36	6.35	6.83
Job security	5.93	7.41	6.41	7.64
Good image	5.39	4.73	7.08	5.41
Internal career opportunities	5.52	4.65	8.05	5.86
Intrinsic				
Support	7.13	5.64	5.89	5.95
Emotional rewards	7.31	5.41	5.70	5.46
Self-improvement	6.57	5.04	6.81	5.59
Challenging work	6.55	5.16	7.19	5.75

Higher score is better, with the value of one being “weakly associated” and ten being “strongly associated”. The superscript show the factors’ relative ranking compared to the other factors in the same column. The data shows the average of all respondents’ answers.

4.7 Inconclusive results

Although we chose to examine the respondents current work situation in relation to their preferences and associations, we did not find any clear observable patterns and thus chose not to perform any deeper analysis or discussion on this subject. However, it is still briefly mentioned in the discussion.

5 Discussion

In this chapter the results from chapter four are further analysed and discussed.

5.1 Preferred organisation

In a similar study by Taylor (2005a), business students placed large private organisations as the most preferred employer by far, followed by small private and public organisations. Overall (including several other various education disciplines), Taylor's (2005a) respondents also placed large private organisations as their most preferred employer, but immediately followed by public (state and federal) and then small private organisations. Consequently, Taylor concluded that business students tend to have a weaker preference towards public organisations than students from other disciplines. As this slant towards large private organisations can also be observed among the business students in our results, we conclude that our study validates that aspect of Taylor's study.

The respondents' P-O fit in the scoring model indicates that there is a perceived high level of P-O fit between respondents that were predisposed towards the large organisations (private and public, individually) and their respective sector counterparts. This means that those respondents prefer the organisation with which they have a lot of matching goals and attributes. However, respondents that were predisposed towards smaller organisations, both private and public, had a higher P-O fit with their corresponding large organisations. At first, this might contradict the ASA-framework or P-O fit theories, however, one must remember that people are multidimensional and consist of a wide variety of characteristics (Schneider 1987) and these respondents could have possibly based their decision of organisational preference on a factor that was not included in this study.

5.2 Management

Our prediction of management factors being highly ranked has to some degree been supported by the survey. This study shows reasonable support for Taylor's claims that good management is important for students (Taylor 2010), whether it be friendly and approachable or efficient leadership. Taylor (2010) states that management factors should be ranked higher than extrinsic and intrinsic factors which is supported by our study as most extrinsic factors were ranked in the bottom (except for high salary and internal career opportunities which were ranked in the top four) and intrinsic factors were ranked in the middle segment when looking at the entire sample. However, the results are not as clear as we first expected them to be. That the public sector predisposed respondents' considerably higher ranking of management factors than their private sector counterparts is unexpected, as the results show that the public sector is only moderately associated with the management factors. Meanwhile, the respondents that were predisposed toward the private sector showed a considerably lower ranking of management factors, which according to the P-O fit theory,

would indicate that the respondents would also have weak associations between these factors and the private sector. However, this was not the case as the respondents instead showed a strong association between them.

Interestingly, friendly and approachable leadership was highly associated with small private organisations. Taylor states that friendly and approachable managers are important to facilitate good communication and self-improvement (Taylor 2010). Our results are inconclusive on this matter and do not show any clear evidence to support Taylor's observed relationships between respondents' organisational associations of friendly and approachable leadership, and self-improvement. The small private organisation's drastically higher association with friendly and approachable leadership can most likely be explained by the fact that small organisations usually tend to have flatter organisational structures (less hierarchy), resulting in less bureaucracy and organisational distance to the top- and middle-level management. Meanwhile, the effective leadership's strong association with large private organisations indicates that the respondents believe that large private organisations have a lot of efficient managers. According to the P-O fit theory, this means that respondents who are very efficient by nature will be attracted towards large private organisations, where they believe that their attributes will be matched by the organisation's attributes.

5.3 Working Conditions

The top choice among our respondents and thereby the most vital factor according to them was the good working conditions factor, as presented in our results. Thus, the results also support Taylor's (2005a) findings that "good working conditions" is the most important factor for students when considering a future employer. Swedish laws regarding working environment are among the strictest in the European Union (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 2011), thus effectively raising the Swedish population's minimum level of accepted standards regarding the work environment. Since it is by far the most important factor for our respondents, it is somewhat surprising to see that the respondents only perceive it to be highly associated with small private organisations while large private and public organisations show only moderate associations with good working conditions. The ASA-theory would suggest that since the majority of our respondents preferred the large private organisation, they will only obtain a mediocre P-O fit if their preconceptions about the large private organisation turn out to be true. In turn, this would make them more likely to leave the large private organisation shortly after joining (when realising that their most important factor only partly exists in their chosen organisation). Attrition is however not guaranteed since all factors must be considered to some degree when evaluating a P-O fit (Schneider 1987); for example if an organisation fulfils three out of four top ranked factors, the individual might

consider staying within the organisation. We believe that the substantially higher ranking of good working conditions compared to the other factors indicates that it will be one of the most vital factors to consider.

5.4 Extrinsic

Amongst the extrinsic factors we predicted that the high salary factor would be ranked in the absolute top of our survey, since this was evident in several previous studies (Taylor 2005a; Latham & Locke 1979). However, our results showed that this was not the case as it was only ranked as the fifth most important overall. While being ranked as the fifth most important factor out of fourteen is not bad, it still contradicts the results of previous studies. Taylor specifically observed that business students ranked high salary considerably higher than any other educational disciplines. We believe that the reason behind our contradictory result is the Swedish feminine culture. The aforementioned previous studies were conducted in significantly more masculine countries, which in turn show that these countries value extrinsic rewards such as high salary much higher than feminine cultures that value intrinsic rewards (Hofstede 2001).

One factor in particular that provided an unexpected result was the material rewards factor. We expected it to be ranked at least in the middle-upper segment but it was consistently ranked in the bottom by all respondents. One reason might be the uncertainty that comes with a bonus as compared to a steady income. Since high salary was ranked in the top segment we might be able to draw the conclusion that the respondents prefer a steady and certain income over unreliable and variable bonuses. As the name of the factor implies, rewards are usually given in return for achieving specific goals or overall good performance at work. Performance based rewards are common in competitive organisations, which according to Hofstede are typical in masculine cultures.

As mentioned in our results, the factor good image was moderately associated by the respondents to all organisation types except the large private organisation where it had a considerably higher association. The reason for its higher association with the large private organisation can be explained by Gatewood et al's (1993) hypothesis that the image of an organisation is based on its exposure. The majority of the organisations that frequently visit the university where the study was conducted are large private organisations (Gadden 2011). This gives them an increased exposure towards the respondents which in turn might have led to the higher association of good image with large private organisations. Gatewood et al. (1993) also mention that the image is of utmost importance when choosing an organisation to work for. This statement is supported by our study which shows that a large proportion of the respondents would prefer working for a large private organisation.

Respondents predisposed towards the public sector ranked social status as being of considerably lower importance than their private sector counterparts, thus supporting previous evidence (Rainey 1982; Wittmer 1991) that employees in the private sector place a larger emphasis on social status and prestige than public sector employees.

The results showed that job availability was overall ranked in the bottom, just as anticipated, and that the respondents predisposed to the public sector ranked job availability as much more important than their private sector counterparts. Job availability was also associated slightly stronger with the public sector than the private sector. According to the study conducted by Gabris and Simo (1995) employees in the public sector have chosen their job due to availability more often than those in the private sector. This might imply that the public sector has greater job availability than the private sector and therefore explain why the respondents associate job availability slightly more strongly with the public sector.

5.5 Intrinsic

Hofstede's (2001) results imply that intrinsic factors in general should be ranked high by our respondents, since they are linked with feminine organisational cultures (Loden 1985). However, this was only partly supported by our results as intrinsic factors were spread out in our ranking list, often with a general focus around the middle segment of the list. The respondents' preconceptions of the organisation types follow this pattern and on average only show moderate associations of intrinsic factors with all of the organisational types. Only one of the intrinsic factors matches Hofstede's predictions about the feminine Swedish culture. The feminine factor of self-improvement was ranked high by almost all of the respondents making it the second most important factor overall and subsequently placing it in front of the other intrinsic factors in our results. This supports evidence found in previous studies (Taylor 2005a). It was not associated particularly strongly with any of the organisational types though, which indicates a bad P-O fit if the respondents' preconceptions turn out to be correct.

Hofstede (2001) defines the Swedish culture as the most feminine in the world. In combination with other studies that strongly associate support with feminine organisations (Catanzaro et al. 2010), Hofstede's theory would suggest that support should be ranked high by the respondents. This however was not the case as respondents predisposed towards the large private organisation ranked support in the bottom segment while respondents predisposed towards small private and public organisations ranked it in the middle segment. Hofstede's theory also suggests that the factor emotional rewards – which Hofstede defines as highly feminine – should be ranked high by the respondents. However, it was ranked in the middle-bottom segment by respondents predisposed

towards all of our organisational types, which contradicts Hofstede's theory. Nonetheless, support and emotional rewards were strongly associated with the small private organisation. While we do not have a clear explanation for this discrepancy, we believe that it can possibly be explained by the fact that many small Swedish companies are family owned, thus the respondents might believe they are more likely to create a family-like environment which encourages emotional rewards and supportive behaviour.

Our results showed that our respondents did not follow the predictions of Gabris and Simo (1995) that challenging work should be of utmost importance. There were a few exceptions though; the respondents who were predisposed towards the small private organisations ranked challenging work higher than the rest of the respondents. Our results clearly show that the respondents as a whole have a considerably higher association for the factor challenging work with the large private organisations, which would suggest that the respondents seeking challenging work should be predisposed towards the large private organisations and not the small private organisations, which is contradicted by our results. A plausible reason for this discrepancy is that many of the respondents do not have a great amount of prior work experience due to their young age and also approximately two fifths do not currently have a job alongside their studies, while Gabris and Simo's respondents all belonged to the workforce. Thus, we conclude that the potential lack of any substantial amounts of previous work experience may have had an effect on the outcome of the challenging work factor.

6 Conclusion

In this chapter the conclusions and recommendations for further studies are presented. We also attempt to answer the research question presented in the introduction of this thesis.

6.1 Main findings

The current sample size was too small to draw any statistically correct conclusions about the entire population of business programme students. Therefore we draw our conclusions based on the respondents in the sample and consider these as indicators of the entire population's organisational preferences and preconceptions.

The aim of the study was mainly to create a better understanding of the organisational preferences and preconceptions towards future employers of students attending the business programme at the Gothenburg School of Business, Economics and Law. Throughout this whole study fourteen different factors were analysed and discussed, both in terms of importance to the individual and the association with different organisational types, in order to determine whether there were any clear patterns that emerged among the respondents. The factors were grouped into four categories with the purpose of simplifying the discussion. The respondents' preference of organisation was also examined.

The majority of the respondents exhibited a predisposition towards large private organisations followed by small private organisations, which is in line with other studies' evidence of business students' organisational preferences (Taylor 2005a). Only a small fraction of the respondents had a predisposition towards the public sector.

Management factors were ranked as being moderately important, with a slightly higher ranking in the public sector than the private sector. On the other hand, they also showed a stronger association with the private sector (especially with the small private organisation) than the public sector. This would indicate that these factors lower the P-O fit of our respondents and their preferred organisations. We also discovered that the management factors differ from the results of previous studies. We believe this might be due to the differences in population and the sample of respondents.

We found that good working conditions were perceived as the most important factor to the respondents, however they were only perceived to exist in any greater capacity in small private organisations. This may indicate that the public or large private organisations either lack this attribute or have not communicated it properly to our respondents.

Extrinsic factors proved to be highly associated with large private organisations in our study while only moderately associated with small private and public organisations, with the exception of job availability and job security, factors that are traditionally associated with public organisations, which were most highly associated with the public sector by our respondents. High salary was not ranked as high among our respondents as previous studies might suggest (Taylor 2005a; Latham & Locke 1979), which is most likely due to the Swedish feminine culture (Hofstede 2001). It was however ranked as the third most important factor for respondents predisposed towards the private sector. Material rewards were also ranked considerably lower than we expected and based on Hofstede's classification of Sweden as the most feminine culture in the world, we thus draw the conclusion that the Swedish students may not be very competitive by nature and dislike performance-based material rewards. We also believe that the uncertainty that comes with materials rewards (such as bonuses) might have had an effect on the respondents' low ranking of this factor.

The study provided inconclusive results for intrinsic factors; overall they were moderately ranked and for the most part they did not follow Hofstede's (2001) theories about the Swedish culture, nor match evidence found in previous studies. They showed a slightly higher association with private organisations, with self-improvement being the second highest ranked factor among respondents predisposed towards the private sector.

When analysing the results of this study, it is important to consider that attraction towards a specific organisation is not dependent on a single factor. It is dependent on an interaction of several different factors used in this study and possibly also factors that this study does not take into account.

6.2 Research question

Is there an observable pattern between the students' organisational preferences and their preconceptions towards future employers?

In our main findings we present several observable patterns among the four groups of factors and four types of organisations. In general, we can conclude that the respondents exhibited a clear P-O fit when examining the sectors as a whole; factors highly associated with the private sector were also highly ranked by respondents predisposed towards the private sector (and vice versa for the public sector). However, when dividing the sectors into small and large organisations the patterns were not as clear; in both respective sectors the respondents showed a greater P-O fit to the large types of organisations. We thus conclude that we have sufficiently answered the research question of this thesis.

6.3 Further studies

This study presents an overview of the respondents' views and does not provide in depth results. Because of this the study can possibly serve as a potential foundation for further studies. In our opinion, further studies should either be designed as a follow-up study to examine whether the respondents actually chose their preferred organization and whether they experienced a P-O fit, or designed with a more in-depth focus on a specific aspect that has been examined in this study.

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Appendix 1 – Survey

This is a translated transcript of the survey that was sent to the respondents. The survey was divided into eight different sections.

Section 1

- Year of birth
- Gender
- Which term are you currently attending at the Business programme?
- Do you have a job alongside your studies?
 - Yes, in the public sector
 - Yes, in the private sector
 - Yes, in both sectors
 - No

Section 2

- Rank the following factors relative to each other according to how important you think they are in your future employer. 1 is the most important and 14 is the least important. Every factor must be ranked and each rank can be used only once.
 - Friendly and approachable leadership
 - I.e. a leadership that you get along with
 - Effective leadership
 - I.e. a leadership that get things done
 - Internal career opportunities
 - I.e. there are good opportunities to advance in the organisation
 - Support
 - I.e. the organisation supports a balance between career and family life
 - Material rewards
 - Material rewards are in addition to salary, e.g. a bonus or a watch
 - Emotional rewards
 - Emotional rewards can e.g. be that management/colleagues clearly show how your work is appreciated through compliments or greater freedom, or that you feel satisfied with what you have done
 - Self-improvement
 - In this case, self-development refers to the opportunity to develop as a person
 - Good working conditions
 - Good working conditions refers to varied work, flexibility (you are allowed to solve tasks in your own way), flexible hours, a good physical working environment and colleagues that you feel comfortable with
 - Social status
 - I.e. how you will be valued by society because of your employment
 - Job security
 - I.e. there is a low risk of losing your job
 - Good image

- I.e. how the organisation is presented in e.g. the media
- High salary
 - A job with a high salary (i.e. excluding bonuses and other forms of compensation)
- Challenging work
 - Challenging work that involves tasks that require creative approaches, "thinking outside the box"
- Job availability
 - Can be e.g. lower requirements from the employer or lack of personnel

Section 3

How strongly do you associate the following factors with a small private organisation (50 or fewer employees)?

A standpoint has to be made for each and every factor.

Section 4

How strongly do you associate the following factors with a small public organisation (50 or fewer employees e.g. a local administrative authority)?

A standpoint has to be made for each and every factor.

Section 5

How strongly do you associate the following factors with a large private organisation (50 or fewer employees)?

A standpoint has to be made for each and every factor.

Section 6

How strongly do you associate the following factors with a small public organisation (50 or fewer employees e.g. a national administrative authority)?

A standpoint has to be made for each and every factor.

Section 7

Which of the following organisations would you rather work for?

Section 8

Do you have any further comments on this survey or its questions?

Appendix 2 – P-O fit scoring model example

In this fictional example, we will demonstrate how the P-O fit scores are calculated.

P-O fit calculation for a fictional respondent – Table 8

Factor	Ranks		Associations			
	Rank	Reversed rank	Small private	Small public	Large private	Large public
Friendly and approachable leadership	1	14	8	4	4	8
Effective leadership	2	13	8	4	8	4
Internal career opportunities	3	12	4	4	8	8
Support	4	11	8	8	4	8
Material rewards	5	10	4	4	8	8
Emotional rewards	6	9	8	8	4	8
Self-improvement	7	8	8	8	4	8
Good working conditions	8	7	4	8	8	4
Social status	9	6	4	4	8	4
Job security	10	5	4	8	4	8
Good image	11	4	4	4	8	4
High salary	12	3	4	4	8	4
Challenging work	13	2	8	4	8	8
Job availability	14	1	8	8	4	8
P-O fit score			652	584	648	708

Since the ranking and association scales have opposite scale orders (the lowest ranked factor is the most important, while the lowest valued association is the least associated factor), the ranks are first reversed. The ranks are now used as a weight, with the most important factor (Friendly and approachable leadership) having the highest possible weight (14) and thus affecting the score the most. Job availability was this respondent's least important factor, and thus it gets the lowest possible weight (1). For each factor, the weight is multiplied with the particular organisation association. The sum of all these products make up the P-O fit score towards that particular organisation type. This process is then repeated for each organisation type.

The formula for the scoring model can be expressed in the following way:

$$Score_{Organisation\ type} = \sum_{n=1}^N (N + 1 - Rank_n) * Association_{n,Organisation\ type}$$

Thus, the P-O fit score for this respondent towards the large public organisation is calculated as:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Score}_{\text{Large public}} &= (14 + 1 - 1) * 8 + (14 + 1 - 2) * 4 + (14 + 1 - 3) * 8 + (14 + 1 - 4) * 8 \\ &+ (14 + 1 - 5) * 8 + (14 + 1 - 6) * 8 + (14 + 1 - 7) * 8 + (14 + 1 - 8) * 4 \\ &+ (14 + 1 - 9) * 4 + (14 + 1 - 10) * 8 + (14 + 1 - 11) * 4 + (14 + 1 - 12) * 4 \\ &+ (14 + 1 - 13) * 8 + (14 + 1 - 14) * 8 = 708 \end{aligned}$$